

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 8693/11  
Passages for Comment

## Key Messages

Candidates need to comment on the qualities and effects conveyed by selected aspects of language and style, not simply identify particular techniques or linguistic features. An ability to respond to the structure and unfolding progression – as well as developments and shifts in mood and tone – of the set passages also helps to shape analyses. In the directed writing tasks, candidates need, at this level, a reasonable grasp of technical accuracy and fluency in expression.

## General Comments

All questions set achieved satisfactory differentiation amongst the candidates. The passages allowed for a range of answers and most candidates engaged with the subject matter. Nearly all candidates could technique-spot correctly but their ability to identify metaphors, euphemisms, puns and so on really counted when they could *explain* the effects created. Candidates at the higher end of the range had a clear grasp of the content and quite subtle understanding of the implications of the text. Less effective answers seemed to rely on feature spotting or paraphrase of the content so that only a few relevant comments about the subject matter rather than its expression through aspects of language and style were noted.

The directed writing tasks elicited some very fluent and perceptive answers which embodied the style and mood of the original extracts proficiently and with creative insight. Some responses tended to be marred by lapses in technical accuracy and expression (especially consistency of tenses and subject-verb agreement). On the whole, time management was effective, but some candidates did not always complete two full questions and this, therefore, limited the final overall mark they could achieve.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) This question proved popular with many candidates and gave them plenty to find and comment on from the text. There were many very positive responses to this passage with often a refined understanding of the use of language. Many were able to go further than simply identifying repetition and demonstrate how this was used and what effects it created. Quite a few appreciated the structure of the speech and noted how the facts in the penultimate paragraph added to the impact and led into the last paragraph.

The best answers showed a strong grasp of both content and technique. Candidates at this level worked their way through the text methodically and fluidly, making perceptive comment on the subject matter while blending in comment on how Clinton appealed to her audience through a variety of rhetorical skills. At the higher end of the range candidates picked out points from the text and explained the process through the language, working chronologically but also relating points to what was said at the start and end of the speech.

Competent answers were able to identify the major points and to explain reasonably well some of the ways in which Clinton spoke to her audience to get her points across. Candidates were less able to explore the reasons for Clinton's use of specific words or phrases and how specific examples of language were more powerful or effective than others.



Candidates at the lower end of the range went doggedly from paragraph to paragraph, paraphrasing the content of the speech with no real attempt to analyse the points made, while other candidates merely listed some of the content.

- (b) The openings to the speeches candidates produced were usually suitably serious and argumentative in tone. Indeed, there were many very impressive responses with intelligent use of the original without simply copying. The best answers used many of the techniques that Clinton used, showing a grasp of the effects of rhetorical devices, but using these judiciously. Overall, most of the directed writing was at least generally adequate; at the lower end of the range candidates appeared to find it difficult to write about the rights of children, and once they had mentioned the right to education, to play and to love, they ran out of points. Some candidates also wrote in an impassioned fashion but never mentioned the core issue: that of the rights of children. They needed to understand that an important aspect of the opening of a speech should be to inform the audience what the speech is going to be about.

Some candidates lifted whole sections of the original speech, substituting the word 'children'.

## Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular question. Most candidates responded to the narrator's perspective about the preparations for going abroad and the growing sense of alienation experienced in Geneva. Candidates at the higher end of the range analysed the passage's figurative language and remarked on the last paragraph as revelatory of the Geneva experience being a psychologically damaging one for the narrator. They worked their way through the text methodically interweaving comment on context with comment of the effects of language. Quotation was blended in seamlessly and the nuances of meaning and tone were discussed sensitively. Candidates in the middle of the range generally picked out the main points but there was a creeping tendency to fall back on listing punctuation and giving some vague generalisations about the effects, with phrases like 'grabs the reader's attention' becoming prevalent. Less secure candidates chiefly paraphrased the main descriptions of place (sometimes noting the stark differences between Istanbul and Geneva) and concluded the narrator was a natural introvert (and usually failing to notice his mischievous attitude and behaviour when having his passport photograph taken). At the lower end of the range there needed to be real analysis of content and explanation of effects, either of subject matter or technique. The majority of candidates in this part of the range needed to appreciate the passport incident, rather than simply seeing the family as extremely poor, and recognise that the writer had become introverted.
- (b) Those who wrote well focused on the emotional issues experienced by both brothers as well as the circumstances. Such candidates deftly reflected both brothers' perspectives in the brother's own voice, often choosing to persuasively represent the narrator as excessively clingy and his brother as an extrovert who resented the narrator's behaviour as it curtailed their stay (and his potential fun) in Geneva.

