

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1125/01
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they identify the key words in each task so as to satisfy the requirements of the question. This is particularly important in **Section 1**, especially when the word 'and', in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point.
- Candidates are advised to stay within the word limits for each response and to check their work thoroughly. Similarly, candidates should avoid writing overlong paragraphs.
- Candidates should ensure that tenses are sequential, consistent and that agreement is considered.
- Direct speech helps to improve a narrative, but it needs to be carefully punctuated and paragraphed.
- The use of capital letters should be appropriate.
- Candidates are advised to learn a range of suitable valedictions for when a letter is required in **Section 1**.
- In **Section 1**, candidates are advised not lift sections of the scenario as an opening paragraph or in **Section 2** to copy the essay title at the start.

General comments

The strongest candidates in this exam continue to demonstrate enormous ability. This year there were very few very short or no-responses. The best essays were fluent, accurate and always interesting. Vocabulary in particular was often a strong point with some impressive words being used, for example, 'cynosure', 'quotidian', and 'incipient'. Tense, number and gender are the main weaknesses in accuracy for many, particularly with confusion between the pronouns 'his/her'. **Section 1** was done well by a large majority, but some were rather casual with the format of their letter. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the titles were attempted, with the descriptive title being the second most popular. Punctuation was also mainly sound, with an improvement in speech punctuation, but there was a lack of sophisticated punctuation, even amongst the very able. The spelling of 'environment' and 'separate' was noticeably better. It was good to see separate paragraphs used for the bullet points in **Section 1**. Sentence separation errors still gave cause for concern with weaker candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to imagine that an important person visited their school. They had to write a letter about this event to a friend who had moved away from the school to live in another town. This **purpose** and **situation** proved to be very straightforward for the majority of candidates. A successful answer had to include the following information:

- who the important person was **and** when the visit took place
- details of what happened during the visit
- how the visit was important for the candidate and the school.

For bullet point 1, it was necessary to give **both** the identity of the important person and when the visit took place. The former was achieved by most candidates. They gave either a specific name or gave the job or position held by the person concerned. Visits by 'the Prime Minister or the Sultan' were extremely popular choices. Other visitors were pop stars, ex-teachers, sporting heroes, owners of global companies and quite often a less well-known personality from the locality who set a good example. The candidates were not asked for a fixed date in saying *when* the visit took place. In fact, many gave a specific date, but many referred to 'last Tuesday'/'last week'/'yesterday'/'at the end of the first term' or something similar. Some

candidates gave the name of an event, such as 'Prize Day', and this was perfectly acceptable as the friend would have known this occasion. Where candidates did not gain full credit for this bullet point it was because they did not give an adequate idea of when it occurred. Either they omitted the 'when' entirely or gave a time of day which could have been on any day and so did not help the friend to locate it clearly. The use of the word 'recently' was copying from the question and so difficult to credit. A small number of candidates mistook the visit for one in the future and a small number also thought they had to invite the friend back for the occasion.

For bullet point 2, candidates had to narrate successfully some of the important particulars of the visit. The very important visitor usually gave a motivational speech to the school assembly. Other activities often mentioned were a tour around the school, a look at the teaching in some classes and an inspection of the fabric and the facilities of the school. The visitor often distributed the prizes at an award ceremony. The details of what happened were usually conveyed in an enthusiastic and convincing manner. Pupils were encouraged to work and study hard. They were given tips on exam success or environmental issues and all seemed inspired by what they were told. Those who set the event in the future found it difficult to complete this bullet point effectively and resorted to giving details of the preparation for the event, rather than details of the event itself. Some candidates did too much for this bullet point, a lot of which was about the preparations for the visit which were not required. This seriously affected how much they were able to do for the other bullets. The responses to the bullets do not have to be equally long but some balance is required.

Bullet point 3 required the candidates to be specific about the importance of the visit for themselves but also for the school. The most successful candidates saw the opportunity to write about these separately. For example, the candidate might have prospered from the advice given to succeed in some way whereas the school might have become more well-known because of this success. Alternatively, candidates often benefited from extra resources given to the school by the Minister of Education while the school itself benefited from an increase in pupil numbers as a result. If candidates simply said the visit was motivational or inspiring it was helpful but better candidates gave a reason why it was tied into the nature of the visitor. In fact, most candidates tended to resort to a mutual importance for the candidate and the school, for example, saying that a new computer room was to be built where there was a strong implication that both would benefit. The weakest responses neglected to mention the importance the one or the other. For this reason, bullet point 3 was a good discriminator, as was bullet point 1.

