

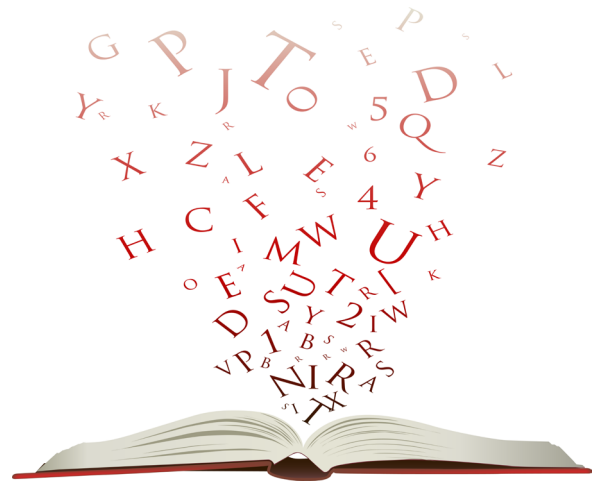


Cambridge Assessment  
International Education

# Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 2

## Cambridge O Level English Language 1123

For examination from 2024



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## Introduction

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These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge International ahead of the examination in 2024 to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge O Level English Language. We have selected questions from Specimen Paper 2, Questions 1, 3 and 4.

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could be obtained. There is also a list of common mistakes and guidance for candidates for each question.

The specimen materials are available to download from the [School Support Hub](#)

**2024 Specimen Paper 02**

**2024 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 02**

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the [School Support Hub](#)

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## Details of the assessment

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The syllabus for Cambridge O Level English Language 1123 is available at [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)

### Paper 2 – Writing

Written paper, 2 hours, 50 marks

Candidates answer **two** questions, one from section A and one from section B.

The texts are printed on the question paper.

Dictionaries must **not** be used.

#### Section A Directed Writing (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** compulsory question.

Candidates read one or two texts totalling approximately 400–450 words in length. They use, develop and evaluate the information in the text(s) to create a discursive/argumentative/ persuasive speech, email, report, letter or article.

Candidates write about 250–350 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (15 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

This question also tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks):

- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

#### Section B Composition (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of four: two descriptive and two narrative.

Candidates develop and write a composition.

Candidates write about 350–450 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (25 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

#### **Descriptive:**

A descriptive piece of writing describes a person, place or situation (including atmosphere) in detail so that the reader can picture it.

#### **Narrative:**

A narrative piece of writing tells a story containing a sequence of connected events which may be real or imaginary.

## Section A: Directed Writing

Read **both** texts and answer **Question 1**.

### Text A

Amira, 42 years

I've never understood why people are so keen to travel to other countries when there is so much to see in their native lands. Very few of us really know our own countries, preferring instead to hop on a fuel-guzzling aeroplane and travel thousands of miles to far-flung lands for our vacations. And what greets us when we land? Paying ridiculously high prices to enter crowded tourist attractions and then getting ripped off in restaurants by paying twice as much as locals for the same food. I believe in the staycation – taking a holiday closer to home. What better way to understand your own country's history and traditions than by holidaying there and seeing them for yourself? It's eco-friendly, and even more so if you don't use a car: why not try a combination of public transport, cycling and even walking! If you're on a low budget, stay with friends and family. It's so easy for us to get bored and fail to appreciate where we live – think about all the beautiful and interesting places you haven't seen that are within easy reach. How many of us can claim that we really know where we come from? Having a holiday with trips to historical sites and landmarks of interest will allow you to gain knowledge about your own culture. So, go on! Have a great vacation and reduce your carbon footprint at the same time.

### Text B

Li Ping, 23 years

It's human nature to want to see and try new things. For young people, travelling to other countries opens their eyes to how fascinating and varied the world is. Travelling is educational: you can practise a language, learn about different cultures and attitudes, try new and exotic foods. Be brave and step outside your comfort zone! I went travelling after my A Levels, and I can honestly say it changed me as a person. I had to live on a really tight budget but had opportunities to do amazing things and see places that were breathtakingly beautiful. I also made lots of new friends along the way from different countries; we learnt so much from each other, mostly that we had far more similarities than differences! Travelling made me realise I had been too caught up with owning all the right stuff when in reality my needs were very simple. I now spend my money on experiences not things. Travelling taught me that you don't have to pay to watch a sunset, enjoy great company, or hike through a forest, and you can survive with what you can carry on your back. It made me grow up and helped me become a much nicer person, as well. I'd advise all young people to get out and see the world. It's smaller than you think!

## Question 1

**Write a magazine article** for young people about the advantages and disadvantages of travelling to other countries.

In your article you should:

- evaluate the ideas and opinions in **both** texts
- give your own views, based on what you have read in the texts about the advantages and disadvantages of travelling to other countries.

Base your article on what you have read in **both** texts but be careful to use your own words.

Address both of the bullet points.

