

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABUS B

<p>Paper 1126/01 Reading and Directed Writing</p>

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to read the wording of the questions closely and focus their responses on the precise requirements of each task. With questions such as **Question 9** candidates should ensure that they make it clear which section of the question is being answered by putting the letter (a, b or c) against the appropriate answer.
- **Question 11** requires candidates to summarise points under three headings; it is important that points should be placed under the appropriate heading and that material not relevant to that heading, or to the subject of the summary as a whole, is not included.
- It is important that candidates attempt to convey their understanding of the reading passages and questions by using their own words wherever possible. This applies particularly when answering **Questions 11 and 12**.

General comments

Most candidates attempted to answer all questions. Responses to **Questions 7 – 9**, in particular, indicated that many candidates were able to make selective reference to key points and not simply lift sections from the passage without clear focus on the passage. Most responses to **Question 12** were of at least adequate length although many concentrated on only the first two bullet points and in doing so tended to rely closely on what had already been written in response to **Question 11**, without taking into account the specific focus and context of the Directed Writing task. On the other hand, a few responses to this task concentrated almost entirely on answering the third bullet and, as a result, showed only limited awareness of the passage as a whole.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Questions 1–6

Few candidates were able to answer all six of these questions correctly. There were several candidates who did not give any of the answers. **Questions 1 and 6** were answered correctly by majority of candidates, whereas **Questions 2 and 4** proved to be more difficult, with fewer candidates identifying the correct answers.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to give three reasons why the cave was not a good place for humans. Most candidates mentioned the poisonous gas, and many referred to the risk of slipping (as a result of the darkness). Only a small number of responses made the point of dangerous animals being present, and scratches and bones were often cited without the implications of their presence being explained. A larger number wrote about the presence of carbon dioxide which the passage states is harmful to the paintings but not to humans.

Question 8

This question was generally well answered, with most candidates selecting at least two of the four points, namely the child's footprint and the man's handprint which showed that the cave was once lived in by humans. Many mentioned 'the cave walls were burnt' with or without reference to the black marks but only a small number referenced the paintings of wild animals as evidence of human habitation.

Question 9

- (a) This question required an explanation of the phrase 'nature's hidden treasure'. There were many references to the beauty of the caves and their treasure but not all responses showed an understanding of the reasons for the use of the word 'hidden'.
- (b) The explanation of how the cave was formed was generally well done, usually through selective lifting. The key points necessary for all four marks to be awarded were: water combines with carbon dioxide; as a result acid is formed; the acid enters holes in the rock; it slowly eats away the rock.
- (c) This question asked for an explanation of why people nowadays find caves to be appealing and was worth a total of two marks. Most candidates were able to show some general understanding of the mystery. Only a small number of candidates succeeded in clearly distinguishing the two main points that although we know almost everything about much of the surface of the earth, caves are mysterious and fascinating because they are still largely unexplored.

Question 10

This question asked why Herzog called his film 'Cave of Forgotten Dreams' and only a small number of candidates gave explanations – either that the paintings in the cave portray the dreams of our prehistoric ancestors or that what was found in the caves reminds us of the humanity and lives of our ancestors. Many mentioned that the caves had been undiscovered for a long time without going on to say how this related to the idea of 'dreams'.

Section 2

Question 11

Most candidates attempted to divide the material into three paragraphs.

Regarding Max's physical appearance most mentioned 'ten centimetres taller' and his being 'slim' but much extraneous material was included from the first five lines of the passage. Only a small number of responses identified his 'green eyes' and 'dark hair'.

In the next two paragraphs many responses included irrelevant details with the result that although candidates achieved quite high content marks by doing this, they did not score highly for Written Expression. Most understood the points that Max wanted to practise and that his father told him to move the car himself if he wanted to do so, but a large number did not make the point that it was the way the car was parked that prevented him from practising.

There was a generally clear understanding of what Max did once he entered the car and most candidates scored highly on this section.

Question 12

Most candidates attempted an informal letter format with a salutation. A small number misunderstood the scenario and wrote letters either as Max himself or to someone other than a cousin.