Candidates who were clear about the other requirements for task fulfilment produced appropriate and convincing letters. The **purpose, situation** and **audience** were well within the grasp and experience of the vast majority of candidates and only those who set the event in the future found the task difficult. Most candidates this year coped well with the **format** of this letter. They did this by using a friendly opening and a friendly valediction. Given the informality of the letter, most valedictions were acceptable, although simply signing the letter with 'from' or 'bye' is never seen as adequate. In the same way, an over-formal ending such as 'Yours faithfully' seemed inappropriate. Most set out the letter well, but a number were a little casual about this, especially in the use of capital letters in valedictions. The **tone** in the letters, particularly the warmth between the friends, was very well handled. Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the **tone** and approach very well. **Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when bullet point 3 was answered.

Linguistically, candidates needed to remember that they were speaking to a friend, someone of similar age and interests. In fact, most candidates produced a convincing piece of work by writing as accurately and naturally as they could. The better candidates were able to balance successfully the need to demonstrate their linguistic ability in an exam and yet ensure that the letter was natural enough to sound convincing. Candidates are advised that even in an informal letter, the use of slang and 'wanna' and 'gonna' and 'kinda' has no place. Overall, spelling was satisfactory, although a very common error here was to mistake the 'Ministry' of Education for the Minister. Many candidates would improve their accuracy by using capital letters properly, ensuring correct verbs and tenses and avoiding omitting articles. There were some good idiomatic expressions used but candidates must be very wary of using memorised idioms ('in the pink of health') which are rather old-fashioned and rarely used now by native speakers.

Section 2 – Composition

Question 2 – Describe your favourite holiday location. (Remember you can describe the surroundings and the local people, as well as the place.)

Once again, the descriptive title this year was more popular than in previous years, as a holiday location was something the candidates knew very well or they knew an area which would make a good holiday location. The very best responses employed the full range of descriptive devices to give accounts of wonderfully carefree holidays. One candidate wrote of a holiday in the country, surrounded by a sugar cane estate, trees and rivers, and described children playing football, swimming in the river, lunch under the trees, communal dinners and the adults tending gardens and livestock. Another was about staying at Grandpa's 'stilt-style bamboo house...encircled by vegetable fields with cucumbers tender and green'. Activities included 'angling under the shade...going up on to the beacon to watch the evening glow...and the silver moon...as green fireflies spattered light as the night advanced'. This was impressive writing, with scenes fully realised and with the ring of sincerity. Beach holidays were also popular with the water 'glittering invitingly' and seaside meals with 'grilled BBQ wings...sizzled to perfection'. Another one described a 'mini heaven on Earth' at night: from noisy teenagers around their bonfire to quieter moments, gazing at the 'starry sky'. Yet another gave an evocative account of a visit to India, with details of an 'overwhelming welcome, soft-hearted, generous citizens, succulent food, delicious signature dishes; a place that holds many secret stories of the past'. Thus, the best essays evoked the atmosphere and made full use of all the senses when describing. They often demonstrated a range of vocabulary which was truly impressive. Effective similes and metaphors were helpful.

Weaker responses relied more heavily on listing aspects of the location rather than describing it and on repeating the words 'beautiful, happy, colourful, amazing and environment'. Some weaker responses barely reflected the idea of it being a holiday location. Some descriptions were not very convincing; one of London, for example, seemed to have little to do with London other than some clichés of English life and suggested the candidate was not writing from first-hand experience. Another weakness with some was to describe a location for a sentence or two but then turn the essay into a narrative, usually of a past holiday.

Question 3 – What helps people to succeed in life: their appearance, their personality or their opinions? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

There were a few extremely thoughtful essays which explored the effects of appearance, personality and opinions and these essays were generally structured by considering each of these in turn. Appearance was seen as both a strength and a weakness in determining success. A pleasant appearance was seen as helpful to people in careers which relied on looks. Models and actors were seen as benefiting in this way, as well as people in the public eye or those whose main role was to interact with the public. Most candidates were well aware that looks can be deceptive and most used the expression 'you can't judge a book by its cover'. Personality was seen as a deeper attribute, with good or bad personality seen as helpful or harmful in all walks of life. Candidates generally found it more difficult to discuss the role of opinions in success. A general weakness in responses to this topic was to see success only in terms of a career and not to range more widely into other aspects of succeeding in life. The sign of a good response was often when the candidate developed alternatives such as education, hard work and perseverance as alternatives to a successful life. This topic was a particularly good illustration of the fact that candidates should be sure they have enough to say before attempting an argument topic. Those who had little to say about opinions should have been looking elsewhere – a short, plan would have helped resolve this.

