**Key Messages**

In preparing for this paper candidates need to ensure that they read a wide variety of material from a range of diverse resources, such as travel writing, memoirs, reviews, biographies, autobiographies, newspaper articles, magazine features, diaries, advertisements and advertorials. They should also read online resources, including those which parallel the written mode such as online newspapers and journals, reviews and blogs. This will better prepare candidates to recognise and assess the conventions and language associated with these different formats and genres. Candidates should also learn to analyse the effects and qualities conveyed by specific words and phrases. This is a critical procedure. Candidates should practice the procedure of using examples from the text and also, critically, to discuss these in terms of content, mood and tone.

Additionally candidates should be able to comment on how an extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops. Candidates should be able to explore any contrasts and differences between the sections of an extract. Candidates must know that they need to do more than write general comments on the content of a passage and references to language terms e.g. personification, alliteration, metaphor should be supported with an explanation of their effects. These features must be accompanied by a discussion of their effects in relation to the context and extract as a whole.

In terms of writing candidates need to use their knowledge of the conventions of different forms in order to adapt their own writing styles to recreate accurately from a range of directed writing tasks which may be in the question set; for example letters, short stories, diaries, reviews. The candidates may be expected to adapt and write in a similar style to the original extract. The task of writing approximately 150 words means that candidates must pay attention to technical accuracy, especially spelling, punctuation and tenses. Candidates should not borrow phrases from the original extract. The concise nature of the writing should be practised by candidates who should not aim to go very much beyond that word limit.

**General Comments**

The new exam format of a compulsory Question 1 and a choice between Questions 2 and 3 was observed by the vast majority of candidates. The extracts proved to be accessible and almost all candidates made a serious attempt to answer though with widely ranging outcomes. The weighting of marks for the (a) commentary section should indicate to candidates that brief answers such as half a page, are likely to be insufficiently detailed. The directed writing tasks enabled candidates to use their local knowledge which many did with enthusiasm.

There was evidence that some candidates are relying less on feature spotting and listing and are displaying a far clearer determination to connect example to effect. In such cases, even when this was not particularly sophisticated or successful, it was evident that teaching had been aimed at finding and showing connections.

A number of candidates spend too much of their time covering different literary and linguistic features, isolated from the contexts and purposes of the passages. Candidates often adopt a paragraph by paragraph approach which leads to a mechanical approach and often one involving repetition of points. A point, with a relevant example and effects needs to be made once only. Valuable time could be spent more effectively by selecting some of the identified features, quoting them, and then most importantly, commenting on the ideas and qualities they convey in terms of tone purpose and inference about the passage as a whole. Some candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time identifying genre and audience, a process which should be used only as a concise introductory approach before moving on to a detailed exploration of the distinctiveness of the text and language use. Candidates should read carefully for close meaning.
The directed writing questions gave scope for candidates to use their own knowledge and experience creatively and this gave authenticity to style and mood. The candidate’s own voice is invaluable here. Many responses showed sophisticated, perceptive and fluent understanding of tone, viewpoint and style. Candidates should take care to spell correctly as far as they are able; there were some careless copying errors which can be avoided. Some answers were rather uneven in terms of content and style. Areas which candidates should take care with are the accurate and consistent use of tenses, and selection of tone and voice. A minority of candidates wrote in an unacceptably colloquial style however, many candidates impressed with their transformational skills.

Candidates must be careful not to make very general assertions that could apply to any text such as ‘makes you want to read on’ or ‘draws the reader in’. These and other generalisations, especially those relating to punctuation and the length of sentences, are merely comments on content. Candidates who are inclined to make such broad statements should go one step further and consider the ways that language is used in order to raise interest in a text. That forms the basis for an engaged answer and rewards the candidate with higher marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) The question from the newspaper article offering a guide to the city of Rio de Janeiro was generally tackled enthusiastically. Many candidates analysed the language and were able to relate this to the whole passage. Commenting on diversity and contrast was key to understanding this piece. Some candidates used the quotation at the start as a tool to explaining the piece. The passage was accessible and contained numerous linguistic features for analysis. Candidates who discussed the many contrasting features were successfully able to use this in various ways. Many candidates seemed able to comment on the opening quotation linking it to a challenge to the reader/ traveller. Candidates also discussed, and in some cases explored, the effectiveness of personification and the listing of activities. Candidates who introduced their analysis with words such as ‘suggests’ often stayed anchored in analysis. Some took an overview of contrasting and variety of activities throughout the day and into the night.

