

Cambridge O Level English Language 1123

Summary tasks guidance – Paper 1 Reading Section B

Overview

Question 3(a) is a selective summary task in response to Text B

The purpose of a selective summary task is to inform the reader of just the key information and explicit ideas they need to understand the text. Writing an effective selective summary involves gathering only those ideas from the text that are relevant to answer the question and then organising, reworking and condensing those points to offer a succinct overview. The reader needs to understand the central ideas from the text quickly and efficiently, just by reading the answer.

Question 3(b) is a short opinion-based task in response to Text B

The purpose of an opinion-based task is to demonstrate understanding of a particular attitude or opinion in the text. Writing an effective opinion-based response involves identifying implicit ideas in the text that are related to the perspective or viewpoint in the question and then using and developing those ideas to offer an explanation that answers the question as set.

Writing a selective summary – Paper 1 Question 3(a)

This task assesses skills in **both Reading and Writing** as follows:

Reading:

- **explicit ideas** – show understanding of the information as it is presented in the text and avoid adding personal comments or extending explanations
- **range** – aim to show understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas taken from the whole passage
- **relevance** – pay attention to the focus of the question and make sure that the points written are relevant to that focus
- **selection** – select only the information needed to answer the question and avoid using excess examples or repeating points
- **use** – use the information selected to help the reader understand the central ideas rather than simply repeating or copying sections from the text.

Writing:

- **organisation** – organise the answer logically and helpfully for the reader so that it efficiently communicates the ideas they need to understand
- **appropriate use of a range of own words and/or structures** – help the reader understand the points selected by reworking the language of the original text to communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Writing an opinion-based response – Paper 1 Question 3(b)

This task assesses **Reading** skills. Writing skills are not assessed in this task, although to communicate understanding fully, it is important that ideas are expressed clearly.

Reading:

- **implicit ideas** – consider details and hints in the text to work out the meaning they suggest, e.g. what the attitude or opinion of someone mentioned in the text might be based on the evidence given
- **consistency** – maintain the viewpoint or perspective specified in the question
- **relevance** – the ideas included in the answer should be rooted in the details of the text
- **development** – extend and develop the implicit ideas identified as relevant to make the meaning clear
- **support** – illustrate and support the points by making reference to any key details mentioned in the text.

Tips for writing a selective summary

Before writing a response:

- read the question carefully to highlight the **focus** of the selective summary – the question may ask for only **advantages** of a topic being discussed in the text
- revisit the text to underline and/or make notes of all the potentially relevant ideas, while considering the whole text
- review the ideas selected to check they are relevant, complete and distinct. For example, aim to identify any repeated points or examples of the same thing that could be covered in one over-arching, 'umbrella' point
- organise content to decide in a logical order and/or the best way to group relevant ideas. Numbering the points will help highlight the most efficient route through the answer and cover all of the ideas within the 150 word guidance.

After writing a response:

- read back through the answer to check that the ideas would be clear to anyone who had not read the text. Try to correct any spelling, punctuation or grammar errors that affect meaning
- check that sections have not been copied from the text
- look back at the plan to check all relevant ideas are included.

Tips for writing an opinion-based response

Before writing a response:

- skim read back through the text to identify things that are said about the persona/perspective identified
- circle anything in the text said or done by the persona/people sharing the perspective identified
- consider what can be worked out about attitude or opinion from the evidence you have found.

When writing a response:

- try to think of a way into the role/position. Creating a 'voice' for your persona may help with this
- use the guidance in the question to help frame your answer
- do more than state the opinion, try to offer reasons why and/or offer a more detailed explanation to clearly illustrate the attitude or perspective.

After writing a response:

- read through the answer to check whether any details can be added from the text to further support the points.

Example task

This is an example of a **Paper 1 Question 3(a)** task. The question below is annotated with some guidance for candidates to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This information is not given to candidates in the examination.

Once you have read through **Text B**, read the instructions for Question 3(a).

The **purpose** of the response is to identify and outline only the information you need to answer the question.

The **audience** for the response is an adult who has not read this text.

The response to this question needs to be in the **form** of a summary so the register required should be **formal** and the style **concise**.

This part of the question is the **selective summary**. You will answer this factually and concisely.

Read **Text B, *A night among the trees***, in the insert and answer **Question 3**.

Question 3

(a) Summarise what would appeal most to guests about a stay at the Treehotel, according to Text B.

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form).

Use your own words where appropriate.

Avoid copying long sections of the text.

Your summary should be no more than 150 words.

Paying attention to the guidance for word number will help learners to plan their time in the examination and target the requirements of the question more effectively.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing.

The response to 3(a) is marked for content and for the quality of your writing, so you will need to check and correct your response for accuracy.

Once you have completed your answer for 3(a), read the instructions for Question 3(b).

The guidance will help you to remember that you need to **use your own words** where you can (without changing the meaning) and should **aim to keep your response at no more than 150 words**.

Example task

This is an example of a **Paper 1 Question 3(b)** task. The question below is annotated with some guidance for candidates to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This information is not given to candidates in the examination.