Question 4 – 'Playing competitive sport is the best way to keep fit and healthy.' What is your opinion? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

Again, this argument essay was a less popular choice and largely interested those who played sport themselves. Most who did it were in favour of sport being a very good way to keep fit for all the obvious reasons of exercise, interest and teamwork. Candidates who took this approach largely concentrated on the one aspect, the benefits of sport, and supported their arguments with personal experience. For example, there was one long, moving account in a weaker response, of how, despite a poor academic record, playing sport had helped create a fit and healthy mind and boosted the candidate's creativity in the arts. Some were able to develop this topic because they were not convinced sport was necessarily the best way to keep fit. They introduced healthy eating as an alternative or supplementary regime and thereby deepened the argument. If there was a weakness in the overall response to this task it was that candidates ignored the word 'competitive' in the title and often spoke more about sport and exercise as a hobby. They tended to argue that general healthy living is as effective as taking part in strenuous activity, whereas the title really invited candidates to discuss the benefits of vigorous and competitive activity.

Question 5 – Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘There were two very different opportunities and he knew he had to choose the right one.’

This was the most popular choice by far and led to a huge range of interesting, and cleverly devised scenarios. The most popular of these was about the very difficult choice of staying at home to support one’s family or accepting the offer of education or longed-for career, often overseas. On a similar theme, there was a very good story of culture shock about a boy from a small village, experiencing Seattle University and his new room-mate – with ‘inked body, hair dyed red and a face brimming with piercings’. Furthermore, there were the ‘assaulting faces’ of the room-mate’s friends. The student found himself in a quandary as to whether to be friendless or become part of the lifestyle. Equally serious and touchingly told, was a story of an estranged son working at a prestigious city job, who then had to decide whether to accept or reject his ‘country bumpkin’ mother. The candidate made it vivid with telling details, such as her ‘worn-out handbag’. There were also a number of stories of a thief in the house and the lone occupant had two choices – escape or tackle the intruder. This year, there were many more cliff hanger endings, and these were often very effective with the choice of the correct opportunity left to the reader’s imagination. The best answers were those which included the given sentence naturally into the narrative. It should be remembered that there is no need to include inverted commas around the given sentence (unless it is part of direct speech), nor underline it. On the other hand, it is essential to keep the given sentence in its original wording and so the tense and the gender of the person involved must be maintained and planned for.

Question 6 – Write a story in which a broken light plays an important part.

This was another popular choice. The ‘broken light’ was very loosely interpreted and included one about a power cut in a shop but it was usually a household light or a torch light. There were many planned trips to the mountains or forests where the candidate was invariably lost without any means of light. One candidate took a humorous approach with a narrative about two young boys who broke a lamp and waited on tenterhooks for the wicked genie to emerge. However, it was just one of their grandfather’s tall stories!