(b) Candidates had to write a similar guide for new visitors to a popular location within the candidate’s own country. This question was generally dealt with competently and enthusiastically, though the style of the original proved elusive. In this question as in other section (b) tasks, candidates were asked to base their answers on the features of writing of the original extract and this was a discriminator in the writing standards. Many candidates who wrote about places in the United States wrote about Disney and in their enthusiasm omitted any contrasting features such as those evident in part (a) original text. Candidates close reading of the extracts should lead them to be aware of features of content and style such as the sustained contrasts in the Rio article. It is worth candidates remembering when writing, that popular phrases such as ‘where your dreams come true’ quickly become clichés which detract from the freshness of the candidate’s own written expression. There was a considerable amount of material lifted from the passage which could not be assessed as the candidate’s own writing. Most candidates understood the requirements of promotional writing and were able to recreate these using descriptive techniques.

Question 2

(a) This was the autobiographical account written by a passenger who was on board the Titanic when it was hit by an iceberg. This passage was accessible and often the most successful question as well as being very popular. Some candidates used a summary approach rather than analysing the framework - an evaluation of the clear progression from an unsuspecting attitude and too great a trust, through to the horror of the lifeboat launch and subsequent rescue prospects allowed candidates to engage easily. Most candidates did make a good start identifying all the foreshadowing elements, although some became generalised and content based when dealing with the middle and end of the passage. The best responses made use of the many language features and considered them closely in the way that the writer revealed her thoughts and feelings. Narrative voice and metaphor featured in the best responses.
b) Again this was an accessible task and some candidates did well in this writing by moving between emotions although some found it difficult to maintain the correct tone. There was often an attempt to echo the original but some candidates took this too far by re-writing the events rather than extending the narrative. Some managed to further the emotions of the writer by writing in a moving way about conflicting emotions. Some successful candidates played with the metaphors of light and sunrise with confidence. Some candidates were driven by the knowledge of the film, 'Titanic', rather than the passage. Many candidates believed the narrator was a man. Given that her friend was Margaret this did inhibit the effectiveness of some of the answers but many of the responses were a pleasure to read.

Question 3

a) This was the review of Rachel Khoo, her cooking style and television show. A significant number of candidates attempted this question many of whom found it hard to engage with the tone of the passage and many missed the humour and so their answers became very summary based. Many candidates however did pick out the elements of humour and the emphasis on the small size of her kitchen. Some candidates were able to comment on the contrast between her tiny size and her enormous determination with ‘talked her way’ and ‘marched’. The majority of candidates seemed comfortable with the topic and successful candidates were able to discuss the relevance of size with the rest of the piece.

b) There was quite a sharp divide here between candidates who were able to write a successful advertisement which included relevant information and those who lifted chunks from the original passage. Some candidates wrote in a very imaginative way with clever play on words relating to contrasts in size and captured the style of an advert successfully. Some candidates failed to connect the passage with the television series and so limited their context mark.
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (US)

Key Messages

In preparing for this paper candidates need to ensure that they read a wide variety of material from a range of diverse resources, such as travel writing, memoirs, reviews, biographies, autobiographies, newspaper articles, magazine features, diaries, advertisements and advertorials. They should also read online resources, including those which parallel the written mode such as online newspapers and journals, reviews and blogs. This will better prepare candidates to recognise and assess the conventions and language associated with these different formats and genres. Candidates should also learn to analyse the effects and qualities conveyed by specific words and phrases. This is a critical procedure. Candidates should practice the procedure of using examples from the text and also, critically, to discuss these in terms of content, mood and tone.

Additionally candidates should be able to comment on how an extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops. Candidates should be able to explore any contrasts and differences between the sections of an extract. Candidates must know that they need to do more than write general comments on the content of a passage and references to language terms e.g. personification, alliteration, metaphor should be supported with an explanation of their effects. These features must be accompanied by a discussion of their effects in relation to the context and extract as a whole.