Begin your article with a suitable headline.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.** [25]

## Specimen answer (1)

*Do you have a taste for travel?*

*There are those who suggest that travelling within your own country is just as valuable as a trip abroad, without many of the downsides that can be associated with international travel. For example, some people may consider that the extortionate cost of travel to other countries is an unnecessary expense, preferring instead to opt for a staycation. It is true that many of us live in a country our whole lives without truly exploring all it has to offer. Do you really need to travel to America to take on Route 66 when we have the Karakoram Highway (officially one of the world's greatest road trips) right here on our doorstep? And it's not just road-trippers who will find something to entertain them closer to home. Pakistan is rich in culture and history, not to mention home to some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. Staying closer to home also has benefits for the environment; choosing to travel by public transport, bike or on foot helps reduce your carbon footprint as well as saving you money.*

*Having said this, others suggest that travel broadens the mind and that you don't need to spend a lot of money to have a life-changing trip. A growing number of young people choose to travel during their gap year, participating in charity projects or activity programmes. This not only keeps costs low but allows participants to experience a country as one of the locals, gaining insight that would be impossible as a tourist. Its also a great way to make new friends!*

*There are clearly some drawbacks of traveling abroad, but the ability of travel to develop a person's character and expose them to life experiences they can't get at home can't be denied. To any young people out there considering a trip abroad, I would encourage you to take some time to explore your own country first – this way, you will be prepared for all an international trip can bring and will ensure that you make the best memories.*

**Mark for Reading = 10 out of 10**

**Mark for Writing = 14 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 24 out of 25**

### Examiner comment

#### Reading

The response has a total of 345 words, and has addressed both the bullet points, selecting a wide range of relevant ideas and opinions from both texts, and analysing, evaluating and developing the chosen content in a way that clearly fulfils all elements of the task. The response is focused and relevant with all content directly relating to the task. Overall, the response fulfils all the criteria within the top level for reading.

#### Writing

This is an effective response which considers both the advantages and disadvantages of travelling abroad assimilating ideas from the texts and developing these well with own opinions. The response adopts an appropriate tone and register for the purpose and audience from the outset with a suitable, lively headline supplied and the use of the rhetorical question used effectively to engage the reader's interest. Use of the additional rhetorical question within the body of the text, as well as the frequent use of direct address demonstrates consistent awareness of audience throughout the response.

A wide range of well-constructed sentences is used accurately, with simple, compound and complex structures used effectively to secure reader engagement. The response uses a wide range of vocabulary precisely and effectively including examples such as 'extortionate', 'insight' and 'denied'.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar are highly accurate in this response despite slips such as the misspelling of 'truely', the missing apostrophe in 'Its', and the omission of 'on' preceding 'foot'. To achieve a mark in the top band, a response does not need to be entirely error-free and as the slips here do not impede communication, this response is awarded a top-level mark.



**Specimen answer (2)*****Advantages and disadvantages of travelling abroad***

*We all enjoy going on holiday, but do we really need to travel to other countries to have a great experience? There are clearly advantages and disadvantages to travelling abroad and before booking your next trip it is worth taking some time to think about these.*

*Firstly, a huge advantage of travelling abroad is that it is educational. You can learn a lot from travelling to another country. For example, you can learn historical facts about the place you are visiting or about the geography of the country. Learning these things helps to improve your general knowledge and will also help you back in school. As well as helping you to learn about the world, travelling to other countries can also help you to appreciate the beauty of our planet. You don't need to spend a lot of money either as some of the most spectacular sights are free.*

*Of course, there are also disadvantages to travelling abroad. The most obvious disadvantage is the impact on the environment. Flying to other countries increases your carbon footprint and this is not good for the planet. Going on holiday in your own country avoids this because you can choose more eco-friendly ways to travel such as cycling or walking. Staying closer to home for your vacation can also give you time to spend with your friends and family, relaxing and enjoying experiences together. I went to visit my grandparents for the last school vacation. We played board games, walked to the local park, and spent time talking about their lives. My grandmother told me about how she met my grandad which is a story I hadn't heard before. This was a lot of fun, as I didn't realise how young they were when they first met.*

*So, you don't need to travel to other countries to have a good holiday. It is possible to have a great holiday in your own country spending time with your family, enjoying the local sites and in doing so, protecting our planet.*

**Mark for Reading = 6 out of 10**

**Mark for Writing = 10 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 16 out of 25**

## Examiner comment

### Reading

This 342-word response identifies sufficient ideas from both texts, focusing on the educational benefits of travelling abroad and appreciation of the beauty in the world from Text 2, set against the negative environmental impact of air travel and the benefit, when holidaying at home, of being able to spend time with family from Text 1. The response is reasonably focused, although the addition of the personal anecdote in the third paragraph signifies a deviation from the task.

This is a top Level 3 response.

### Writing

The content of this response is developed and effective, with development of the ideas taken from the two texts, for example including the suggestion of how knowledge gained from travel would be beneficial in school. The response is securely organised, with discourse markers signposting movement from one idea to the next. Ideas from the texts are suitably combined and the response is paragraphed effectively.