Many candidates wrote an effective introductory paragraph to say they were fine followed by the information that Max had had an accident. The most successful responses then continued to write in character as either Max's brother or sister and showed an understanding of what the passage stated that he or she was doing during the episode of Max's driving adventure, and gave convincing accounts not only of the shock and concern resulting from his accident, but also brought in the reaction and concern shown by Max's parents, the response of his neighbours (including reference to the newspaper article) and ended with a sympathetic

and convincing description of Max's personality and character and how his experience had affected him. Responses at this level took on the persona of Max's elder sister or brother and adjusted their language accordingly. Some included informal comments such as 'As you know...' and added appropriate original ideas such as 'I was in the kitchen preparing dinner'.

Less successful responses closely followed the points from the passage, with only limited attempts to develop on the given information. Such heavy reliance on the passage resulted in the copying of material and details that the brother or sister could not possibly have seen with the result that there was no convincing sibling perspective.

In the least successful responses, there were only very limited credible additional ideas to bullet point 2, the events that followed Max's crash regarding father and the neighbours, and bullet point 3 regarding how typical it was of Max's behaviour was often omitted or not clearly understood. A small number of responses mentioned that it was his father's fault and Max was not to blame. Others were more scathing about Max's behaviour.

Linguistically, most responses were structured through well-organised paragraphs, and the most successful attempted to express the events using their own words to produce a convincing tone and register for the brother or sister who was writing the letter. Errors of tense sequence, prepositions, pronouns and overall sentence structure were apparent in the less successful responses. Most candidates undertook this task with evidence of interest and enthusiasm, and many were aware of the need to use their own words in response to this question.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABUS B

<p>Paper 1126/02 Continuous Writing</p>

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to choose only **one** question to answer.
- Candidates should be encouraged to write a plan for their writing before they start. Gathering ideas before they start will allow them to consider if they have enough relevant vocabulary and a secure knowledge of the structures needed to answer the question.
- Candidates should be advised to leave some time to reread their work to check for errors when they have finished writing.

General comments

Many candidates were able to demonstrate their language ability well against the questions set. There were many very short responses. Short essays are unlikely to be able to show a range of vocabulary and structure and miss opportunities to demonstrate coherence. Candidates should be encouraged to plan before they start writing to ensure they can produce enough content for the question. There were some occasions when candidates started an answer and changed to a different question after writing a lengthy paragraph.

Candidates should read the questions carefully to consider what is being asked, rather than attempting to tailor the essay they wish to write to the question. There were many essays which attempted to guide the answer towards a different topic or event which meant that questions were not fully answered, or in the weakest cases, were completely irrelevant.

Questions 2 and 9 were the most popular choices. Many candidates answered two questions: one of **Questions 1 – 8** as well as **Question 9**. When writing two responses candidates are unlikely to be able to produce two strong answers and should be reminded to answer only one question as the rubric on the question paper indicates.

Candidates would benefit from practice in question choice and from thinking about what language they need to answer a question fully and successfully. Many candidates this year chose to write a narrative – sometimes despite the fact that the question did not ask for a narrative but did not have sufficient control of past tenses to do this well. At times answers were confused and communication broke down.

Stronger candidates were able to recognise the structures and vocabulary needed to answer the chosen question and there was often good use of past tenses, conditionals and modal verbs in stronger answers. Weaker answers often lacked control of structures with auxiliary verbs lacking agreement and incorrect forms used, most notably *am/are* and *do/does*. Candidates should be encouraged to make personal lists of common errors which they make and should check their work for these areas before considering it complete. The range of vocabulary used was often impressive in stronger essays with some very descriptive adjectives used completely accurately in **Questions 1 and 2** in particular. There was good use of phrasal verbs and the use of collocations was often appropriate.

Almost all candidates used paragraphing well to break up their essays and in many answers there was good use of cohesive devices to link ideas. Stronger answers in particular used pronouns and ellipsis with skill to make their essays very cohesive. Weaker candidates were more repetitive, and this is an area that many candidates would benefit from more focus on.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Write about an event to which you had not been looking forward, that turned out to be very enjoyable.