Those who wrote less effectively tended to stick with one issue, usually the passport bit, and chiefly repeated the narrator's main observations without creating a sense of the brother's own personality and hence perspective.

## Question 3

- (a) This was quite well answered with the majority recognising the two expeditions and how the earlier one had been less exciting. Many focused on the tension and excitement supporting their ideas with a focus on the sounds and sights. In addition, many picked out how the writer had used short sentences to create the tension in the first description and then used long sentences when describing the earlier, disappointing expedition. Nearly all candidates were comfortable with the style and content of an example of travel literature and some very analytical responses were produced accordingly. There were some very able discussions of the descriptive and figurative language employed. At the higher end of the range candidates worked their way through logically and chronologically, commenting on the feelings of the narrator and how the build up of tension unfolded, showing how the use of language contributed towards this. They picked up hints within the text and responded to the more subtle humour. In the middle of the range candidates did some of the above but in less detail, sometimes needing to focus on the obvious areas and omitting the more subtle linguistic markers. At the lower end of the range candidates often omitted to mention the other organised tiger hunt at the end of the passage and also failed to notice it had, in fact,

preceded the description given first. Some also said that the writer preferred the more organised and restricted tour and therefore missed the point entirely. Indeed, there was a key point of differentiation: only the most effective candidates identified and appreciated the position of the prior, tourist 'expedition' at the end of the passage as contextualising the narrator's determination and perseverance in finding a tiger in the jungle.

- (b) The directed writing task was often realistic, confident and perceptive; there were very few 'flat' pieces. Many candidates opted to have the narrator next 'hunt' for wild dogs, leopards or gaur; some opted to situate the next expedition in a very different locale and hence struggled to capture the authenticity of the original. Yet, overall, the task was generally well done – with the majority attempting to create a sense of wonder. Many candidates used the short sentence pattern, dialogue and other of the original features and were quite inventive. Other candidates also brought in some element of disappointment in their response similar to the original passage. Overall, there was often sensitive use of description and humour with some very positive writing, even when the analysis had been weak. The task clearly appealed to the candidates.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 8693/12

Passages for Comment

## Key Messages

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The directed writing tasks elicited some very fluent and perceptive answers which embodied the style and mood of the original extracts proficiently and with creative insight. Some responses tended to be marred by lapses in technical accuracy and expression (especially consistency of tenses and subject-verb agreement). On the whole, time management was effective, but some candidates did not always complete two full questions and this, therefore, limited the final overall mark they could achieve.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) This was a popular question which provided the strongest candidates with a platform to show their capabilities in writing about not only the context but also the effects of language, particularly when used in a speech. Candidates found this an accessible speech from which to select features and comment on their effects. Obama's phrasing (and allusions to twentieth-century American history, for that matter) were well appreciated by candidates. At the higher end of the range candidates realised that as a speech in its original form, there might be differences in reaction from an audience who heard the speech and another which might read it. They were able to differentiate in what effect this might have on the two groups. These candidates worked systematically through the speech but were also able to range forwards and backwards to link points and ideas and make comparisons about effects of language. Indeed, such candidates picked up the subtlety in the use of language and were able to identify the way the speaker was manipulating his audience. Less secure candidates just made lists and needed to make an attempt to analyse the content of the speech in relation to the language. Others simply did not develop the points that they had made. They had some difficulty with the changes of tone and direction.

- (b) Responses to the directed writing task were mostly more fluent and engaging. Many candidates focused on the exemplar figure of Obama's mother as the point of departure to good, often excellent, effect. Many also incorporated Obama's parental concern for his daughters, too. At the higher end of the range candidates used the oratorical skills from the original text; at the lower end of the range some candidates became too fixated on one or two aspects and therefore lost the focus on the question. The creative element of this part of the question gave even the less secure candidates a chance to show a different skill and pick up better marks and some improved their overall final mark considerably this way.