A straightforward headline is provided, and the use of the rhetorical question and direct address indicate purpose and support appropriate tone.

A range of sentence structures is used accurately, including some complex ones and the range of vocabulary employed is effective with examples such as 'educational', 'appreciate' and 'impact' showing some ambition.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar is accurate with occasional errors which do not mar the quality of communication. Although accurate, the response is not error free, with misspellings of 'spectaculer' and 'ovious', as well as confusion between the homophones 'sites' and 'sights'. Although full stops, commas and the question mark are used accurately, the range of punctuation could have been extended.

This is a low Level 4 response.

**Specimen answer (3)**

There are advantages and disadvantages of travelling to other countries. For example there is so much to see in their native land. I had taken a trip with my family to Khewra salt mine. I appreciate it is beautiful. It helped me to learn about history of salt. I have also visit Lahore Fort and Badshahi mosque and my family were very happy to see the history. The building are beautiful. It is good to see the beautiful places in Pakistan and it is fun to spend time with my family. I had the best time and I hope you can see somewhere beautiful like this too.

Also going to another country cost a lot of money because you have to travel in a airplane and this is bad for environment because of the fuel-guzzling aeroplane and it can make the climate change worse, you need to think about this if you are travelling abroad. The climate change refers to the global warming which is the temperature on earth is getting hotter day by day and this is the biggest problem for the planet. The global warming is caused by carbon dioxide, reducing the amount of carbon dioxide can slow down the global warming and make the climate change better. Everybody can make a difference to the global warming if they make a change and this will be better for the planet. It cost a lot of money for my family to travel abroad so it is better for us to stay in Pakistan for a holiday. When you travelling abroad it costs a lot of money to buy food and hotels as well as you have to pay high prices to go into the tourist attractions which means it is too expensive. This is biggest disadvantage of travelling to other countries. I think you should stay at home instead of travelling to other countries because there is lots to see and it is bad for the environment and costs a lot of money.

**Mark for Reading = 4 out of 10**

**Mark for Writing = 5 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 9 out of 25**

## Examiner comment

### Reading

The 335-word response identifies some relevant points from Text 1 and is sometimes focused in its development of these. However, it does not engage with Text 2 and, particularly in the development of the idea of the environmental concerns associated with international travel, it loses focus on the question.

This response fulfils Level 2 criteria.

### Writing

The content of this response is straightforward with occasional development. There is an attempt to organise and structure ideas from Text 1, with the initial paragraph focusing the idea that there is much to see in one's own country and the second paragraph considering both the cost and environmental impact of travelling abroad. The opening and concluding sentences show awareness of purpose, however the required headline is not provided, and both tone and register are uneven, with phrases such as 'I hope you can see somewhere beautiful like this too.' less suitable for a magazine article.

Simple sentence structures are used accurately but, in the first paragraph, these are repetitive. The vocabulary used is simple and repetition of words such as 'beautiful' and the use of phrases from the text ('there is so much to see in their native land' and 'fuel-guzzling aeroplane') that limits reader engagement.

Spelling of simple vocabulary is generally accurate, with misspellings of more complex choices such as 'apprehiate', 'tempreture' and 'carbendioxide'. Sentence separation is marked with generally accurate use of full stops, however there is some comma splicing in the second paragraph. Grammar is generally accurate although there are some tense and agreement errors.

Overall, this response fulfils criteria for Level 2.

## Common errors and general guidance for candidates

- Features of the text type should be included, for example, for an article, a suitable headline should be supplied, and for a letter an appropriate salutation and valediction would be required.
- When referencing ideas and opinions in the texts, candidates may use phrases like 'Some may say ...' or 'Others might consider ...' rather than '[Name] says ...' or 'The voice in Text A suggests ...'
- When evaluating ideas and opinions from the stimulus texts, candidates should consider how sensible/ convincing the arguments presented are, evidence of bias (thinking carefully at the given age/ occupation, etc. of the writer can be helpful for this aspect), how well supported the argument is (with evidence), reference to others' viewpoints and use of language.
- Candidates should carefully consider the audience and purpose of their response and adopt a suitable tone and register accordingly.
- The recommended indicative word count of 250–350 words is important and it is better for candidates to remain within this.
- Candidates should consider carefully the structure of their response, paragraphing their writing and using connectives and transition signals (for example, using words/ phrases such as, *Firstly, In addition, Conversely, Similarly* etc.) to ensure their writing is effectively linked.
- Candidates should ensure that they respond to both bullet points, evaluating the ideas and opinions in both texts and giving their own views on the issue presented.
- It would be beneficial to candidates to underline/ highlight ideas and opinions in each text before beginning to write their response as this will help focus on the first bullet point of the question and ensure a suitable range of ideas and opinions are covered.
- Although candidates are expected to base their response on the ideas and opinions in both texts, it is important that they use their own words when writing about these.

