FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

> **Paper 0524/13**
> **Reading**

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed instructions and references carefully to base their answers on the correct text/section of text for each task
- read the introductions to the texts carefully and used the information to aid their understanding
- worked through the three texts and questions in the order set
- avoided copying the language of the text where explanations were required in their own words
- answered all parts of all questions and considered the marks allocated to each question
- planned their responses for higher tariff tasks in advance of writing – keeping the focus of the question in mind
- paid attention to the specific guidance offered in tasks – for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary, indicating clearly the one example from the text extract they were using in **2(c)** and choosing examples from the correct paragraphs in **2(d)**
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- developed relevant ideas, opinions and details from the text in the response to reading task rather than inventing untethered material
- avoided repetition in all questions
- checked and edited their responses to correct any incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the Reading paper and understanding of the general demands of the three tasks, and all three Reading texts were found to be equally accessible. Most candidates seemed to find the texts engaging and there were very few examples of significant misreading, though some missed details limiting the effectiveness of their response. There were still some candidates who did not pay attention to the guidance in the task instructions and consequently missed opportunities to evidence skills and understanding. There were instances where whole tasks had not been attempted and occasions where responses to part questions were incomplete or missing, limiting opportunities to score higher marks. This was most common in **Question 1(d)(ii)** and **1(e)** where some candidates did not attempt to find three points, and in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates included a limited range of ideas in their responses. In **Question 2(c)** for example, a number of candidates did not clearly identify the one example they were attempting to explain, or tried to discuss several examples, and in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task, or choices from paragraphs other than 2 and 15. Candidates are reminded to plan their examination time carefully to ensure they allow sufficient time to respond to every question.

In **Question 1**, the most successful approach taken by candidates was to work through the questions in the order presented, carefully noting the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. Most candidates remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from **Text A** in order to evidence their Reading skills and are not based on their personal opinion, imagination or experience. Less effective responses attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a) – (e)** taking up valuable examination time, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Others simply copied out sections of text with limited modification – often negating any suggestion of understanding by doing so. Several candidates addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding therefore and missed marks they might reasonably have expected to target – for example in **1(b)(i)** 'freely' was often repeated rather than explained. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates wrote

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excessively long explanations or relied heavily on the language of **Text B** and/or copied out chunks of text, limiting the available evidence of their understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to identify in **2(a)** and explain in **2(b)** selected words or phrases from specified sections of the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. **Question 2(c)** supplied a short section of the text to select from as a preparation for the longer response in **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were able to consider meanings in context, as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in a clear overview of the featured paragraphs. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding, although at times they tended to be literal rather than considered within the context of the whole text. In less effective responses, generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A small number of candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering little relevant comment and/or few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses addressed all three bullets in the question, though a few candidates lost focus – for example, writing creatively about camping, the equipment required and a range of other wild animals. Most candidates followed the instructions and wrote as John answering the questions of a journalist for a local radio station, although a few wrote from Hanna's perspective. More effective responses developed the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to discuss what he already knew about the behaviour of beavers before the project began and what surprised him about what they had observed and discovered so far. Effective responses were then able to identify the challenges Hanna faced in the early days of the project and how he helped her to solve them, and what he admired about Hanna's attitude to her work and what they both hoped to achieve through this project by using details from **Text C** to support and extend the ideas. Middle-range responses often missed opportunities because of uneven focus on the bullets of the question, a lack of planning beforehand and/or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less effective responses either offered only brief reference to the passage (sometimes without any reference to beavers or a pond), included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, though marks are available for Writing in **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity, organisation and register of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to plan and review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task

Questions 1 (a) – (e)

In response to **Text A** candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. More effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or simply copied without taking account of the need to modify the original text – candidates are reminded that whilst their writing skills are not assessed in **Questions 1(a) – (e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise to communicate details from the text accurately. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and diluting evidence of understanding.

(a) **What <u>two</u> features of the large wild cats known as jaguars make them look strong and frightening?**

In **Question 1(a)**, most candidates recognised that lean muscles and a powerful jaw were the features of the large wild cats known as jaguars that made them look strong and frightening. Some read less carefully and offered incorrect answers such as 'spotty tan coloured fur'. Other responses were incomplete by offering either 'muscles' or 'jaw' on their own.