### Question 2

- (a) This was another popular question. Most candidates identified closely with the narrator's experience and perspective, suitably responsive to the intrigue generated by the descriptions of the narrator's father and his suitcase. At the higher end of the range candidates handled this with sensitivity and perception. They clearly grasped the nuances of the relationship between the father and son and were able to pinpoint certain words and phrases which illustrated this. There was much in this passage that enabled the candidates to examine the passage's psychological depths and they wrote movingly. There were some very perceptive and appreciative analyses. In the middle of the range candidates found much to comment on, though some needed to really grasp the issues between father and son and their answers were therefore more superficial. An effective discriminator was the detail of the explication of the final paragraph, with the latter group most attuned to the narrator's concern that he would discover his own 'writerly voice' was not 'authentic' much as he had concluded in advance is the case for his father's, and that they shared two very different, irreconcilable personas: the public figure beloved by his reading audience as opposed to the more complicated (and less perfect) private individual known well only by his immediate family. Less secure candidates largely misunderstood the relationship and, therefore, were not able to write with any authority on the passage. Their answers were generally shorter, in some cases very short: such answers seemed to find the content confusing and made mistakes over direct analysis of events and mood, particularly the final paragraph.
- (b) The majority of candidates wrote quite touchingly from the father's point of view and so the task produced one of the best set of answers. In fact this question brought out quite a few extremes of ability. At the top end of the range the responses were sensitive, thoughtful and well expressed, showing not only a command of language but also of response to the subject matter which showed maturity and empathy. At the lower end of the range some of the candidates had not taken on board that it was the father's autobiography being written and these continued to write in the son's voice. Others needed a clearer idea of what autobiography involves and also seemed to ignore the rubric about the 'opening of a chapter' and tried to cram too much into their responses.

### Question 3

- (a) Candidates from the higher end of the range were able to discuss the issues raised by the passage with intelligence and depth. These looked beneath the surface of the text into the clash between cultures and more 'liberal' attitudes towards women in a patriarchal society. They understood that this was one woman's viewpoint as an outsider and were therefore less prone to see the issues in black and white. In fact, the majority of candidates were able to comment on the descriptions of Sanaa and then Tarim. Most candidates went on to comment on the effect of the "smells of shampoo" and so on and were able to see that the writer was shocked by the apparent acceptance of the life by the women. A common strategy was for candidates to interpret the passage as consisting of two (unequal in length) halves. The first half – consisting mostly of contrasting physical descriptions of place and inhabitants, Dubai vs. the Yemeni capital Sanaa and then the more remote Tarim – was responded to with some close analysis of descriptive language in particular. For some candidates, though, the second half needed to generate more detailed comments and an appreciation of the confluence of Western and Middle Eastern cultures (except for the clear strictures placed on the female students in the third last paragraph), a recognition of the concluding invitation to adopt Islamic female dress, and its implications for the journey the narrator had undertaken thus far.

- (b) Most candidates responded well to this section, though not all had read 'studying in another country' carefully and some responses were clearly based in the candidate's home country. Despite this, the main aspects of the original text were picked up well – travelling to somewhere unknown, some information on the first impressions of the new place and culture, the meeting of people in the speaker's new surroundings – and some responses were very good. Some, however, became side-tracked by one aspect of the task – for example, the journey, the clothes - and needed to produce a more rounded answer.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 8693/13

Passages for Comment

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- (b) Most candidates responded well to this section, though not all had read 'studying in another country' carefully and some responses were clearly based in the candidate's home country. Despite this, the main aspects of the original text were picked up well – travelling to somewhere unknown, some information on the first impressions of the new place and culture, the meeting of people in the speaker's new surroundings – and some responses were very good. Some, however, became side-tracked by one aspect of the task – for example, the journey, the clothes - and needed to produce a more rounded answer.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Paper 8693/21**  
**Composition**

## Key Messages

It is recommended that to secure higher marks candidates pay particular attention to:

- planning the development of their writing
- avoiding more predictable or derivative plots (Section A) and ideas (Section B)
- using a tone appropriate to the type of writing specified by the question.