For further information about common mistakes made by candidates, please refer to the examiner reports which are published after the first exam series in 2024 on the [School Support Hub](#)

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## Section B: Composition

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### Question 3

#### Descriptive writing

- 3 Describe the feelings you experienced leading up to a challenging event **and** the feelings you experienced afterwards. (The challenging event could be sporting, academic or any other activity.) [25]

#### Specimen answer (1)

9am.

*I feel sick; I can't do this.*

*As I stand in the corridor furiously trying to cram in last minute revision, the fear eating at my stomach prevents me from being able to concentrate. Two years of English studies have hurtled by and now it is time for the final reckoning. The last exam. One last test which will determine my fate: pass and I can head to university; fail and a future in fast food awaits.*

9.15am

*Convinced I have forgotten everything that I have ever been taught (and resigned to imminent failure), I shuffle into the hall. Why do I feel like a death row prisoner walking to their doom?*

9.20am

*Taking my allocated seat right in the centre of the room, I'm exposed. My heart is pounding like an inmate determined to break free of their prison. It's a furnace in the exam hall and the backs of my legs stick to the uncomfortable plastic chair. The air is heavy with tension. Sweat blooms through the back of my shirt and my tie is stifling me.*

9.25am

*Silence. The only sounds are the tick of the clock and the tap of the invigilator's shoes as she moves among the desks. My paper is slid onto the desk. The urge to be sick intensifies. Shaking, I fill in my details in the required spaces. My hand feels tight; my writing is already a mess.*

9.29am

*The clock sluggishly inches nearer to 9.30am. I don't want to open the paper, but simultaneously need to know what is inside. The anxious anticipation is almost unbearable. The minute hand crawls towards the 6 and with one final, protracted click signals the start of the exam.*

*"You may begin."*

\* \* \*

*“You have five minutes remaining.”*

*After 2 hours of non-stop writing, as the invigilator gives the five-minute warning, I finish my final sentence. Closing the paper, I want to cry. The emotion of the last two hours seems determined to spill over and I take some steadying breaths.*

*As I hand over my paper, a wave of relief washes over me as I realise that my exams are complete. I have done my best and feel the paper has gone as well as it could. The theme I revised the most thoroughly came up and I feel lucky.*

*Walking out into the warm embrace of the sunshine, a whole summer free of work stretching ahead, a glow of blissful contentment envelopes me; the joy I feel in this moment as I listen to my friends' excited chatter is unrivaled. Freedom is finally ours.*

*I no longer feel sick; I have done it!*

**Mark for Content and structure = 10 out of 10**

**Mark for Style and accuracy = 15 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 25 out of 25**

### Examiner comment

#### Content and structure

This is a consistently effective response to the task which uses a wide range of features, including sensory description, simile, metaphor, personification, and alliteration, to convey the required feelings. The response is well-balanced, covering both parts of the question, with structural devices (including the use of time and short sentences) used effectively to build a feeling of tension in the first half of the response and the absence of these conveying the sense of freedom signalled by the end of the exam. The structure is clear, with the repeated sentence structure and image bookending the response electively to convey a sense of completion and showing clear evidence of planning.

The response is well balanced, considering both aspects of the question, the slightly shorter second half of the response deliberately emphasising the flood of relief being described following the event.

This response fulfils all the criteria of Level 5 for content and structure.

#### Style and accuracy

The response uses well-constructed simple, compound, and complex sentences accurately, manipulating sentence structures for specific effect for example, the one-word sentence ‘Silence’ which emphasises the all-encompassing nature of the lack of sound and, in the penultimate paragraph, the long sentence which reflects the expanse of time lying ahead. The vocabulary chosen is wide and ambitious with examples such as ‘blooms’ intentionally selected to convey precise meaning. The use of spelling and grammar is highly accurate with only occasional slips (such as the misspelling of ‘iminent’ and ‘unrivaled’) caused by ambition which do not alter the response’s overall high level of accuracy.

A wide range of punctuation is used with the response crafted to ensure the opportunity to include a colon, semi-colons, brackets, speech marks, a question mark and exclamation mark demonstrating the ability to use these accurately.

For style and accuracy, this is a response at the top of Level 5.