(b) <u>Using your own words</u>, **explain what the text means by:**

  (i) **'roamed freely' (line 2)**

  (ii) **'prospective framework' (line 5)**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers failed to achieve both marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate's partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i),** some candidates were able to find an alternative word or phrase for 'roamed', such as wandered around or explored, but they repeated the word 'free' in their explanation of 'freely' thus only partially addressing the task. Some interpreted 'roamed' as relating to 'lived' or 'existed' and were therefore not accurate in the context of the text. Effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text, offering straightforward synonyms for each word. In **Question 1(b)(ii),** a number of successful responses offered 'likely' or future' to explain 'prospective' and explained 'framework' through the use of 'plan' or 'scheme'. Candidates should be aware that the 2 marks offered for each sub-section of **Question 1(b)** require all parts of the phrase to be explained clearly and precisely in the context of the text.

(c) **Re-read paragraphs 2 and 3 ('Some scientists ... future.').**

Give <u>two</u> reasons why the scientists felt that reintroducing jaguars in this area would be an appropriate thing to do.

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraphs 2 and 3 closely were able to identify two clear reasons why the scientists felt that reintroducing jaguars in this area would be an appropriate thing to do. Many candidates offered to provide a refuge or righting a wrong. A few candidates lost marks by offering an incomplete response such as 'they had lived there' without giving a sense of the extended length of time as justification for their reintroduction.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 ('Comprising ... 1890.').**

  (i) **Which 'features' make the proposed area suitable for jaguars?**

  (ii) **Explain why some people might not be convinced by claims that jaguars are native to the area?**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify 'two' features that make the proposed area suitable for jaguars. Most candidates were able to identify the availability of water and/or prey and that it was free from human disturbance. Others did not show a full enough sense of the size of the area to convey an understanding of how it 'could support a number of jaguars'. Careful answers made use of the two bullets in the response area as an efficient way to present their ideas and then check that their answers were distinct. Occasionally opportunities to score both marks were missed by offering the availability of water and prey separately and overlooking the two other distinct points.

Likewise, in **1d(ii)**, candidates paying attention to the command word 'explain' used, rather than simply repeated, information from the text, reworking it to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the maximum 3 marks. In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were successful at gaining all three marks available by referring clearly to them as needing to exist somewhere for a more extended period to be considered native, that they do not feature in local legends or stories and that evidence only goes back as far as 1890. The most common point to miss was 'relatively few sightings'. On occasion, candidates diluted evidence of their understanding – for example, not reading back to check the full sense of their answer to the question or an idea as it was presented

in the passage by suggesting incorrect dates related to the evidence of sightings. A smaller number of responses only offered 1 or 2 of the available points, not targeting the full 3 marks available for this question.

(e) **Re-read paragraph 6 ('Danger ... story.').**

<u>Using your own words</u>, explain why some people might <u>not</u> be reassured by the scientists' claims.

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations reworked the relevant information only, using their own words as appropriate, to identify three distinct reasons in their explanation of why some people might not be reassured by the scientists' claims. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark, a reasonable number gained two marks, but few gained all three, usually through explaining that people might not be reassured because there is still some danger or as a result of sensational stories or the media. On occasions, misreading the question resulted in reasons being provided to support the scientists' claims, as opposed to the alternative. Where opportunities to score full marks were lost, it was usually because candidates had not provided three clearly differentiated points, or because they copied unselectively from the text and therefore suggested that 'danger to humans is low' or 'unprovoked attacks were extremely rare' instead of answering the question.

(f) **According to Text B, what are the arguments in favour of rewilding <u>and</u> why might some people still not agree with it?**

You must use <u>continuous writing</u> (not note form) and <u>use your own words</u> as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from **Text B** and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, misreading and/or inclusion of extra details, including opinions on environmental factors, meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. A small number of candidates misread the question and based their response on **Text A**.

The most successful responses to the selective summary task showed evidence of candidates having planned the content of their answer before writing their response. Many had produced and followed a bullet point plan. There were some effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas. They grouped ideas together, for example considering that outcomes can be uncertain due to the low survival rate of some reintroduced species, whilst others may be invasive or too successful. Responses in the middle range tended to include a more limited range of ideas or offered too much supporting detail. There was often inclusion of excess material even where a good range of ideas had been considered, particularly describing more than one successful example of rewilding or a variety of positive geographical changes. Less effective responses were either very brief due to a very limited number of ideas being considered or were excessively long and unselective. Occasionally, less effective responses adhered to the advised word count but took far too long to consider a few ideas by including unnecessary details and/or comments. Another feature of less effective responses was a tendency to include information from the other texts or repeat ideas – most commonly in relation to details about rewilding projects.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible – without changing or blurring the original idea – though some lifted phrases and longer sections of text that might easily have been reworded for example, 'the reduction in grazing by elk allowed trees to grow' and 'reduce human intervention in ecosystems'. Others used own words, though overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task, with significant excess arising because of lengthy explanation. A few candidates wrote far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a fairly wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

Length was sometimes an indicator of the relative success of a response. Some responses were far too short with only a small number of relevant ideas identified, and others very long and wordy due to the inclusion of unnecessary information, comments or quotations. The least effective responses were overly reliant on the language of the original, with a small number of responses

offering no creditable content as they were entirely copied from the text. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text, which is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task.