## General Comments

Some very able writing was in evidence: original, thoughtful and perceptive work was seen by Examiners.

At the higher end of the range, there was skilful use of descriptive elements and structure in responses to Section A and cogent, well exemplified argument in responses to Section B. At the lower end of the range, it was most often lapses in technical areas and expression that limited the marks that could be awarded.

In the main, candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task, but a number needed to address the question focus and consider more carefully the nature of the guidelines of the task (as shown in words such as 'character and motivation', 'setting', 'mood', 'mystery' or 'suspense'; or a prescribed structure: e.g. opening to a novel or short story).

Audience and purpose sometimes needed to be more convincing in Section B. Tone would be a particularly useful area to address and focus upon in classroom practice for such tasks.

A significant number of candidates produced work that was well short of the lower word limit.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Section A

#### Question 1

There were some very effective answers where responses captured the mood and setting very imaginatively, often using the present tense. There was often a fusion of descriptions of people – usually opposing sets of fans – and places. The better answers brought out vivid contrasts; less effective answers tended to make the second piece simply the negative image of the first piece ('There were cars....There were no cars').

Less effective answers seemed to offer a narrative rather than descriptive approach, with the writer at the centre, offering too narrow a perspective. In such answers there was often a tendency towards formulaic structures: steady build-up of expectations in the arriving crowd (sometimes a focus on participants, too) in the first piece, contrasting emotions of the winning and losing sides and their supporters in the second piece. These tended to be stronger on 'mood' than 'place'.



Better answers included first and third person narratives, with third person sometimes a more appropriate choice, as this could give the narratives greater range with settings. When approached with imagination, this task produced some excellent descriptions based on detailed sensory perceptions.

## Question 2

This question allowed candidates to offer imaginative and carefully constructed narrative elements combined with a sense of character and motivation. The most successful answers did this very well indeed; some answers were genuinely entertaining and intriguing. Less successful ones needed to show some sense of planning and direction. Sometimes those did not make 'deception' the hinge. Some candidates ignored the question wording and wrote about a character being motivated generally.

There was an impressive mix of first and third-person narration and a range of character types, jilted lovers, duped espionage agents and mistrusting offspring of secretive parents being the most prevalent. The title certainly lent itself to some tense, atmospheric openings culminating in cliff-hangers or the introduction of problems promising further confrontation and misunderstandings.

Less effective answers tended to focus on stitched-up spies out for revenge only, with little character development and over-reliance on dialogue. A number of plots were based on somewhat clichéd ideas of sentimental love stories, which worked well if carefully and engagingly handled but which often descended into unoriginal and predictable outcomes. The problem in some scripts was that deception was not clear until the end and/or very contrived: a story not building character or motivation but something totally unrelated until the end.

## Question 3

This was the most popular narrative choice. The title produced a full range of responses – from the atmospheric to the mundane. Most responses developed the idea of a threatening presence in the forest. Effective compositions created a mysterious, at times gothic, ambience and sustained this approach throughout; others produced a less effective focus of the Hansel and Gretel type, or unloaded narratives which seemed rather random in their direction and credibility.

Stronger responses were carefully crafted with a well-managed climax. A number of candidates wrote third-person narratives where the employment of the omniscient narrator allowed some explication of a suspenseful situation whilst describing a mysterious locale. Equally, when the first-person was used it made for a genuine build-up of mystery and fear, due to the restricted perspective and limited knowledge of the main character. The best answers used the forest to intrigue, leaving the reader to want to know more about the characters and the situation.

Less effective responses tended to list a series of events, some of which were quite unconvincing. Quite a few forgot they were writing with the forest as the main title. Several thought that if the final sentence mentioned it they were covered. On the other hand some relied, unhelpfully, on simply offering descriptions of a forest as though that were a means to an end: simple, sometimes effective, descriptions were delivered but did not invite the reader to sense the next chapter or the novel as a whole. Candidates need to avoid derivative and clichéd writing. Conventional horror film narratives found their way into many answers; many were influenced by zombies, monsters, wolves, serial killers and the like. Some managed unsettling and genuinely eerie content, but there were volumes of glowing red eyes and their ilk. Some candidates ignored the requirement to 'write the opening' and killed off the narrator at the end.