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1125/02
Reading

Key messages

- In **Question 1(a)**, candidates are advised to focus on the selection and expression of only the main, or overarching, points within the text. Irrelevant examples and extensions of those points, if included, often detract from otherwise correct responses in **Question 1(a)**, which then influences the writing of responses in **Question 1(b)**. Candidates should pay close attention to expressions such as ‘for example’ or ‘such as’ in the text and be very wary in working around such expressions. For example, in the point about honey having medicinal properties, many candidates ran on to include ‘cuts and burns’. Examples can be included as long as they are clearly indicated as such.
- Also in **Question 1(a)**, the use of ‘etc.’ and multiple slashes is discouraged, as in ‘medical purposes for Egyptians etc.’ or ‘tombs / food / afterlife.’ Similarly, brackets serve no purpose and often denied the mark, as in ‘vitamins and minerals (Vitamin C, iron, calcium)’.
- In **Question 1(b)**, candidates need to go beyond reliance on ‘and’, ‘also’, ‘that’ and ‘as’ to produce a response which is stylish or impressive.
- Again in **Question 1(b)**, it seems that many candidates have a mental list of useful words and phrases. They need to be careful not to misuse these and should avoid repetition. Complex sentences are helpful, as is varying the clause structures and using participles.
- Again in **Question 1(b)**, ‘firstly’, ‘secondly’ etc. are best avoided. Some candidates began with ‘firstly’ oblivious to the fact that the first importance had already been given. Similarly, ‘lastly’ was sometimes used near the end of the response only to be followed with one or more additional points.
- In **Section 2** candidates need to be trained to look carefully at the questions and not distort them. ‘In what way...?’ and ‘What two signs...?’ are very different to ‘Why?’ and ‘What?’
- Candidates should read the questions carefully to determine where their own words are required and where they can use a quotation.
- Candidates should take the space given for their response as a prompt. Lengthy lifting in excess of 2 lines will usually be incorrect.
- For **Question 2**, candidates would benefit from practice in identifying subjective words which point to opinions rather than to facts and in avoiding spoiling a correct response by straying into further areas of the text which are factual. There were many issues this session with marks being lost because candidates, having identified a correct opinion, spoiled their response by including excess information in the text.
- In **Question 9**, the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates are advised to consider, within the context, each of the alternatives offered. They should also make their choice of response unambiguous. Some candidates changed their minds over some answers, and where the chosen answer was not clearly indicated, no mark could be awarded.
- In the final question of **Section 2**, candidates are advised to concentrate on appreciation of the writer’s craft. Candidates are asked to recognise the literal meaning of a given section of the text, and to comment on the effect on the reader of the writer’s use of particular words or images. Candidates are advised to focus on literal meaning under ‘meaning’ and to avoid presenting effect as if it were meaning.

General comments

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, the first entitled 'Honey' and the second entitled 'Hortense'. The first passage, 'Honey', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 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 the text of 'Honey' and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a continuous piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. A further question allotted 3 marks to the testing of candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish fact from opinion in the first, sixth and seventh paragraphs of the text.

The second passage, 'Hortense', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their ability to select appropriate quotations, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

The extracts seemed to be approachable and of a familiar genre for the candidates. Subtleties in the literary text led to some discriminating questions. There were very few incomplete scripts, and in general, candidates coped well with the layout of the answer booklets. Where questions were omitted it tended to be the final question on writer's craft.

Both spelling and punctuation were generally good, as were handwriting and legibility. In **Question 1(a)**, almost all candidates put information into the correct sections.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were advised to write between 150 and 180 words and most candidates conformed to this limit. There were clear attempts at connecting phrases but many times these became repetitive and failed to enhance the flow of the writing. Some candidates wrote consistently in the present tense; others used tenses randomly. Stronger responses demonstrated an ability to use correct tenses, consistently and to use linking devices with confidence e.g. 'not only is honey good for soft skin, it is also used by athletes', and 'while it helps patients recover from illness, it can even treat the common cough and cold since it is packed with vitamins and minerals.'

Misuse of linking devices was common in weaker responses, where the connection between points was unclear, e.g. 'it improves athletic performance and so it is good for skin' and 'it was used for medical purposes because of references in texts of world religions'. The use of the following linking devices as sentence openers was often insecure or inappropriate: 'however', 'in contrast', 'likewise', 'similarly', 'then' and 'in addition'.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks; candidates were asked to identify and write down the information in the passage which described the importance of honey in former times, and the possible benefits of honey in modern times. The summary had 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. The test here, as with all summary writing, was to demonstrate an ability to present the overarching points and to separate the overarching points from examples or supporting material.

There were several points in this summary task which contained examples which illustrated or supported overarching points, particularly in the first section of the task. Several responses did not include the overarching points, but instead gave examples or supporting evidence; while others strayed into the examples or illustrations once the overarching point had been made, thereby spoiling an otherwise correct response.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 14 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12 points, each point carrying one mark. Most responses were expressed either in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text. Although some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, many responses presented the points in a concise way. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the

rubric suggested that they might find it useful to do so, and the sample points given to assist them used bullets; in fact, most candidates used bullet points.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 gave the information in the passage which described the importance of honey in former times, and there were 8 points (excluding the first given point) which candidates could make. In Paragraph 1, there were 2 content points, (excluding the first given point) which were that honey featured in mythology, or folklore, or legend in many civilisations, and that the texts of many religions, or faiths, or beliefs, contain reference to honey. Merely writing 'mythology' made the first of these points; when it came to the second of these points, some candidates referred to religion rather than texts of religions, and many others went on to make reference to the Bible or the Qur'an, thus presenting an example rather than an overarching point.