In terms of writing candidates need to use their knowledge of the conventions of different forms in order to adapt their own writing styles to recreate accurately from a range of directed writing tasks which may be in the question set; for example letters, short stories, diaries, reviews. The candidates may be expected to adapt and write in a similar style to the original extract. The task of writing approximately 150 words means that candidates must pay attention to technical accuracy, especially spelling, punctuation and tenses. Candidates should not borrow phrases from the original extract. The concise nature of the writing should be practised by candidates who should not aim to go very much beyond that word limit.

General Comments

The new exam format of a compulsory Question 1 and a choice between Questions 2 and 3 was observed by the vast majority of candidates. The extracts proved to be accessible and almost all candidates made a serious attempt to answer though with widely ranging outcomes. The weighting of marks for the (a) commentary section should indicate to candidates that brief answers such as half a page, are likely to be insufficiently detailed. The directed writing tasks enabled candidates to use their local knowledge which many did with enthusiasm.

There was evidence that some candidates are relying less on feature spotting and listing and are displaying a far clearer determination to connect example to effect. In such cases, even when this was not particularly sophisticated or successful, it was evident that teaching had been aimed at finding and showing connections.

A number of candidates spend too much of their time covering different literary and linguistic features, isolated from the contexts and purposes of the passages. Candidates often adopt a paragraph by paragraph approach which leads to a mechanical approach and often one involving repetition of points. A point, with a relevant example and effects needs to be made once only. Valuable time could be spent more effectively by selecting some of the identified features, quoting them, and then most importantly, commenting on the ideas and qualities they convey in terms of tone purpose and inference about the passage as a whole. Some candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time identifying genre and audience, a process which should be used only as a concise introductory approach before moving on to a detailed exploration of the distinctiveness of the text and language use. Candidates should read carefully for close meaning.
The directed writing questions gave scope for candidates to use their own knowledge and experience creatively and this gave authenticity to style and mood. The candidate’s own voice is invaluable here. Many responses showed sophisticated, perceptive and fluent understanding of tone, viewpoint and style. Candidates should take care to spell correctly as far as they are able; there were some careless copying errors which can be avoided. Some answers were rather uneven in terms of content and style. Areas which candidates should take care with are the accurate and consistent use of tenses, and selection of tone and voice. A minority of candidates wrote in an unacceptably colloquial style however, many candidates impressed with their transformational skills.

Candidates must be careful not to make very general assertions that could apply to any text such as ‘makes you want to read on’ or ‘draws the reader in’. These and other generalisations, especially those relating to punctuation and the length of sentences, are merely comments on content. Candidates who are inclined to make such broad statements should go one step further and consider the ways that language is used in order to raise interest in a text. That forms the basis for an engaged answer.

Comments on Specific Questions

Overall there were fewer candidates for this component so Examiner comments relate to a smaller number of scripts marked.

Question 1

(a) The compulsory question for this component was another piece of promotional writing for the Pembroke luxury apartment in Cape Town.

Candidates found this text accessible and responded well to the range of persuasive devices and the luxury advertised. There were some candidates who repeated the idea of luxury throughout, whereas the point once made with examples and effects is sufficient. Candidates usually started well, with the ideas of exclusiveness and luxury, but this was not always sustained. Points relating to the personal tone, exclusiveness, appeals to senses, use of superlatives to reinforce the attention and care given, the attractions of natural and manmade features intensively modified to reinforce the excellence of the environment could form the basis of an analysis though of course any relevant, exemplified and justified viewpoint explored by candidates would form the basis of an engaged answer.

(b) (i) The writing here was well done with a collection of destinations, all persuasively written. It was pleasing to see that candidates wrote confidently in this style of writing and incorporated highly descriptive language to develop their piece.

Question 2

(a) The question concerned the present day underwater exploration of the wreck of the Titanic, which sank in 1912. This was a popular question. Candidates responded well to this and were able to comment on the personification of the ROV and the atmosphere inside the wreck of the ship. Sensitive candidates were able to comment on the grandeur and the ghost like quality on the ship, including personal effects from those drowned. Perceptive candidates were able to highlight the feelings of the writer’s account with the language devices used.