## Question 4

This was a less popular choice but produced some rounded and clearly contrasting monologues, often involving neighbours disputing over pets, noise or gardens/property boundaries and perceived social snubs. The imaginative ones contained some careful use of vocabulary and dialect. Successful answers conveyed a clear and strong sense of different dialogue structures, tone and feelings as well as voice, often differentiated by age or gender. Some were quite thoughtful and well structured, allowing the same incidents to be seen through contrasting perspectives.

The most notable difficulties some candidates had with this task related to tense, because they did not understand the monologue form. A common pitfall was including mixtures of narrative with the delivery of the character's comments so that it became unclear at which point the speaker was addressing the audience. Some wrote play scripts. A number were a rambling stream-of-consciousness rehearsal of grievances. Distinctions of contrasting voice were not very convincing or effective in the less able scripts. A

recommendation for teaching in this connection would be to encourage candidates to practise adopting very different voices, perhaps through classroom hot-seating activities on novels or short stories, considering the same incident from a wide range of viewpoints.

## Section B

### Question 5

This title was a popular choice and elicited some strongly argued, rational essays underpinned by a clear sense of voice, purpose and audience. Some were able to relate the contemporary and historical significance of the Olympic Games to political and social issues and debates very well. Candidates seemed to be well informed about this topic (even if a significant number thought they originated in Ancient Rome rather than Greece), and there was a sense that some had debated the issue previously.

Responses were mostly well structured, with stronger candidates producing well developed and logical discussion. Better answers widened their arguments to include all aspects of the proposition. Appeals to global harmony were successfully made, while the economic benefits to the host country were argued.

Weaker responses were still quite clearly structured but the development of arguments was less secure. Some made digressions into the spirit of the Olympics Games, its history and traditions and its motivational properties (especially for the young – wholesome role models, etc.), with not nearly enough consideration of the central proposition – ‘a complete waste of money’ - and in them little notice was taken of the recommendation in the statement, ‘...should be abolished’.

### Question 6

There were some very noteworthy attempts where candidates succeeded in adopting the appropriate format and style, while incorporating conventional modes of address and drawing on relevant and focused examples and lines of argument. Most candidates maintained a good sense of audience.

There were some excellent responses in terms of persuasion and engaging with audience. By contrast some did not have a clear enough structure for their writing while some did not find enough content to interest their readers. Other less effective answers offered reams of sensible advice unsupported by any rationale.

Sometimes there was some confusion over the audience. Some candidates began with an appropriate voice but were not able to sustain that voice throughout. Some wrote the article as a lecture in a very serious way or in a highly moral tone which failed to engage, though the ideas might have been good. The weakest responses were flawed technically and lacked engagement with their audience, except sporadically.

Good scripts featured effervescent, bubbly prose capturing the target audience, a youthful journalist dynamic in a convincing manner. They contained very knowledgeable advice concerning healthy diet and training regimes. The best engaged both the serious and the light-hearted perspectives and were holistic in response, moving beyond eating, drinking, smoking and sport to empathising with the individual emotionally. Wide ranging ideas and a lively voice characterised these answers. A recommendation for success in such tasks in the future would be for candidates to widen their focus, including both genders in their advice if appropriate.

This question required a response to form; not all answers were explicit in responding to a ‘magazine article’ – but the better ones used the second and third person, rhetorical devices and personal appeals, while ensuring that their articles had shape.

### Question 7

This was a very popular question across the range of ability, prompting very keen and informed answers from candidates whatever their geographical location and cultural background. Candidates seemed to enjoy the relevance of the material and seemed very well informed about the protocol of social networking sites and the arguments for and against their existence. The best grappled with the pros and cons for the individual and society as a whole. There was an impression of clear and vocal sentiments in a large number of these essays. Most candidates seemed fully aware of the potential dangers, going beyond the threat from stalkers to consideration of malware and methods of cracking Facebook’s security protocols. Many wrote about how they would like to ban Facebook.