This was a popular choice and stronger candidates demonstrated a good control of past tenses, with some using past perfect simple and continuous very accurately. However, a number of candidates wrote a general story about an event, usually a party, without any reference to not looking forward to it. These candidates did not fully answer the question and missed the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of language of contrast and explanation.

Question 2: Describe your best friend and how you first met. Explain why you are such good friends.

This was a very popular choice and many candidates gave well-considered answers which addressed both elements of the question: the description of the friend and how they met. These candidates were able to use a wide range of adjectives in the description and to use past tenses clearly and appropriately to explain the meeting. The strongest candidates wrote excellent responses which went beyond physical description, and this was integrated well with explanation of the meeting. A large number of responses did not fully address the question and wrote a story about a friend. These were not always related to the first meeting, and often did not include a description. Many candidates were not able to provide accurate descriptions and it was common to see 'hairs' instead of 'hair', 'high' instead of 'tall' and incorrect word order such as 'a girl very friendly'.

Question 3: If you could interview any famous person for a magazine article, who would you choose? Why would you choose this person and what would you talk about?

There were some very good responses to this question and candidates who identified a famous person who they admired wrote well and had plenty of ideas to complete their essay. Most famous people chosen were sports players and there was a good range of language used to suggest what the interview would include. On some occasions weaker candidates chose a famous person and described the person, saying why they admired them, but did not relate their answer to interviewing them. These candidates were unable to answer the question fully.

Question 4: Describe a restaurant that you and your family like and say why you would recommend it.

This question was often answered well, with candidates describing a restaurant, the staff, the setting and the food. The question was often answered in story form, but some candidates did not have a secure enough command of past tenses to do this successfully. Candidates who identified that much of the question could be answered in the present simple performed well on this question.

Question 5: 'It was still dark when they set off.' Write a story that begins with these words.

This question was a fairly popular although there was sometimes a lack of understanding of the phrasal verb in the question. Most answers followed on from the prompt well with stories starting in darkness. Candidates who were able to use the different past tenses with accuracy wrote good responses and there was some excellent vocabulary seen in the stronger answers. However, many candidates either wrote in a mix of present and past simple or wrote in a range of past tenses: simple, continuous and perfect, but without any consistency or accuracy. This made stories difficult to follow and understand at times.

Question 6: Your school is setting up a students' website. What do you think should be included on the website, and why?

Very few candidates chose to answer this question and some of those who did chose to write their answers as a narrative. These were not successful and did not answer the question as it had been set. Those who did address the content clearly were able to use specific vocabulary and showed a good understanding of the topic. Only the strongest candidates were able to use appropriate structures in their answers.

Question 7: Do you think that enjoying a job is more important than how much it pays? Give reasons for your opinions.

There were few answers to this question but those candidates who did choose it often answered well. There were some very mature and clearly thought out responses which showed that planning had taken place. Ideas were clearly organised and suitable paragraphing made the strongest answers very cohesive. These candidates were able to show their knowledge of language of contrast and comparison. There was often a range of different viewpoints expressed. A few weaker candidates attempted this question and usually these answers were unplanned and often candidates ran out of ideas. Some of these answers were therefore very short, often under 150 words, which meant that candidates were unable to demonstrate a range of structures and vocabulary. Other weaker answers were repetitive and so lacked coherence.

Question 8: How is life in the city different from life in the countryside? Where would you prefer to live, and why?

Although few candidates answered this question, there were some very good, mature, well-considered responses. These candidates reflected on multiple aspects of life: social, economic, environmental and practical. Most candidates decided on a preference but some stated that there were advantages and disadvantages to both, and this was acceptable. In this question in particular, some very good vocabulary was used appropriately to good effect.

Question 9: Using the picture, write in any way about the ideas it suggests to you.

This question was very popular and a large number of candidates chose to write stories about a family outing. There were some strong answers where candidates wrote about the family as a unit, the importance of family time and spending time with their family in general. Most responses were narratives. As with other narratives, many candidates were not able to use past tenses and time adverbials accurately and there was a lot of repetition in the structures and the vocabulary used. The weakest candidates produced a list of sentences describing the picture in the present tense but did not attempt to make these into a full response. Candidates should be reminded that if they select **Question 9**, they should write a coherent essay in, for example, story, discussion, or descriptive form.