(b) The writing task asked candidates to closely parallel the style of the commentary and to describe the exploration of another unusual location and to create a strong sense of atmosphere. Candidates responded well with some unusual explorations, often crossing the boundary into science fiction of time and place and this was entirely reasonable as long as the style requirements were met. However some candidates were unable to sustain the accuracy and fluency of their chosen scenario and the writing became far fetched.

Question 3

(a) The question asked the candidates to discuss the ways that language and style are used to represent the writer’s thoughts and feelings. Close reading of the question was vital here as many candidates discussed the content – i.e. the thoughts and feelings and not the ways in which they are represented. Candidates could have discussed points concerning the first person narration and its effects; the child/adult layers of narration including the choice of vocabulary; the contrasts of
dialogue, narration and description, the impact of the extended commentary of the lizards and the context of time and place. There were very varied responses here. Some candidates merely commented on the historical event and the author’s thoughts, whereas more successful candidates were able to engage with the language and use of metaphor and transformation of mother/father as Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette. Less successful candidates concentrated on the lizards to the exclusion of other parts of the extract. This seemed to be generally more difficult for candidates perhaps because the context was unfamiliar.

(b) Candidates were asked to write a diary entry mirroring the first person reflections of the passage. They were asked to record the mother’s reflections on the events of the day. The responses were often dependent on the understanding of the passage, as well as the quality of expression. A common limitation leading to an uneven response was to describe the mother’s feelings only about the overthrowing of Batista.
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (US)

Key Messages

On the whole, the questions seemed to differentiate a range of candidates successfully, with answers ranging from the very mature and thoughtful to those marred by significant lapses in technical accuracy. At the high end, there were some very creative and highly imaginative narrative/descriptive responses and some sophisticated and well exemplified argumentative/discursive compositions. These sophisticated and mature responses were highly enjoyable to read and very impressive, considering the time constraints they were produced in.

At the lower end of the range some answers tended to rely on often undirected and drifting plots while other responses tended to be undeveloped, with lapses in technical areas and expression. The usual areas of concern emerged: tenses commonly confused; the incorrect use of punctuation in dialogue, especially with speech marks; evidence of ‘prepared’ answers that did not quite fit the examination questions. On the whole, there were not many rubric infringements and time management seemed satisfactory.

The majority of candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task. A number needed to address the question focus and consider the nature of the guidelines of the task in Section A, e.g. prescribed instructions such as ‘character and motivation’, ‘setting’, ‘mood’, ‘mystery’ and/or ‘suspense’; or a prescribed structure: novel or short story; or indeed simply an ‘opening’ to a short story.

The candidates’ sense of audience, form and purpose in Section B was convincing on the whole: candidates were prepared well in terms of appropriate register, form and tone for such tasks as discursive texts, letters, arguments and magazine articles. One area for improvement is to use two different tones in letters opposing each other, and not keep to the same sort of ‘voice’ for the two.

General Comments:

Problems with tenses can occur when candidates begin work in the present tense but then shift into past. The advice would be to have the time frame in a definite time in the past so past tenses can be used, rather than drifting into present. Often candidates attempt to replicate urgency and immediacy by using the present tense, but control is lost. Another issue is sequence of tenses. When one event follows another in the past they have to use past perfect, not simple past.

Revision of punctuation would be useful. Accurate punctuation is important: candidates can make their work more effective by apposite punctuation between and within sentences, noting especially the correct use of the apostrophe and the semicolon. Reading the work quietly to oneself helps in hearing the fall of cadence in the sentence. Semicolon/colon use is disappointing even in the higher band essays. Apostrophe in genitive singular and plural needs revision just before the exam takes place. Punctuating direct speech correctly is also important. All punctuation has to go INSIDE the speech marks. When speech is reported/indirect, candidates need to remember to 1) go back one tense 2) change the pronoun 3) change the time word. The most frequent error in punctuation is using the comma instead of a full stop. There were often many paragraphs which were one sentence long, and much absent punctuation pegged the mark to lower bands.