Advice to candidates on Question 1f:

- read the task instructions to identify the focus of the summary task, then re-read **Text B** to identify just the relevant ideas for use in your answer
- plan the response using brief notes – you might find it helpful to list them in a plan and/or number them on the text in the insert
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan – check that you have a wide range, and they are distinct and complete
- avoid including any repeated ideas or unnecessary details which do not address the question
- return to the text to 'sense check' any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid including a general introduction
- do not add comments or your own views – use a neutral writing style
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently using your own words – avoid lifting phrases
- check back over your plan to ensure you have included the ideas you intended to
- try to keep to the guidance: 'Your summary should not be more than 120 words.'

Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

(i) **Hanna was planning to study the pond all alone and <u>not have anyone else with her</u>.**

(ii) **Initially, Hanna was not intending <u>to decide on</u> any particular pond to observe until she had checked out lots of them.**

(iii) **John <u>sensitively offered advice</u> to Hanna that there was not enough to eat in the area around the pond for beavers to live there.**

(iv) **John looked at Hanna with <u>disbelief on his face</u> when she suggested Lily Pond was the place she had been looking for.**

The most successful answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. A few responses copied the whole sentence from the question inserting the correct phrase from the text to replace the underlined phrase in the question, but this approach does waste valuable time for the candidates. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase/sentence could not be rewarded even if the correct word/phrase was included, as candidates do need to exercise precision to demonstrate full understanding.

Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question, but a few seemed confused about how to respond, offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to including too much of the text and therefore moving beyond explaining just the underlined phrase, for example 'Planning to spend several hundred nights there without human companionship' or 'I was not going to settle for the first pond that looked promising'. For **2(a)(iv)** several candidates offered 'incredulity' on its own without including 'expression of' to explain the full underlined phrase.

(b) <u>Using your own words</u>, explain what the writer means by each of the <u>words underlined</u>:

Just then a furry face peered out of one. Next, slowly <u>surfaced</u> one long, brown body. The creature seemed <u>unaware</u> of us frozen in position. Twice the animal paddled the length of the dam, inspecting it, allowing close-ups of him. The third time, he dived and covered the course again, underwater, <u>trailing</u> bubbles.

(i) surfaced

(ii) unaware

(iii) trailing

In **Question 2(b)**, some answers offered just one carefully chosen word or phrase as their answer, whilst others offered evidence of understanding through longer explanations. Either approach could be creditworthy, though candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering various suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. For example, 'surfaced' in **2(b)(i)** referred to a beaver coming up or emerging from the water, not simply appearing, as suggested by some candidates. Answers that included other potential meanings and guesses that were not correct in context could not be credited. Successful answers had considered the precise meaning of each of the underlined words as they were used in the text. Several candidates were unsure of the meaning of 'unaware' – for example, suggesting variously that it meant ignored, uninformed or confused. Likewise, meanings of 'trailing' connected to dragging or generating were not appropriate in this context.

(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests her feelings as she watched the pond.

<u>Use your own words in your explanation</u>.

'It's no good,' John sighed, delivering supplies days later. 'Those lilies are too thick to see anything – even if there are beavers.' But there were tempting breaks in the floral mats, cheeky narrow bands of open water arranged in satisfyingly geometric patterns. Secretly, this kept my hope alight.

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested Hanna's feelings as she watched the pond. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no focus on the writer's language and no language choice selected. Where a paraphrased version of a language choice was offered, it was occasionally possible to credit an explanation if they lifted a word such as 'tempting', but they often lacked focus on any specific words used by the writer and therefore could not be credited at all. A significant number of candidates repeated the language of the text and repeatedly used a form of the word 'hope' in their explanation so did not receive credit.

The most successful responses had carefully noted the number of marks available, along with the instruction to use their own words, and focused on making three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example.