The **purpose** of the response is to show that you have understood a particular perspective (attitude or opinion) suggested in the text.

Question 3(b)

Imagine you are Kent Lindvall, one of the owners of the hotel.

You are interviewed by a local news programme about the effect that hotels are having on the forest environment.

Give your answer to the interviewer's question, using information from the text.

Interviewer's question: Some local people think that your Treehotel might have a negative effect on our forest environment.

What is your opinion and why?

Kent Lindvall's answer:

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The **audience** for the response is the interviewer, so you need to focus on answering just this one question they have asked.

This part of the question is the **opinion-based response**. You will answer **as if you are Kent Lindvall** giving and explaining his opinion in detail.

The response to this question needs to be in the **role** of the persona / from the perspective identified – you should aim to offer a developed answer from this point of view.

Question 3(b) is only marked for content – you need to show that you have can use the relevant details and hints in the text to work out what Kent Lindvall's opinion would be.

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<p>Question 3(a)</p> <p>Staying at the Treehouse hotel is like entering another world. It's the perfect, relaxing escape from the city, with five different and amazing designs of tree house for everyone to enjoy.</p> <p>Inside your private treehouse it is even cosy and warm in winter. Additionally, you can become one with nature and admire the beautiful landscape and wildlife and you're so high up you can even see the birds up close through the window in the ceiling.</p> <p>Finally, you don't have to worry if you don't like bugs and insects, or the impractical side of camping out under the night sky, because you are too high up in the tree for mosquitoes to get you and you have an environmentally friendly toilet.</p> <p>Question 3(b) – Kent Lindvall's answer:</p> <p>I believe that it could actually be beneficial to the environment, it could encourage people who before their stay might not have thought twice about nature and the importance of it to truly open their eyes when they are confronted by the beauty of the forest and realise how important we think it is to preserve what is left of nature as a whole.</p>	<p>1 The candidate has reorganised ideas from the text to begin with a useful overview of four key attractions drawn from different parts of the text (mark scheme points 1, 6 and 10). Note how points related to the range and nature of the treehouse designs have been combined for concision.</p> <p>2 Focus has now moved to the inside of the treehouse. In this section, the candidate is helping the reader understand what might appeal to guests once they were inside the accommodation (mark scheme points 7 and 8 have been skilfully combined here).</p> <p>3 Mark scheme points 2, 4 and 11 are all included together through the idea of enjoying nature.</p> <p>4 The candidate uses formal linking words to move the reader through the information.</p> <p>5 There is a slight blurring of focus here with the content touching on what might not appeal to guests rather than exclusively what would. However, the reference to the impractical side of camping appears an attempt to link guests' potential concerns to the idea of sleeping out at night without threat of being bitten and the eco-friendly toilet facilities (mark scheme points 9 and 13).</p> <p>Reading Level 5: A wide range of relevant ideas are skilfully selected and used.</p> <p>Writing Level 5: Expression is clear, fluent and mostly concise. Some efficient organisation.</p> <p>6 Along with the evidence in the text, the positive effect on the forest environment is clearly demonstrated as Lindvall's attitude from the beginning of this answer.</p> <p>7 The idea of educating the public is covered here (mark scheme bullet 4).</p> <p>8 The Lindvalls' commitment to the forest environment is clearly stated here (mark scheme bullet 4)</p>

*On top of that we at the Treehotel are very mindful in regards to the local ecosystem – we have film to stop birds flying into buildings and do not allow noisy activities like snowmobiles which disturb the peace.*¹⁰

9 The Lindvall's wider commitment to the environment is expressed here (mark scheme bullet 2).

10 Details from the text are used to support that do not allow activities that might pollute or endanger the environment (mark scheme bullet 3).

Reading Level 3 The candidate presents a well-developed and consistent explanation of the relevant perspective, supporting ideas by reference to details from the text.

How the candidate could have improved their answer

Question 3(a)

The candidate has interpreted the purpose of the task as more persuasive than the task itself requires or invites. In effect, they have added a further, unnecessary challenge for themselves. Writing about the guests, rather than to them, might have allowed the candidate to be concise more consistently in this answer. Whilst the word guidance has been kept in mind and excess material avoided, the added challenge of persuading the reader (rather than simply informing them) does result in a slightly more conversational style. This can more easily lead to a loss of control and/or an overlong explanation. There is a clear sense of overall structure however, a good use of the candidate's own words and a range of sentence structures, with some useful linking and grouping of ideas.

Question 3(b)

The candidate has adopted Lindvall's perspective convincingly, drawing on details in the text to develop a consistently appropriate attitude and offering supported opinion. Whilst this is a full and effective answer, a slightly more concise style in Question 3(b) might have allowed for points to be explained and developed more efficiently, leaving additional time to check back over Question 3(a).

Common mistakes

Question 3(a)

Candidates can sometimes lose sight of the focus for a question, for example, by offering both what would and would not appeal to potential guests, when only the attractions / what would appeal are asked for.