Candidates need to be aware of the importance of a varied vocabulary. Frequently, in weaker answers, a word is repeatedly employed. A teaching recommendation is that candidates should select the key words/phrases from the question and note alternatives. This would provide a vocabulary bank.

Paragraphing has seen some improvement. It is important that the paragraphing and discourse markers are used to help the reader navigate around the work. Topic sentences should be taught. Paragraphing, topic sentences and connectives are helpful structures are important props which add to the structure and coherent progression of ideas in a text. When conversation is used in stories, candidates should remember
to start a new paragraph for each change of speaker.

There was much more evidence of planning in this examination session. In some cases the plan was too detailed and too long. It took time away from the writing of the actual essay. There has to be a balance approach here. Plans are useful for sequencing ideas in a Section A narrative or a description, and of course with Section B responses where careful argumentation and explanation are often central to the tasks set. Candidates should be advised that 5-10 minutes worth of planning would be sound practice. Also, five minutes could be set aside for the checking of work for accuracy.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 21:

Question 1 (The Tower)

There were some very evocative and focused responses which created atmospheric suspense. Candidates employed a range of descriptive and narrative effects in a substantial number of answers. Stronger compositions involved subtle mixtures of place and mood, often highly subjective points-of-view from a single protagonist. Many compositions situated the tower in a forbidding forest, or on a lonely island, though there were a few that involved a tower as a part of an urban cityscape. Some candidates used the idea of the tower as a metaphor. Answers worked well when the prescribed instructions were followed- i.e. to create a sense of mystery and suspense; and to create the opening to a short story. Less successful answers wasted time by creating lengthy preambles, building up to the introduction of ‘the tower’, attempting to develop many characters - then failing to achieve the ‘sense of mystery and suspense’ that the narrative needed. Some less secure compositions drew on horror conventions alone at the expense of originality. The use of tenses was often precarious in the weaker answers.

Question 2 (The Comedian)

This question was often very well done. The element of contrast seemed to focus the candidates on a restricted number of key points and so led to some structured essays. The two sides of a comedian provided some interesting and imaginative answers usually with a good contrast between the public and private persona. The noise, laughter and liveliness of the performance sections were well described and contrasted starkly with a range of gloomy, lonely and tragic personal lives. The ‘character and mood’ aspect was done well, with candidates sensibly recycling those words to anchor the material to the question. Often, the jolly comedian was sketched as a grumpy manic depressive at home, which is a fairly obvious choice, but it was done well and subtly in some cases. Just a few had their comedian as a woman. The onstage section was often better than the at home character. The most successful answers used cohesive devices to structure the contrasting sides into an effective whole. The most successful writing adopted a first person narrative voice, which allowed for implicit meanings, rather than stating the obvious from an observer’s point of view. With less successful compositions, a common weakness here was inconsistency with tenses.

Question 3 (Rain)

This popular title has a descriptive pointer which encouraged candidates to deploy the full panoply of devices: adjectives, emphasising adverbs, compounds, adjective stacks, simile, metaphor, extended metaphor, personification, imagery etc. The colour and sounds were a helpful focus in that respect, but they were not adequately exploited. Many candidates simply narrated a piece with references to rain threaded through. The narrative ought to act as a spine to hold the descriptive elements together. There were many essays which narrated the beginning of a day, and only managed to get to the rain element towards the end. Several candidates used the rain as a parallel to the events/moods of the narratives. So rain fell as news of a death/illness/disaster became known. Rain was also used as a positive, life enhancing symbol, as the rain fell the long lost son/lover/soldier returned. However clever the use of pathetic fallacy, successful answers were ones that managed to sustain an appropriate level of depth in their description, using structure to cohere their ideas, instead of simply listing. The balance between narrative and descriptive elements had to be right - taking too long to ‘set up’ a story would mean less focus on the description itself. The Examiners’ advice for a descriptive piece would be to begin ‘in medias res’ and aim for the lower end of the 600 to 900 word range.