Occasionally, less focused answers drifted into detailed narratives about cases of assignations and their consequences, moving away from the central issues of the question. Weaker work tended to list points without much development which meant there was some repetition when candidates ran out of new ideas. Some answers on social networking sites wandered into consideration of media technology in general, considering issues such as lack of sport, the growth of laziness, not eating well and lack of health in people. The weakest responses were flawed technically and had few ideas.

### Question 8

This generally produced steady and competent ideas, supported by a reasonable choice of examples and arguments. Some candidates seemed to rein in their thoughts here and perhaps played a little safe. In lower scoring answers, some had a problem with 'debate' or had few ideas, while others had speaker A cover one area and speaker B an entirely different area. This in itself was not an issue but in such answers there was little or no sense of persuasion, and the speakers tended to rely on simple assertion. Candidates here often had a reasonable or good sense of audience but were less clear about what points would support their two arguments. Though it was tackled the reasons given were not always compelling. Many adhered to the required format – a school debate – though the tone was not always right.

More successful work featured some considered and well-planned writing. Rhetorical devices such as triplets, pointed repetition of key words, questions, and appeals to an audience raised achievement. Those who did well responded in their second speech to the points made in the first.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Composition**

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- using a tone appropriate to the type of writing specified by the question
- technical accuracy.

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Audience and purpose sometimes needed to be more convincing in Section B. Tone would be a particularly useful area to address and focus upon in classroom practice for such tasks.

For good marks answers need to show technical accuracy. In many scripts agreement, tenses and plural endings were not secure. Here candidates very often confused tenses, especially when they chose to begin their story or description in the present tense. Very often they were unable to maintain this.

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.

Paragraphing and discourse markers are important props which add to the structure and coherent progression of ideas in a text. There was often a lack of paragraphing and signposting in responses to both sections of the paper. When conversation was used in stories, many candidates failed to start a new paragraph for each change of speaker. Other errors, such as punctuating conversation, were also frequent. Mastering this crucial skill would not only allow candidates to present their ideas in a more logical sequence, but enhance the reader's understanding of the material accordingly, helping answers to get higher credit.

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This was very popular. The open nature of the title allowed for varied interpretations, with candidates clearly relishing the opportunity to engage in some genre-based narration: the mainstays being apocalyptic, natural disaster, crime, and science fiction writing about worlds or dystopias set in the future. Many examples of lively writing were seen. Many candidates managed to note the demands for mystery and suspense, leaving a dénouement (if only one of sorts) until the final paragraphs.

Where thought and planning were involved the title was allowed to be the central focus, but less effective compositions tended to see it as something to tag on to the end of the material in a rather haphazard way. Those who concentrated on building up atmosphere did well; those who wanted to tell an entire (complicated) story were less successful. With the latter, the sense of the novel was not apparent. Complete episodes rather than beginnings characterised the weaker end and, with some, the 'darkness' was not at all apparent. The best responses included psychological, emotional darkness which engaged the reader immediately and promised some sense of a story yet to come.

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#### Question 4

This was less popular but produced some quite skilful answers, displaying sharp and precise contrasts between the protagonists. Often, the underlying opposition was based on jealousy or social class and perceptions that the boss was having a far easier time than the lowest paid worker. Some answers made effective use of the blindness of a superior in understanding a lower grade colleague.

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This evoked some very personal and strongly held opinions. A good number of candidates who chose this option found plenty of apt examples to illustrate their points.

There was an opportunity for a distinctive and emotive voice here but quite a few candidates became sidetracked, losing focus on the title and drifting into a general consideration of animal welfare issues. They were limited in relevant discussion in terms of examples and exploration. Once the point had been made – that human beings do not have the right to inflict suffering of any kind on animals – the candidates did not have any means of developing the argument. Many talked about circuses or zoos rather than sport, while some made slightly unconvincing assertions such as that horse racing would lead to the extinction of horses; and human beings' use of farm animals would lead to their extinction.

The question provided for much sympathetic and thoughtful writing but almost always resulted in arguments in favour of the proposition, making little attempt at the balance which would have made for a more complex and interesting discussion. The best answers wove arguments with exemplification while acknowledging cultural counter-arguments too.