Inefficient planning of an answer leads to some candidates attempting to simply track through the passage chronologically, repeating most of the information offered rather than selecting, recasting and using in their response just that which is relevant to answering the question. Answers approached in this way are often overlong or stop abruptly at 150 words before a range of relevant ideas have been communicated.

Copying sections straight from the text can make a response unclear. For example, there are likely to be times when an explanation taken straight from the text is neither concise nor complete. Recasting the material using their own words and/or sentence structure as appropriate will help candidates to offer a clear and concise response, showing a secure understanding of both text and task.

Question 3(b)

Candidates can sometimes lose sight of the text, forgetting that the task is testing their Reading skills, for example, offering their own opinion outside of the text and/or drifting into discussion of ideas unconnected to the details in the passage.

Examination preparation

Question 3(a) Selective summary

Candidates should practice selecting only relevant information from a text, as well as explaining it to others who have not read that text. Opportunities to target and develop skills include working with a range of texts – spoken or visual, as well as written – and working with peers to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of example responses – both written and oral.

Candidates should be encouraged to rehearse and extend their summary skills in real life situations, for example by recapping points covered on an aspect of a topic in a previous lesson.

The role of efficient planning, editing and correcting in timed conditions should be explored and explained.

Example activities taken from 1123 Scheme of Work (for examination from 2024): Summary tasks.

Assessment objectives (AO)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
AO1 Reading R5 select and use information for specific purposes	Understanding the nature and purpose of selective summary tasks	<p>Ask learners what they understand by the word 'summarise'. Compile a list of occasions in real life when someone might need to summarise in written or spoken language.</p> <p>Elicit examples of formal and informal summaries, e.g. making revision notes of key points, explaining the main events of an episode of a television programme or a sports match to a friend who has missed it, writing a report for your boss etc.</p> <p>http://websummarizer.blogspot.com/2013/01/summaries-in-everyday-life.html</p> <p>Agree some basic 'rules' to test out in future lessons and activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in a summary you should...• in a summary you should not... <p>Provide learners with examples of an effective and less effective summary of a short text to identify features. Revisit 'rules' to refine them further based on the evidence they have seen.</p> <p>Show learners a clip of a documentary, asking them to identify and present the key points in a specified time limit.</p> <p>Ask learners to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are any ideas repeated?• Are all the essential pieces of information included?• Are interesting but non-essential facts or details eliminated?• Would someone who had not seen the documentary really understand the main points of the clip by reading my summary? <p>Peer assessment of the summary responses (oral or written transcript) using the marking criteria could also be helpful. For example, using the format www (what went well) – highlight descriptors in the tables you think you have seen in examples of summaries today.</p>

Question 3(b) Opinion-based response

Candidates should be encouraged to read, discuss and explore a variety of texts and text types, to identify and explore the differing perspectives, opinions and attitudes represented.

Opportunities to target and develop skills include role play activities such as hot seating characters/personas, as well as visual representations of the text such as drama tableaux – helping candidates to recognise and extend inferences.

Candidates should be encouraged to support their ideas by reference to evidence in the text and develop their explanations – oral and written – to make explicit those ideas that the text only suggests.

Example activities taken from 1123 Scheme of Work (for examination from 2024): Reading for facts, ideas and opinions:

Assessment objectives (AO)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
AO1 Reading R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meaning and attitudes R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text	Recognising differing attitudes	Learners hot seat characters from a text they know well and or a short story: www.responsiveclassroom.org/the-hot-seat/ www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/hot-seat-0 They should explore the characters' feelings and reactions to an issue in the text, or a contemporary global issue, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create character files for two characters' opinions using evidence from and reference to the text for their interpretation• write and perform to the class a dialogue between two of the characters to demonstrate the attitudes and opinions of the two characters in relation to the issue. Audience feedback should be in relation to how realistic / appropriate the dialogue was in relation to what they know about the characters. (F)

Useful resources

The **School Support Hub** at www.cambridgeinternational/support provides teachers with a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge O Level.

Teaching resources (for examination from 2024)

- Scheme of Work
- Summary Tasks Guidance
- Specimen Paper Answers
- Example Candidate Responses (January 2025)

The up-to-date resource list for this syllabus, including endorsed resources to support Cambridge O Level English Language is on the Published resources tab of the syllabus page on our public website [here](#).

Please note: The website links listed below are useful resources to help with the study of the Cambridge O Level English Language summary tasks question.

Cambridge Assessment International Education is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained in these sites. The inclusion of a link to an external website should not be understood to be an endorsement of that website or the site's owners (or their products/services).

The website pages referenced in this guide were selected when this document was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked and only the particular resources are recommended.

<http://websummarizer.blogspot.com/2013/01/summaries-in-everyday-life.html>

A website giving examples of summaries in everyday life.

www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-write-a-summary

A website with guidance on how to write a summary, including examples and a step-by-step guide.

www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/gist-summarizing-strategy

A website with lesson plans and summarising strategies.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEwmts9MqGs

A video on summary writing skills, including a step-by-step guide.

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