The most popular example was 'Secretly, this kept my hope alight' and candidates were able to explore the suggestion that in keeping her thoughts to herself, Hanna's excitement or optimism was increasing and likened to a fire burning. Many responses also tackled 'But there were tempting breaks in the floral mats', exploring how Hanna wanted to believe something was there as she observed the gaps between the plants floating on the water and was not ready to give up. Less effective responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. A few less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and/or discuss it in very general terms.

(d)   **Re-read paragraphs 2 and 15.**

- **Paragraph 2 begins 'Then I saw ... ' and is about Hanna's first impressions of Lily Pond.**
- **Paragraph 15 begins 'Under cover ... ' and is about Hanna's thoughts and feelings as she studies the beavers.**

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear and careful analysis of three relevant selected words or phrases from each paragraph – often beginning by explaining literal meaning and then moving on to consider connotations, effects and impacts created by the writer's language choices. Where candidates had considered all the key words in slightly longer choices, they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses and offer more secure evidence of understanding. Responses at Level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question.

Many answers for paragraph 2 began with the description of the pond with its perfumed blossoms of water plants and unspoilt waters by likening it to a painting that grasped Hanna's attention. Various interpretations of 'a complex tangle of life' were explored – including how it was a web of interconnected organisms working together within the ecosystem. Several answers went on to identify 'enchanting pool' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of how magical and appealing it appeared to Hanna. Some of the best answers focused on how spellbinding and intoxicating it was to Hanna to look at.

Middle range responses were usually more successful when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects fully, or there was more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other. The least effective responses tended to offer quotations, though sometimes unselectively, and struggled to find anything relevant to say about them. They limited their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices resulting in partially effective explanations only – for example, not all considered the word 'fragrant' and what it suggested about the perfumed nature of the flowers and many weaker answers dealing with this popular choice did little more than repeat/replay the wording of the text.

Some candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question, leading to some underdeveloped responses. Some candidates chose inappropriate language choices – sometimes plain language offering limited opportunities.

Where effects were less successfully explained, it tended to be due to repeating the same idea for all three language choices in the paragraph. In paragraph 2 this tended to be through repeating the idea of the pond being beautiful to look at through all choices selected without looking at them individually to consider the nuances, and in paragraph 15, it tended to be repeating the idea of Hanna's fascination with the beavers. There were also candidates who used the language of the text repeatedly in their explanations: most commonly 'amazing', 'captivated', 'mysterious', 'magical', and 'mythical'.

Explanations of paragraph 15 often targeted the 'mysterious, magical quality' of the beavers and how they 'resemble some mythical beast', with the best answers describing their intriguing and enigmatic nature. They described how they seemed surreal or like they belonged to another world. They had recognised that not much is known about them and explored links with animals in fantastical tales, such as fauns or centaurs. Other responses focused on their 'beautifully etched' tails that appeared to be designed artistically, whilst also linking it to the movement of their 'trademark beaver tail slap' which served as a warning signal.

The least effective answers to **2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as 'It creates a clear image in the reader's head' or 'The writer uses really interesting language to draw you in'. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen,

whilst more effective answers also identified effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images at different points in the encounter, using explanation of precise meaning/what you could 'see/hear happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

There was very little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some less effective responses included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. On occasions no quotations were included with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Such responses did not address the question at all. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only, or selections were made from other paragraphs, so no choices could be credited. Some selected from paragraphs 2 to 15 inclusive, wasting valuable examination time. Candidates are advised to look at the section of text supplied in the question as well as the paragraph number to ensure that they select language choices from the correct paragraphs.

In **Question 2(d)**, candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which can be credited. Listing of literary devices or the selection of plain language from the text is unlikely to lead to a successful response. Examples of plainer language such as 'the place was busy' or 'five-fingered front paws, webbed hind feet' cannot be credited in this question therefore candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase from **Text C** to precisely match the sense of the underlined words only in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it fits)
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about the example you have chosen
- in **2(d),** select three precise and accurate language choices from each of the specified paragraphs– six in total
- only offer an overview in **2(d)** if you have spotted that there is a relevant connection between your chosen choices from a paragraph
- do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- where you are trying to explain meaning, read your answer back to check that you have not repeated the words of the choice
- when you are unsure how to explain the effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice
- avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice: try to be more specific about analysing at word-level
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as 'the writer makes the reader feel like they are there' or 'this is powerful imagery' without further explanation
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create.