**Specimen answer (2)**

*I am scared. I am standing backstage. It is the biggest night of the school year, the talent show. I have been preparing for weeks. I have spent hours after school rehearsing and perfecting the performance. This is the first time I have performed in the show and I am feeling really nervous.*

*Around me, there is lots of hustle and bustle. Students are putting last minute touches to their makeup, doing vocal warmups, and adjusting their costumes. The music teacher is walking around with a clipboard, checking that everyone is present and ready to perform. There is excited chatter all around as everyone waits for the start of the show. Unlike everyone around me, I am feeling too sick to be excited. Why am I doing this to myself? I adore singing and enjoy nothing more than belting out my favourite numbers in a car or bathroom karaoke session, but this is different. This time there are people watching. This time I will be judged. I look at my watch. It is five minutes until show time. My heart is now pounding in my chest, my hands are sweaty, and I am shaking.*

*On stage, I heard the headmaster welcome everyone to the talent show and before I know it I heard my name being announced as the first competitor. Taking a deep breathe, I hesitantly walked out onto the stage and into the blinding spotlight.*

*Taking my place in front of the microphone, I hear the first notes of my song. I close my eyes and start to sing.*

*What seems like only a few moments later, I sing the final note and my performance is over. There is a moment of silence. I slowly open my eyes. Suddenly, the audience are on their feet, clapping and cheering loudly. I realise that my performance went well, and a smile lights up my face like the sun. Stepping to the side of the microphone, I take a slow bow. This feels incredible!*

*As I walk off the stage, I am greeted by the enthusiastic congratulations of the other students. I can't stop smiling. I feel like jumping for joy and the relief is huge. My heart rate and breathing are beginning to slow down, and I am so excited with how my performance went. I have no idea if I have done enough to win, and there are lots more competitors to take to the stage before the end of the evening, but no matter what the result is, I am proud that I pushed myself to do something which scared me.*

**Mark for Content and structure = 7 out of 10**

**Mark for Style and accuracy = 10 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 17 out of 25**

## Examiner comment

### Content and structure

The response is 433 words, producing a mostly effective answer to the task which uses a range of descriptive features to good effect. Sensory description is used effectively to convey feelings with this mirrored before and after the event, indicating careful planning of the response. The use of alliteration and simile contribute to the effectiveness of the piece.

The cyclical structure of the response (beginning with the image of being scared in the initial paragraph and returning to this in the final sentence) is a choice made for deliberate effect, while in the second paragraph short sentences are used to heighten tension and reinforce the feelings described.

The response is fairly well balanced, focusing on both aspects of the task with slightly more detail given for the feelings before the event. Paragraphing is effective with conditional clauses used effectively to link from one to the next.

This is a low Level 4 response.

### Style and accuracy

The response uses a range of sentence structures accurately, including some complex ones. The range of vocabulary employed is effective with some repetition ('excited') while more ambitious choices employed to convey precise shades of meaning, including 'perfecting', 'adore', 'belting' and 'enthusiastic'. There are occasional spelling errors, including 'ajusting', 'differant' and 'breathe' (which should read 'breath'), however overall spelling is accurate.

Punctuation is accurately used throughout, including the demarcation of sentence separation with full stops, the correct punctuation of the rhetorical question and the use of the exclamation mark to emphasise extreme emotion. Commas are used accurately to separate items in lists and to separate the clauses in complex sentences, however the use of commas in compound sentences is not always accurate. Tense and agreement are generally secure throughout with occasional slips (for example, in paragraph three).

For style and accuracy, this response fulfils the criteria for a low Level 4 mark.



**Specimen answer (3)**

“Ali, hurry up we’re on in a minuet” shouted Rashid. “I don’t think I can do this Ali” I replied. “Don’t be silly we have been training for months” Rashid said. I was in the boys changing room. I was feeling sick. We had been preparing for the game for months, but I still didn’t feel ready. The other team were the best in the city. I knew that we didn’t have much chance of beating them. I was the best player on our team and everyone thought that I would win the match for us but I didn’t feel ready, I felt nervous. This was our best chance to win the trophie and I didn’t want to let the team down. We had started training six months ago. Every night we came to the school football pitch and worked on our skills. It was tiring and hard to manage with school at the same time, but we all did it because we really wanted to win.

Now it was the day of the big game and I was too nervous to leave the changing rooms. After Rashid spoke to me I felt a bit better and decided that I should go out and play with my team. I tied up my boots and followed Rashid out onto the pitch for the big game. I was so nervous I was shaking like a leaf when we got to the pitch and my heart was beating really fast. I was sweating and I had a headache. I wished I was somewhere else but it was to late now because my team were counting on me.

Phwwwwwhht! The whistle went for the start of the game and I was feeling better. I ran and tackled and even had a couple of shots on goal, but I didn’t score. In the second half of the game I finally scored and at the end of the game we had won by one goal.

Phwwwwwhht! When the final whistle went, everyone on my team came running over and jumped on me because I was the one who had won the game for us. Everything that I was worried about before the game wasn’t true and now we were the champions. It was the best feeling. I was really exited and cheered with the rest of my team. I couldn’t stop smiling as everyone hugged me. I was really happy that I had done my job and won the match for us. I suppose you never know what you can do until you try.

**Mark for Content and structure = 5 out of 10**

**Mark for Style and accuracy = 7 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 12 out of 25**

## Examiner comment

### Content and structure

This 428-word response is sometimes effective. Both aspects of the task have been attempted, however there is a lack of balance between the two parts, with the feelings in the lead up to the event covered in much greater detail than the feelings experienced afterwards. The use of direct speech at the outset of the response introduces a narrative, rather than descriptive, element and there is fluctuation between narration and description throughout the piece. Some descriptive features are incorporated including use of the senses, alliteration and simile. The structure is reasonably clear, with generally accurate paragraphing.