Question 4 (Two Homes for Sale)

Although a popular question, with very varied submissions, it was disappointing when candidates forgot about writing to an audience and offered just a stream of attributes of the homes without expanding on their
merits and desirability. As these essays were intended to be advertising copy, a distinct tone and sense of audience were essential but were often lacking. The biggest problem then became a lack of cohesion, and rambling descriptions. Simply deploying contrasting language to list the differences between the two homes was not enough for a complex ‘argument’. Those with a distinct tone/attitude were often well done - and these successful answers deployed persuasive devices and some appropriate specialist vocabulary to imitate real estate advertising copy - creating a real sense of voice, audience and purpose.

**Question 5 (Stress)**

This was a popular question that was done well. Candidates appeared more comfortable with the content of this question than the previous, and most responses had an appropriate audience, voice and form. There were a good number of very successful answers which offered practical advice and explanation in an appropriate register for the target audience. Candidates were able to develop a lively approach to this text due to the subject matter and the intended audience. However, some candidates needed to address the audience directly (‘aimed at teenagers’) rather than talk *about* teenagers. The question specifies that the candidate ‘offers guidance’ and this clear directive was not always followed. The crux of the essay is about the stress generated by teen life, not about the problems encountered in teen life. That is a definite split that has to be addressed to access the higher bands. The question also asks for practical advice: therefore prayer, thinking straight, being happy, being yourself are more ‘theoretical’ and do not qualify as practical advice. Sound, practical advice included asking for guidance and help, using planners to organise time better, making sure to factor in enough sleep/rest, play and work. A few candidates managed to develop their responses to a deeper level by considering the morality of competition and how far success was linked to personal happiness. This, of course, was only done after the initial stipulations of the questions were met.

**Question 6 (The Joys of Reading)**

The question states no specific audience so the range needs to be broad in appeal. It is a leaflet, and the format needs addressing. Because a lot of candidates read, there was much valuable material including references to specific books, authors and genres. Pleasures and benefits were well considered. Often candidates recycled the words, and so anchored themselves to the question. A very good idea. Candidates who appear to have been writing from their own experiences, wrote with excitement and passion and presented very convincing essays, combining theories with some book recommendations. Less successful answers tended to be repetitive, talking about the benefits of an increased vocabulary and being able to impress at an interview, spending a lot of time discussing how reading helps you learn more but often missed the point about the pleasure of reading.
Key Messages

On the whole, the questions seemed to differentiate a range of candidates successfully, with answers ranging from the very mature and thoughtful to those marred by significant lapses in technical accuracy. At the high end, there were some very creative and highly imaginative narrative/descriptive responses and some sophisticated and well exemplified argumentative/discursive compositions. These sophisticated and mature responses were highly enjoyable to read and very impressive, considering the time constraints they were produced in.

At the lower end of the range some answers tended to rely on often undirected and drifting plots while other responses tended to be undeveloped, with lapses in technical areas and expression. The usual areas of concern emerged: tenses commonly confused; the incorrect use of punctuation in dialogue, especially with speech marks; evidence of ‘prepared’ answers that did not quite fit the examination questions. On the whole, there were not many rubric infringements and time management seemed satisfactory.

The majority of candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task. A number needed to address the question focus and consider the nature of the guidelines of the task in Section A, e.g. prescribed instructions such as ‘character and motivation’, ‘setting’, ‘mood’, ‘mystery’ and/or ‘suspense’; or a prescribed structure: novel or short story; or indeed simply an ‘opening’ to a short story.

The candidates’ sense of audience, form and purpose in Section B was convincing on the whole: candidates were prepared well in terms of appropriate register, form and tone for such tasks as discursive texts, letters, arguments and magazine articles. One area for improvement is to use two different tones in letters opposing each other, and not keep to the same sort of ‘voice’ for the two.

General Comments:

Problems with tenses can occur when candidates begin work in the present tense but then shift into past. The advice would be to have the time frame in a definite time in the past so past tenses can be used, rather than drifting into present. Often candidates attempt to replicate urgency and immediacy by using the present tense, but control is lost. Another issue is sequence of tenses. When one event follows another in the past they have to use past perfect, not simple past.