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Many candidates produced steady and effective articles combining an appropriate form of address and precise register. There was clear advice and guidance, supported by an understanding of some of the difficulties the target audience may be facing or about to face. Strong answers kept the main title in constant focus, persuading and engaging with their teenage audience.



Some weaker answers were not able to sustain that voice throughout. Some wrote the article as a lecture in a very serious way or in a highly moral tone which failed to engage, though the ideas might have been good. The weakest responses were flawed technically and lacked engagement with their audience, except sporadically. Some candidates wrote around the subject in very abstract terms; more successful answers had a number of well-structured paragraphs which discussed more specific aspects of the subject.

The most successful answers engaged both serious and light-hearted features. These were holistic in response, moving beyond topics such as eating, drinking, smoking and doing sport, to empathising with the individual emotionally. Wide-ranging ideas and lively voice marked out the best.

### Question 7

The quotation prompted some strong opinions, with some understanding the reasons — often social and financial — why people might download material; they also appreciated the moral and intellectual arguments about its illegality. The title's moral dilemma made some candidates think very hard, with some admitting that they had downloaded material whilst recognising some of the condemnation this might expose them to.

Weaker answers had a limited range of ideas, with some sidetracking into technology and its advantages and disadvantages as a whole, which sometimes became repetitive. There were predictable ideas about how obsessive it made people and how it was going to hurt the entertainment industry. (Some were not sure about the word 'justified', taking it to mean 'legalised' or 'regulated'. The latter interpretation may have come from word-processing, as in justifying the margin, so the deduction was that it meant to 'regularise' downloading. The result was that the ethical element was not really dealt with.) In tackling this question, candidates would do well to focus on a range of what constitutes stealing and morality proffering some suggestions as to how they might persuade people this is so; or, otherwise, argue that downloading is a deserved freedom, or how a compromise might be reached to the satisfaction of all concerned. The best grappled with the pros and cons for the individual and society as a whole and were fully informed. These candidates had clearly grappled with the moral and ethical issues of this topic and so there were strong views decidedly expressed. There was some very penetrating understanding of the economics of different entertainment and media-industry vehicles.

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This allowed some degree of choice. Those tackling it usually focused on driving laws and drinking laws. In general, candidates who chose this topic had a good sense of audience. The question seemed to touch a nerve with a number of candidates who felt they were not allowed by their society or culture to grow up. Effective answers produced a range of exemplification and insights.

Answers sometimes took on too many 'activities' at once, to their detriment. There was a sense that some candidates were trying to cover too much ground in too little detail, with insufficient attention to developing a coherent argument using rhetorical devices and persuasive language, because they might have perceived that addressing more 'legal age limits' would find more favour with the Examiner. In some cases, the difficulty was in not being specific about current age limits and then arguing for changes — the discussion was too generalised and therefore became unfocused. Candidates sometimes confused criminality with legal age limits.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Paper 8693/23**  
**Composition**

## Key Messages

It is recommended that to secure higher marks candidates pay particular attention to:

- planning the development of their writing
- avoiding more predictable or derivative plots (Section A) and ideas (Section B)
- using a tone appropriate to the type of writing specified by the question
- technical accuracy.

## General Comments

Some very able writing was in evidence: original, thoughtful and perceptive work was seen by Examiners.

At the higher end of the range, there was skilful use of descriptive elements and structure in responses to Section A, and cogent, well exemplified argument in responses to Section B. At the lower end of the range, it was most often lapses in technical areas and expression that limited the marks that could be awarded.

In the main, candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task, but a number needed to address the question focus and consider more carefully the nature of the guidelines of the task (as shown in words such as 'character and motivation', 'setting', 'mood', 'mystery' or 'suspense'; or a prescribed structure: e.g. opening to a novel or short story).

Audience and purpose sometimes needed to be more convincing in Section B. Tone would be a particularly useful area to address and focus upon in classroom practice for such tasks.

For good marks answers need to show technical accuracy. In many scripts agreement, tenses and plural endings were not secure. Here candidates very often confused tenses, especially when they chose to begin their story or description in the present tense. Very often they were unable to maintain this.

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