Organisationally, the response initially describes the required feelings leading up to the event, losing focus slightly in its consideration of previous training at the end of the first paragraph, before returning to the given subject in paragraphs three and five. Some structural choices are made for deliberate effect, specifically the use of the sound of the whistle to add liveliness and a sense of realism to the final two paragraphs.

This response fulfils the content and structure criteria for low Level 3.

### Style and accuracy

The response uses simple sentences accurately and attempts complex ones with some success, for example, at the start of the final paragraph. Where compound sentences are used, the comma preceding the coordinating conjunction is sometimes missing.

A straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary is used, but repetition of some choices (for example, 'nervous' and 'best') indicates some limitation. Spelling of straightforward vocabulary is generally accurate with occasional errors including, 'minuet', 'trophie', 'finaly' and 'exited'. Sentence separation is marked accurately, and commas are sometimes used correctly. Speech marks are used; however the punctuation of direct speech is not secure. Exclamation marks are used to effectively to emphasise the sound of the whistle. Control of tense is secure throughout.

This response fulfils the style and accuracy criteria for low Level 3.

## Common errors and general guidance for candidates

- Where direct speech is used, attention should be given to accurate punctuation.
- Where a descriptive writing question has two branches (indicated by the word **and** in bold) it is essential that candidates respond to both parts of the question.
- Candidates are reminded that descriptive writing describes a person, place or situation in detail so that the reader can picture it, while narrative writing tells a story containing a sequence of connected events which may be real or imaginary. It is important that candidates ensure that the type of writing they produce matches the question type chosen.
- Correct punctuation (full stops, commas) and a more varied use of punctuation (colons, semi-colons, and exclamation marks) will help candidates to raise the level of their response.
- The use of a wide range of vocabulary is to be encouraged, however it is important that where this is used by candidates, it is done so precisely and accurately.
- The use of descriptive features (such as metaphor, simile, use of the five senses, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, etc.) will help candidates create a consistently effective response.
- When selecting a descriptive writing question focused on a place or situation, candidates should focus on creating a sense of atmosphere, moving from overview to focus on specific details and striving to convey a sense of how it would feel to be in that place or situation at the specified times.
- If the question requires description of people (rather than an experience), it is important to move beyond description of physical appearance and focus also on personality using well-chosen adjectives and exemplifying these with descriptions of the person's behaviour/ actions.
- Adopting a clear, well-balanced structure and making structural choices for deliberate effect will help candidates achieve marks in the top level for content and structure.

For further information about common mistakes made by candidates, please refer to the examiner reports which are published after the first exam series in 2024 on the [School Support Hub](#)

## Question 4

### Narrative writing

4 Write a story in which something unexpected happens at an important school event. [25]

### Specimen answer (1)

The whole school had been eagerly anticipating the event for months and finally the day had arrived where we would take on our fiercest rivals, Greenbank High, in the inter-area football championship. Preparations had been underway for the whole of the last term: bi-weekly skills practises, conditioning sessions in the gym and warm-up matches against local teams. We had done all we could; we were ready.

The day of the match brought with it a festival atmosphere; spectators flanked the pitch, the hum of excited chatter and the fizz of intense rivalry bubbling among them. The grass was perfectly manicured, the lines solidly chalked and the goalposts wearing a fresh lick of crisp white paint.

From his vantage point under a gazebo placed level with the centre line, the PE teacher's voice carried through his megaphone, "How are we doing, Bay View?" he called to the delighted hoots of the home supporters. "Welcome to the final of the regional football competition. Kick off will be in 10 minutes, so let's hear you make some noise for our boys – the Bay View First XI!"

We jogged onto the pitch, to the uproarious sound of our friends and family giving shouts of encouragement. Forming a tight huddle in our defending half of the pitch, our captain, Adnan had a few last-minute inspirational words before we broke away to take up our start positions. On the opposite side of the pitch, our mirrors, the Greenbank team, performed the same ritual.

There was a moment's pause as the two teams stared off against each other, the warm breeze ruffling hair and shirts as the crowd momentarily fell silent in anticipation of kick off.

Suddenly, from nowhere, a blur tore onto the pitch. It headed straight for the ball awaiting the first kick on the centre line, grabbed it and made a dash towards the trees at the edge of the school ground.