Revision of punctuation would be useful. Accurate punctuation is important: candidates can make their work more effective by apposite punctuation between and within sentences, noting especially the correct use of the apostrophe and the semicolon. Reading the work quietly to oneself helps in hearing the fall of cadence in the sentence. Semicolon/colon use is disappointing even in the higher band essays. Apostrophe in genitive singular and plural needs revision just before the exam takes place. Punctuating direct speech correctly is also important. All punctuation has to go INSIDE the speech marks. When speech is reported/indirect, candidates need to remember to 1) go back one tense 2) change the pronoun 3) change the time word. The most frequent error in punctuation is using the comma instead of a full stop. There were often many paragraphs which were one sentence long, and much absent punctuation pegged the mark to lower bands.

Candidates need to be aware of the importance of a varied vocabulary. Frequently, in weaker answers, a word is repeatedly employed. A teaching recommendation is that candidates should select the key words/phrases from the question and note alternatives. This would provide a vocabulary bank.

Paragraphing has seen some improvement. It is important that the paragraphing and discourse markers are used to help the reader navigate around the work. Topic sentences should be taught. Paragraphing, topic sentences and connectives are helpful structures are important props which add to the structure and coherent progression of ideas in a text. When conversation is used in stories, candidates should remember
to start a new paragraph for each change of speaker.  

There was much more evidence of planning in this examination session. In some cases the plan was too detailed and too long. It took time away from the writing of the actual essay. There has to be a balance approach here. Plans are useful for sequencing ideas in a Section A narrative or a description, and of course with Section B responses where careful argumentation and explanation are often central to the tasks set. Candidates should be advised that 5-10 minutes worth of planning would be sound practice. Also, five minutes could be set aside for the checking of work for accuracy.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 23:

Question 1 (Moonlight)

This was hugely popular and enjoyed some degree of success. Stronger responses veered away from the mythical (werewolves, vampires etc) and clichéd writing with 'spooky' description. Less successful answers either referred to 'moonlight' too frequently throughout their piece, rather than working to actually create a sense of a threatening and fearful exposition, or else forgot to include any reference to moonlight at all in their story. Contrived responses – i.e. standard horror stories - did not achieve high marks. Successful answers managed to create a real sense of threat and fear.

Question 2 (Contrasting Views of the Same Location)

This was a successfully answered question although it was not popular among candidates. Successful responses used a character to convey the differences between the two views. Some answers were more successful at creating ground level descriptions, but struggled for ideas when dealing with the view from a high altitude.

Question 3 (Sense of Wonder at the Natural World)

This was not a particularly popular question. There were some impressively written pieces which contained a developed description of the natural world. In less successful answers, a lot of time was spent listing colours and textures rather than creating a developed description. Focus was lacking in these answers.

Question 4 (Contrasting Job Applications)

This was a relatively popular but rather problematic question for candidates. Almost all wrote in the appropriate form but the level of 'complex argument' was not always achieved. Candidates did try to create differing voices but they struggled to write appropriate content in both letters, often talking a lot about their friends, or that their parents are forcing them to get a job etc. Candidates often forgot to create different voices for the two parts, so that the applicants tended to sound exactly the same, creating letters that were list-like, with only slightly different content. Some neglected to say what the job was, which made the two parts of the answer too general. Some answers went into hugely personal tales of their hard lives to show why they deserved the job, which seemed inappropriate.

Question 5 (Letter to a Newspaper about Making Retirement Compulsory)

This question was better answered. Candidates took the viewpoint seriously and argued well on either side with development. Less successful answers struggled with this, not understanding when people retire, often talking about 30/40 year olds stealing candidates' jobs. Some responses spent a lot of time ‘stating that they feel strongly...the writer should be ashamed etc’ but did not respond to the topic itself. Conversely, another problem was when candidates ignored the fact it said letter and wrote an essay about the subject instead. Successful answers remembered to use language techniques for persuasive writing.

Question 6 (Script for a TV Voiceover for a Charity Organisation)

This was very popular and resulted in some varied responses. Most candidates wrote in depth, using the appropriate form and created a strong sense of voice. More successful responses used specific examples of how their charity has helped others. Some were very short and did not develop well, others included some emotive and persuasive language. Some less successful candidates did not really understand what they were writing or how to structure it.