Paragraph 2 contained 2 content points. The first of these was that honey was used for medical purposes. If candidates extended this into a mention of the four nationalities given - namely the Egyptians, Chinese, Greeks and Romans - this was acceptable but, if they wrote that honey was used to heal cuts and burns, or to cure diseases of the intestine, they had strayed into examples only and narrowed the focus such that the overarching point was not being made. The second content point in this paragraph was that honey was given as a precious, or special, or valuable gift. As with the previous point, many candidates gave the supporting example as if it were the overarching point, i.e. the reference to honey being presented as a gift to the Pharaoh in Egypt; again this narrowed the focus and meant that the point was not made.

In Paragraph 3, there were a further 3 content points, which were that honey was used as an embalming agent, that it was placed in tombs as food for the afterlife, and that it had a symbolic value. Many candidates made these points sharply and succinctly, but others strayed into offering examples as if they were overarching points. They did this with the first of these points by confining what they wrote to embalming done by the Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians; they would have needed to mention Georgia too for this to be acceptable. They spoiled the second of these points by writing that honey was left in tombs as food for the afterlife in North and Central America; these locations were only examples. They often spoiled the third of these points by failing to notice that the reference to honey having symbolic value came after two examples, one concerning Jewish New year and one concerning Chinese wedding ceremonies; no credit could be given for examples only.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for the possible benefits of honey in modern times, as outlined in the passage, and there were a further 7 content points, excluding the given point. From Paragraph 4 candidates could make 2 points (excluding the first given point), the first being that honey is or may be beneficial for patients recovering from illness, or that it may speed up the healing process after surgery. The second point was that honey is a cure for coughs and / or colds, or that the World Health Organisation recommends honey as a cure for coughs and / or sore throats. There was much success in identifying these points, and there were no examples to distract.

In Paragraph 5 there were 2 content points, the first of these being that honey is a source of vitamins and minerals; candidates were free to add that the most common of these were Vitamin C, calcium and iron, but if they suggested that these were the only vitamins or minerals to be found in honey, the point was not made. Another point followed, which was that honey improves athletic performance. The reference to helping to maintain blood sugar levels, or to encouraging muscle recuperation, were supporting evidence for ways in which honey improves athletic performance and therefore did not make the point if presented alone.

In Paragraph 6, there were a further 2 content points, which were that honey helps to create smooth skin, and that honey triggers changes in the body which mean we do not crave other sweet food. If candidates gave the opinion that the best shower gels and shampoos are those containing honey, this was not credited as being a correct point and was ignored so long as it was not presented as being the overarching point. Some candidates interpreted the second point in this paragraph as being that honey makes us lose weight, which was clearly inaccurate; the point was either that honey triggers changes in the body which mean we do not crave other sweet food, or that it can be part of a weight loss programme.

The final content point could be found in Paragraph 7 and was that honey can be a part of our normal diet. Some candidates wrote that honey is delicious but this was an opinion and not a content point.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the importance of honey in former times and the possible benefits of honey in modern times, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150 and 180 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. They were asked to write up their note form content points into a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. The most commendable results came from candidates who

wrote well under relevance and coherence. Such scripts were characterised under relevance by adhering to the points of the text which were relevant to the question, avoiding the over-use of supporting details and examples, and also avoiding non-specific topic sentences, such as 'In this way we can see that honey was important in former times' or 'But there are reasons for the continuing importance of honey in modern times.' As indicated above, irrelevant sections of the text which were frequently included were references to honey healing cuts and burns, to Jewish New Year or Chinese wedding ceremonies, or to specific parts of the world such as Egypt, Greece or Central America, which narrowed the focus and distorted the relevance.