"Somebody catch that monkey!" yelled the coach. The crowd screeched with delight and amusement as the furry beast tore across the pitch, ball grasped tightly in its leathery grip. Clearly without thinking, Adnan gave chase, quickly gaining precious metres in his pursuit of the primate. As the monkey reached the fence at the edge of the school field and effortlessly swung itself up and into the nearest tree, Adnan made a heroic dive, fingertips just grazing

*its tail. The crowd erupted in whoops of mirth. Adnan lay on the ground, chest heaving, with the monkey taunting him from the safety of the canopy.*

*This was certainly not the start either team (or the spectators) were expecting, but no matter what the final score, this match would definitely go down in school history.*

**Mark for Content and structure = 10 out of 10**

**Mark for Style and accuracy = 15 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 25 out of 25**

### Examiner comment

#### Content and structure

The response is 450 words and is a consistently effective answer to the task which uses a wide range of narrative features to build tension and create a sense of climax. Use of devices such as onomatopoeia ('hum'), alliteration ('pursuit of the primate') and personification ('goalposts wearing a fresh lick of crisp white paint') help to build setting and advance plot, while the use of direct speech in conjunction with appropriate reporting clauses adds a sense of dynamism to the narrative. The structure is clear, well balanced, and carefully organised for deliberate effect. Beginning with exposition, the narrative moves through rising action, carefully builds anticipation before introducing the unexpected conflict.

The climax, falling action and conclusion which links back to the question indicate that this is a carefully crafted narrative which engages and sustains the reader's attention throughout.

This response satisfies all the criteria of Level 5.

#### Style and accuracy

A wide range of well-constructed sentences are used accurately, including complex sentences, which fulfils the first criteria in the top level. The response precisely and effectively uses a wide range of ambitious vocabulary with adjectives and verb/adverb combinations chosen to convey precise meaning, for example, 'fiercest', 'leathery' and 'grasped tightly' among others.

Throughout the response, complex vocabulary choices such as 'uproarious' and 'inspirational' are spelled correctly. While there are occasional errors ('rivalry' and 'ruffeling') these are slips which do not detract from the meaning or flow of the piece and, as a response does not need to be flawless to achieve a top mark, do not affect the overall level of the response.

A wide range of punctuation marks are used accurately throughout the response. As well as the accurate use of full stops, commas, a question and exclamation marks, more complex choices such as a colon, semi-colons and brackets are used. In addition, direct speech is punctuated accurately. Control of tense and agreement is also secure throughout.

This response satisfies all the criteria of Level 5 for style and accuracy.

**Specimen answer (2)**

My name is Fasil. I am sixteen years old. I go to school at Rockhampton SS. I have always loved acting. When I heard that there was going to be a school play, I knew I had to audition. It was going to be a performance of Macbeth. I really wanted to play Lady Macbeth. I was nervous because I knew that there were lots of talented other girls. But when the cast list was put on the notice board, my name was right there, right next to the character I had been dreaming of playing.

Backstage it is chaos. Everyone trying to get into their costumes, do their make-up and do one last run through of their lines. This was the night when all our hard work would pay off and we would get to show our friends and family what we had been spending all our time working on. The atmosphere was exciting. I was nervous but I couldn't wait to step onto the stage. We could hear the hum of conversation coming from in front of the curtains as the audience took their seats.

"Break a leg" I whispered to Sanuktha, Rachna and Amina. The speakers in the theatre played the sound of thunder and they cackled onto the stage as the three witches. The first four scenes wizzed by in a blur and suddenly it was time for my entrance. I picked up my prop letter and I walked out on to stage reading. "They met me" I was totally in the moment and focusing on giving the best performance I could. I was loving my moment in the spot light. Adil came on stage and said that Macbeth was on his way and then it was time for my big moment. The spot light shined down on me. I took a moment and then began "The raven himself"

Bang! Suddenly the stage went completely dark. I stopped.

What was happening? Should I carry on? I was frozen not sure what to do next. I looked to the side of the stage for help, but it was dark there too. I waited for what seemed like forever before the headmaster came on stage carrying a torch. "Please accept my apologies ladies and gentlemen. There has been a power cut and we are working to get the generator up and running as soon as possible". Well this was unexpected, but as the saying goes, the show must go on. A few moments later, the generator sprung into life. I took a deep breath and carried on.

**Mark for Content and structure = 7 out of 10**

**Mark awarded for Style and accuracy = 8 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 15 out of 25**

## Examiner comment

### Content and structure

The response is 433 words and is a mostly effective answer to the task. Some narrative features are used with a suitable introduction establishing both character and setting and rising action building towards a suitably unexpected climax. The first-person narrative voice is used consistently throughout helping to engage the reader's interest.

The structure is mostly clear, with slight confusion regarding the temporal shift at the start of paragraph two causing some uncertainty. Despite this, the response is well organised and progresses logically with some choices made for deliberate effect, specifically the use of a short paragraph for the moment of the blackout and the repetition of rhetorical questions to indicate the character's confusion regarding the situation.

This response fulfils the criteria for a low Level 4 for content and structure.

### Style and accuracy

This response uses most sentence structures accurately, sometimes attempting complex ones with success, for example in the first paragraph where a number of simple sentences are followed by an accurate complex one. A straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary is used with occasional more ambitious phrasing such as 'hum of conversation', 'cackled onto the stage' and 'sprung into life'.