Question 3

You are John. You are interviewed by a journalist for a local radio station. The journalist is interested in Hanna's work studying the beavers of Lily Pond over the past six months. The journalist interviewing you asks three questions only:

- **What did you already know about the behaviour of beavers before this project began <u>and</u> what surprised you about what Hanna has observed and discovered so far?**
- **What were the challenges Hanna faced in the early days of the project <u>and</u> how did you help her to solve them?**
- **What do you admire about Hanna's attitude to her work <u>and</u> what do you both hope to achieve through this project?**

Write your answers to the journalist's questions.

Having already familiarised themselves with **Text C** in **Question 2**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to shift their perspective away from the writer, Hanna, to the viewpoint of her husband, John. The task guidance invited candidates to write their answers to the radio station journalist's three questions on Hanna's work studying the beavers of Lily Pond over the past six months. A few attempted to answer the questions as Hanna and limited the development they were able to offer as a result, particularly in relation to the third bullet point in the question. On occasion, candidates invented scenarios outside the task as set – for example, a backstory about how John and Hanna met or details about their relationship or family life. Candidates are reminded that their response to **Question 3** needs to be relevant to the details of the text and task in hand in order to successfully evidence their Reading skills.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms. Some in the mid-range though omitted potentially useful details and information in their explanation of John's attitude towards Hannah's work though – for example, by not referencing details of the beavers living in or near water. Where candidates had planned their response beforehand, they were often able to incorporate ideas from across the text to address this first bullet successfully, for example by referring to the beavers building their accommodation, adapting their diet and foraging at night, though some misunderstood details such as that Hanna or John had built the lodge for the beavers or themselves to live in or John acquired the lilies for the beavers to eat or they themselves were hungry – ideas not supported by reading the text. More effective responses also referred to how the beavers made future tasks easier by creating swimming channels and did not react to artificial light, though fewer evaluated/developed this relevantly to make explicit that it made them more vulnerable due to a lack of understanding of modern technology.

Candidates who had engaged with both task and text to offer competent or better responses often took time to interpret details rather than simply repeat them. For example, in bullet two reference(s) to finding the right location and working around the legal restrictions were extended and developed by candidates reading closely, showing they had recognised how John had accompanied Hanna on her search and there were tight controls as the areas were protected – the fact that Hanna was very particular and did not just select the first pond she came across and how John had to persuade the authorities to allow them to do the research there were exploited to good effect in the best answers. They also recognised that they were able to tell the beavers apart and suggested names based on their actions to help identify them. Occasionally, in less effective answers, candidates did not attempt to address any of the challenges that Hanna faced in the early days of the project or what John did to help her to solve them.

When responding to the third bullet, the most successful responses picked out a range of clues from throughout the text to develop appropriate ideas about what John admired about Hanna's attitude to her work and what they both hoped to achieve through this project, citing her dedication and commitment to her work and that she trusted her instincts and had a lot of confidence. They were then able to suggest how they both gained an increased knowledge of the species. Hanna's dedication to her work was most commonly offered with clear development of how strong willed she was, despite potentially uncomfortable living conditions. Such responses also noted that their motivation was to make a difference by protecting or conserving the beavers due to their vital role in the ecosystem. Mid-range responses described Hanna's dedication and attention to detail more generally through the development of her patience. Other responses simply described the different seasons without really commenting on Hanna's attitude towards it. Less effective responses tended to lack range in response to this bullet often making very general suggestions not really linked to ideas in the text or copied sections of text with minimal modification. The most common lifted phrases were that they 'dredge deep swimming-channels' and 'were not naturally nocturnal'.

The most effective answers showed evidence that candidates had identified a good or wide range of relevant ideas and details from the text before writing, considering which bullet the information they had located best suited and how the perspective of John might differ from his wife, Hanna's view as the narrator of **Text C**. Occasionally, insecure responses strayed into speculation regarding other endangered wild animals or wildlife parks – suggestions not supported by or rooted in the text.

Overall, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview, and many were able to craft a response with an effective sense of audience and develop an appropriate style for John as referenced in the text. Some candidates misread the question and wrote from Hanna's perspective, rather than from John's. Middle-range responses tended to be written in a plain narrative style relying heavily on the sequencing of the original text and sometimes just describing what John and Hanna did. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct mistakes in their use of language where possible. Some less effective responses were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences throughout the response and there were a few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, which affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- remember to read **Text C** carefully and base your answer to **Question 3** on just the ideas and details you find there
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- pay attention to details of the task as set – for example, note the form of the response and the perspective/viewpoint you need to adopt
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave some time to check through your response
- do not expend time counting the words: the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

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Paper 0524/03
Coursework Portfolio

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Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and the context for each of the three assignments in their coursework portfolio
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text for **Assignment 1**
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses in **Assignment 1**
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text in **Assignment 1**
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations.
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios, on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. The majority of coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. Moderators reported seeing very few incomplete folders.