Under coherence, the better responses came from candidates whose writing was fluent, with a possible combination of similar or supporting points, with points linked in a way which aided fluency and moved the answer on in a natural and helpful way. While the best responses used common adverbial connectives such as 'nevertheless', 'however' 'furthermore' etc. appropriately but not excessively, some responses sprinkled them throughout their summaries in ways which were not always logical. Elsewhere, the repeated use of 'and' or 'also' was noticeable to string points together; in the better responses, however, these words were used only now and then for the skilful synthesis of ideas. Weaker responses included simple or compound sentences without linking. Others included long phrases from the original text which inevitably contained unnecessary detail and often led to an 'unbalanced' response as the space available was filled before they got to the benefits of honey in modern times.

In **Question 2** candidates were asked to identify three of the writer's opinions from Paragraph 1. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and in this case the words were 'fascinating' for the first opinion, 'best' for the second opinion and 'delicious' for the third.

These words supplied the first opinion that '(the production of) honey has a fascinating history. The key subjective claim in the second opinion was 'the best shower gels / shampoos (are those advertising that they) contain (milk and) honey.' Finally, 'we would all agree that honey is delicious' was the key subjective claim in the third opinion, although the slightly different 'honey is delicious' was also accepted. Many candidates lost marks through including excess text around the correct answer. Candidates need to be aware that an opinion can be closely followed by a fact. This meant that many candidates identified the opinion but, as indicated above, spoiled their response by adding extra information which meant the focus was lost as to what was the opinion and what was additional fact, e.g. 'the production of honey has a fascinating history as shown by a cave painting in Spain of humans foraging for honey.' A small number of candidates offered their own opinions rather than the writer's opinion as required by the rubric.

Section 2

Most candidates seemed to find this narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1.

Question 3(a) was a literal comprehension question asking what, as a child, the writer wanted to do when he became an adult, the answer being that he wanted to be a zoologist, or to study animals; this was a relatively straightforward question designed to ease candidates into this section of the Paper.

Question 3(b) was another literal comprehension question asking candidates why 'the writer felt he was an exceptionally lucky person' and the answer was that he got the job he always wanted, or that he got the job he had wanted since he was child. Many candidates found this difficult and lifted from the passage: 'a child whose ambition is to have a particular job rarely grows up to fulfil that role' which did not answer the question, although the addition of 'but my dream came true when I got the job I'd always wanted' was sufficient to make the point. Some candidates wrote, incorrectly, that 'his dream came true' without any reference to a job, or 'I got the job I wanted' which was incorrect without 'always' as it did not bring out the timescale required to show the contrast between when he was a child and when he was an adult.

In **Question 4(a)** candidates were asked to identify the phrase in Paragraph 2 which came after 'every conceivable type of creature' and which conveyed the same meaning: '(my) vast assortment of wildlife'. Some candidates were in the correct area but spoiled their responses by including 'harassed by' as in 'harassed by my vast assortment of wildlife'. Others wrote, incorrectly, 'from monkeys to the common garden snail', which was an example of 'every conceivable type of creature' rather than a definition.

Question 4(b) was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain what was meant by the expression 'was just a phase I was passing through and that I would soon grow out of it.' The key lay in re-casting 'phase' and 'grow out of', although this re-casting had to be done within a sensible context as the question had to be seen as more than a vocabulary test. The reality was, in fact, that almost all candidates attempted a relevant context with very few giving only

synonyms. Acceptable answers were responses such as 'his hobby was temporary', or 'his hobby was just for a time', or 'it would stop'; there were many ways in which this could be done and there was much success with this part of the question. A few misunderstood 'phase' as 'phrase'.

There was less success in capturing the idea of 'grow out of it' as many candidates used the word 'grow' in their responses while this was a question inviting them to use their own words. Correct responses were 'when he was older', 'when he was mature' or 'when he was an adult'. Some candidates used the words 'soon' or 'later' or 'it would pass' to re-cast 'grow out of it', but these words were too unspecific and, in any case, the words 'soon' and 'passing' were in the expression to be re-cast.

Question 5(a) was a relatively straightforward literal comprehension question, asking candidates why the writer's school friend could no longer look after Hortense, the answer being that he was moving to an apartment, or to town. The contrast between his living arrangements now and in the future, which would make looking after a deer impossible, had to be stated or at least implied. 'Quitting' and 'shifting' were awkward but acceptable alternatives for 'moving'. Although very many candidates gave a correct response here, some wrote, incorrectly, that the friend was moving to another house or apartment or town; such answers did not bring out the idea of contrast or change.