Straightforward punctuation is used, with full stops marking sentence separation and commas used to separate dependent and independent clauses in a complex sentence and preceding the coordinating conjunctions in some compound sentences. Speech marks are used to indicate direct speech, however commas preceding this are omitted as is the required punctuation inside the closing speech mark. Straightforward spellings are accurate, with errors seen in less frequently used words including 'cayos', 'wizzed', 'enterence' and 'generator'. Overall control of tense is secure, with slight confusion between past and present tense in the second paragraph.

This response fulfils the criteria for mid-Level 3.

## Specimen answer (3)

*The sun was shinning. There were lots of people on the school feild. The stalls was all decoriated in bright colours. The parents were trying to sell the cakes and other things. There was a table with a game where you can win a jar of sweets if you can guess how many bright colours sweets there is in the jar. There's music and everyone was having a nice time. The event was to raise money for the school. I was helping with the stall where you had to throw a ring over a peg and if you got the ring over the peg then you win a prize like a book or a pen. I have made the game in my spare time and painted the pegs with bright colours and it looked good and lots of people want to play my game and I get a lot of money when they play the game. It started at 2pm and finished at 5pm it was already 3pm and everything was good. Lots of people had tried to win a price on my stall and I was having a nice time talking to everyone. The sky was blue and the sun was shinning. The stall selling the cold drinks and ice creams got a lot of money. When we had been talking about the event we had talked about what drinks to sell and my friend had said that "we need to sell coffee" but I had said that "the cold drinks would be better because the weather will be hot on that day" my friend didn't agree but my other friends had said that I was right so they told him "the*

*coffee is a drink for the winter and it is the summer so we will sell the cold drinks'. I was happy that they agree with me. Everyone was having nice time buy the cold drinks.*

*Suddently I heard a rumbly noise. The blue sky had suddently clouds in it. The wind started that was cold. Everyone was wearing t-shirts and the shorts because it was sunny and now they were worried because it is cold. Suddently, big raindrops were dripping in the sky and everyone is getting wet. They started to run under the stalls canopys to keep from getting wet then there was a big crash and a lightening was in the sky. It was unexpected that it would rain and be thundering and lightening because it was full sun before. After 10 minutes it stopped thundery and lightning and the sun is shinning out so everyone was having a nice day again.*

**Mark for Content and structure = 4 out of 10**

**Mark for Style and accuracy = 5 out of 15**

**Total mark awarded = 9 out of 25**

### Examiner comment

#### Content and structure

The response is a 435-word adequate response to the task which attempts to convey what is thought and felt. The response is adequately focused on the task, with the unexpected storm at a school fundraising event the climax of the narrative. The structure is occasionally clear, with an introduction which attempts to convey the atmosphere and purpose of the event before describing the unexpected storm and its effect.

Towards the end of the first paragraph, the narrative loses some focus in its description of the conversation, prior to the event, between the narrator and his/her friends regarding beverage choice for the event, but there is some attempt at organisation to achieve effects with the use of short sentences to signal the surprising speed with which the weather changes.

There is an attempt at paragraphing and the start of a new paragraph at the moment the storm breaks emphasising the shift in atmosphere. This response satisfies the criteria for the top of Level 2.

#### Style and accuracy

Simple sentence structures are generally used accurately, but the repetition of these produces a monotonous effect. The vocabulary chosen is also simple, with repetition of 'bright colours', 'nice' and the misspelled 'suddently' and 'shinning' among others. Demarcation of sentence separation is generally accurate, however this slips towards the end of the first paragraph as the response attempts to include direct speech. Control of tense and agreement is not always secure.

Overall, this response satisfies the criteria for Level 2.



### Common errors and general guidance for candidates

- The correct use of direct and indirect articles is essential at all levels and is vital to ensure the achievement of higher levels.
- Candidates should avoid the use of repetitive sentence structure, using instead a range of simple, compound, and complex sentences accurately.
- Narratives should have a clear beginning, middle and end and should include a sense of climax.
- The consistent use of correct tenses and agreement will help candidates reach the higher levels.
- Taking a little time to plan their response would be beneficial to candidates as this will help them to avoid repetition of ideas and ensure their structure is clear.
- Candidates may adopt the first or third-person voice for their narrative but should be consistent with whichever is chosen throughout their response.
- While the narrative question chosen here is of the 'Write a story in which . . .' format, if candidates choose the question asking them to write a story using a given sentence, this should be integrated convincingly. Pre-prepared essays into which the given sentence is inserted without clear purpose should be avoided.
- When including direct speech, selecting suitable reporting clauses and varying whether these come before, after, or are embedded within, what is said will help to create a more engaging response.
- Leaving time at the end of the examination to proofread their response will ensure that candidates can correct slips and improve the overall accuracy of their writing.

For further information about common mistakes made by candidates, please refer to the examiner reports which are published after the first exam series in 2024 on the [School Support Hub](#)



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