The majority of centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. The Moderation Team reported that many centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark

schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

The major concern for all moderators was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks.

Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- used the new coursework checklist to ensure all administration guidelines had been followed
- submitted their sample and documents by the deadline
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as all relevant documentation
- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and ICRC, including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was stapled or tagged and securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

Internal Moderation

Moderators reported improvements in the number of centres getting the administration right this session. This can be attributed to the new coursework checklist which when used ensures that centres follow all guidelines in the 0500/0990 coursework handbook.

Centres who followed the instructions for carrying out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook are thanked for engaging in this important process. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

Using the coursework handbook

A cause of concern for all moderators was that some issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments by moderators:

1   Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria to work containing frequent, and often serious errors that had not been annotated

by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

2   Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- A number of centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- Some confusion was caused when centres included ICRCs for the whole cohort as well as the ICRCs for the sample sent; centres only need to send the ICRCs (securely attached to the coursework portfolio) for the candidates in the sample submitted for moderation.
- A small number of centres provided their own version of an ICRC instead of using the one provided by Cambridge; these had to be requested by the moderator, which slowed down the moderation process.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

3   Coursework portfolios

- A significant number of centres did not collate the individual assignments into complete coursework portfolios but instead placed loose pages of work into the grey plastic envelopes and despatched them to Cambridge; this caused moderators some difficulties when assembling the coursework folders and increased the risk of work becoming lost or mislaid. Centres should secure each individual coursework folder using tags or staples with the ICRC securely fastened as a cover sheet.
- Moderators reported that several centres used plastic wallets or folders to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets.
- Some centres included more than one rough draft in each folder; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Occasionally rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.
- Some centres included documentation not required for the moderation process; the only paperwork that should be included in the sample is clearly indicated in the Coursework Handbook.

Comments on specific assignments:

Assignment 1

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting texts of appropriate length which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Moderators commented that many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people, for example, single-sex schools, social media influencers, the pros and cons of having tattoos, climate change, the influence of fashion, and issues of local or national interest. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated, texts which were too informative (and often long) or were of limited personal interest to the candidates, or texts which were largely visual, such as adverts. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluating those ideas and opinions, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to

select texts for their quality of written communication: moderators reported seeing a number of poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis. Moderators also reported seeing texts which contained potentially offensive or disturbing material. This may indicate that candidates were allowed to make their own text choices, but centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all texts used for Assignment 1 are fit for purpose, and this includes avoiding offensive or unsuitable material.

Some centres set one text for a class or sometimes whole cohort. When this approach was adopted by a centre there was usually a tendency for candidates to produce responses which were very similar in content and structure due to heavy scaffolding. This made it difficult for candidates to create the original and sophisticated responses expected of the higher-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments of marks. Centres are advised that teaching a text to a whole class and offering a scaffolded plan for the response may be a useful teaching strategy for developing the necessary skills and knowledge for Assignment 1, but this approach should not be used for the final coursework submission; it is recommended that candidates are offered a choice of texts approved by the teacher.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Reading

Although some centres were accurate with their marking of reading, as in the previous moderation sessions, there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct reference or included quotes from the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the writing was not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5, Table A (writing), or below. The moderators noted that there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. Moderators also noted a tendency for centres to over-reward vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. Moderators also noticed that there were fewer descriptions which slipped into narrative than in previous sessions, but this is still a relatively common flaw in descriptive writing assignments, sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which invited candidates to describe a specific scene from a play, or chapter from a novel, which tended to lead to unoriginal responses, or tasks more suited to narrative writing. Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of towns or cities in which candidates lived, important events in candidates' lives, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques. Some moderators commented that this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding in the use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions.

In addition, the work of a significantly large number of candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the candidates' work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; moderators noted that on some weaker

assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in the Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences to create specific effects.

Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and moderators saw some engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which did not invite narrative responses as they were too informative. These included accounts of Jack the Ripper or sometimes descriptions of film or book plots. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. Moderators commented that this sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of horror or murder mystery stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure). Moderators noticed that there was a trend with a significant majority of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was quite frequently a reason for marks being adjusted.

When moderators saw very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, moderators noticed a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for the adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors such as punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and sentence construction.