In **Question 5(b)**, a two-part inferential question, candidates were asked to identify the two signs of the school friend's desperation to be rid of Hortense. One of these inferences lay in the fact that the boy and his father could deliver the deer in twenty-four hours, or immediately, or quickly, or at once. The other inference was more difficult and lay in identifying the fact that the boy lied about Hortense's age, or said he was young, when he wasn't; this could be inferred from lines 13–14 'which he described – wrongly as I discovered later – as young.' This pointed to the fact that the deer was not really manageable, and hence the desperation to be rid of it. Some candidates wrote, incorrectly, that he was unable to keep his pet, even though it was tame and house-trained. There was a gap of logic in such responses; if a pet was tame and house-trained that would be a reason to keep it, not to get rid of it. Other candidates, wrote, incorrectly, that he had looked after it since it was young, a true observation but not one which addressed the notion of 'desperation'.

In **Question 6(a)**, candidates were asked for the two ways in which the writer's decision to take Hortense was not wise. This was a literal comprehension question; the answer to the first part was that he didn't ask his mother's permission, and the answer to the second part was that he had never seen Hortense. In the first part, some candidates confused the way in which his decision was not wise with the reason why he made this bad decision, namely that he was unable to ask his mother's permission because she was not at home. Others wrote, incorrectly, that his decision was not a wise one because he already had a collection of animals, or that the owner was clamouring to be rid of the deer, which again was a reason *why* he perhaps made a hasty decision but not *the way* in which his decision was unwise.

Question 6(b) asked candidates how they could tell that the writer wasn't sure if his mother would allow him to keep Hortense, the answer being that he rehearsed, or practised, his story to her, or that he made up, or created, a story that would soften a heart of stone. Incorrect responses were ones which said that he made up a story to convince her. These were incomplete responses because it was necessary to write what kind of story would convince her, namely a story that would soften a heart of stone. Other incorrect responses were that he already had a collection of animals. Some candidates misunderstood 'rehearsed' in the text and took that to mean he repeated the story to his mother – any suggestion that she was at home, when in fact she wasn't, spoiled the answer. Some candidates wrote, incorrectly, that his mother had a heart of stone, a direct contradiction of what the text said; such responses showed a lack of attentiveness in reading the text.

In **Question 7(a)**, candidates were asked for one word in Paragraph 5 which showed a surprising contrast between Hortense's appearance and his behaviour, the answer being 'delicate'. Very many candidates overlooked the word 'contrast' in the question and seemed to be looking for a similar word to 'pair of horns with a forest of lethal-looking spikes' rather than a contrasting word. This meant that the most popular and incorrect response was 'fierce', although 'shock', and even 'wheelbarrow' were offered. This question was a good illustration of the necessity to read a question carefully before beginning to answer it.

Question 7(b) was an inferential question asking why 'the writer was in a hurry to thank the boy and his father'. The key to answering this correctly lay in either identifying what would happen after the mother recovered from the shock, or what the writer wanted to happen before his mother recovered from the shock. This meant that correct responses were 'in case his mother changed her mind (about Hortense)' or 'before his mother told the boy and his father to take Hortense away', or 'before his mother said that Hortense was too big / couldn't stay', or 'so that he could take Hortense to the garage before his mother recovered from the shock', or 'so that the boy and his father would leave before his mother recovered from the shock'. Popular incorrect responses were 'before his / my mother could recover from the shock' (alone) or 'he wanted to put

him in the garage / tie him up' (alone). Other incorrect responses were 'so that Hortense wouldn't eat more of his mother's roses' or 'he wanted to put Hortense in the garage before his mother saw him' (she already had seen him), or 'he wanted to put Hortense in the garage before his brother saw him', or 'he didn't want his mother to see Hortense'.

In **Question 7(c)**, candidates were asked to infer how the writer's brother felt about animals. The key lay in lines 31–33, in that he disliked or hated animals. Many candidates wrote that he was afraid of animals, drawing an incorrect inference from 'you know how Larry feels about fierce things', and although it might be reasonable to think that fierce animals would evoke fear, the question asked about animals in general, as referred to in line 33 'fierce or otherwise'. If candidates wrote that Larry hated or disliked animals and was afraid of them, the idea of 'fear' was treated as a neutral extension, but 'he was afraid of animals' (alone) was incorrect as was 'he hated fierce animals.'

Question 8 was the second of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words and asked 'what the writer means when he describes Hortense as astonished by the havoc he had created', with the key ideas being 'astonished' and 'havoc'. There were very many ways in which the correct answer could be captured, with words such as 'surprised', 'amazed', 'astounded' or 'shocked' capturing the idea of 'astonished', and words such as 'chaos', 'disaster' or 'mess', capturing the idea of 'havoc'. The meaning of 'havoc' may well have been deduced from the context of the disrupted tea party. Incorrect responses were those which suggested that it was the writer and not Hortense who was astonished; however, if such incorrect responses were given, the mark could be given for a correct explanation of 'havoc' even in this wrong context. When answered incorrectly, 'astonished' generated a very wide range of answers: 'guilty', 'innocent', 'embarrassed', 'impressed', 'proud', 'afraid', 'amused', 'unaware' or 'he couldn't believe it' or 'it was unexpected'.

Question 9 took the form of the multiple-choice synonym question. Strong performance on this question is most likely where each word is taken back to and considered in the light of the context provided. Most success was evident in **Question 9(b)**, where 'dilemma' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'quandary' and in **Question 9(c)**, where 'settled' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'clinched'. Less successful were **Question 9(a)** where the correct answer was 'early' for 'formative', **Question 9(d)**, where 'excessively' was the correct synonym for 'profusely' with 'gratefully' being the most common incorrect response, and **Question 9(e)** where the correct response was 'shyly'.

In **Question 9(a)**, the root 'form' perhaps led many to opt for 'growing'. In **Question 9(b)**, the most popular incorrect response was 'confusion', perhaps because of the events in the passage. In **Question 9(c)**, many opted for 'arranged' or 'hugged'. In **Question 9(d)**, many chose 'gratefully', perhaps associating it with thanks. In **Question 9(e)**, many chose 'humbly' perhaps because of the change in Hortense's behaviour.

Question 10 was the question on writer's craft. In each section, **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of a sentence as used in the text, followed by the effect of the sentence. Many candidates were imprecise with their responses to meaning and often confused meaning with effect.

Question 10(a) directed candidates to the sentence 'I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I wanted to be a collector of animals' and asked for its meaning and its effect, its effect in this case being what the sentence shows 'about the personality of the writer'. The key was to focus on the idiom 'without a shadow of a doubt' and refer to the fact that the writer was sure, or certain, or definite, or had no second thoughts, that he wanted to be a zoologist, or to collect animals. It was not necessary to give the meaning of 'collector of animals' although many candidates attempted to do this. Some candidates used the word 'doubt' in their response, which could not be credited as it was one of the words being tested. What this sentence shows about the personality of the writer, namely the effect of 'without a shadow of a doubt' was that the writer was a determined, or a decisive, or a single-minded (sort of person). There was much success with meaning here, but many candidates gave the effect as if it were the meaning as in, for example, 'this means that the writer was determined to collect animals'. Candidates would have been wise to keep the question in mind, where effect was connected to the personality of the writer.

In **Question 10(b)**, candidates were directed to the sentence 'This is the last straw,' roared Larry, 'so get that animal out of here!' They were asked for its meaning and its effect, its effect in this case being what the sentence shows 'about the personality of the writer's brother'. Credit was given here for either the meaning of "'This is the last straw,' roared Larry' or for 'Larry roared, "so get that animal out of here!'", although many candidates attempted to give the meaning of the entire sentence. The meaning of the first part of the sentence required a focusing on the idiom 'this is the last straw', which means that Larry was tired or sick or had had enough (of the animal); alternatively the meaning could be given in another version of direct speech

such as 'this is the end', or 'this is the limit', or 'I can't take or endure any more'. Common incorrect responses for 'this is the last straw' repeated the word 'last', e.g. 'last time', 'last chance', 'last warning'. The meaning of the second part of the sentence was that Larry was saying that the animal had to be removed or taken away; again, the meaning could be given in another version of direct speech. When it came to effect, this was connected to the personality of the writer's brother. Correct responses were that he was a bad-tempered or impatient, or intolerant (sort of person); 'angry' or 'furious' were also accepted.

As indicated above, some candidates did not answer **Question 10** at all, more opting not to answer this question than any other. Perhaps they ran out of time or perhaps they had decided in advance that this style of question would be too difficult for them.