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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE (MALDIVES)

GCE Ordinary Level

<p>Paper 1123/01 Composition</p>

General comments

Candidates from this area were attempting the CIE 'O' Level English Language Paper for the first time. In the Composition component of the Syllabus there was a wide range in the standard of achievement. Very few candidates produced work at the top of the range. Some candidates showed an ability to write thoughtful, confident and well-structured essays, although limited linguistic skills often meant that they struggled to express their lively ideas in sufficiently fluent, correct English to be clearly understood. Many of the weakest candidates in this area had clearly not yet reached the level of competence in English demanded by the 'O' Level standard, and they were unable to cope with this Paper.

Some strained to develop their **Part 1** essays at too great a length and found that they had insufficient time to deal adequately with the Directed Writing task of **Part 2**. Long answers often deteriorate in accuracy and lose focus on the topic, whilst very short answers, of which there were many in **Part 2**, will incur a penalty and may also fail to include the required content points. Candidates are advised to note and abide by the advice given in the rubrics on how much time should be spent and the number of words expected in each part of the Paper.

Most essays were written with the clear intention of arousing the reader's interest and some candidates had tried to plan their work carefully to address the chosen topic. The more able candidates had imaginative tales and perceptive comment to offer with considerable freshness of approach and originality of expression. Such candidates tried to enliven their essays for dramatic effect, where appropriate, with short passages of direct speech, helpfully paragraphed, if not always correctly punctuated.

Weaker candidates and those of average ability showed genuine engagement with the topics, even where there were difficulties with tense sequence and consistency and verb formation, particularly in the correct use of the auxiliary verbs 'was' and 'had', which seemed almost interchangeable for some candidates. Flaws in idiom, particularly with the confusion of prepositions, led to imprecise or clumsy expression. However, limited or inaccurate use of complex structures, errors of agreement and failure to separate sentences correctly or to venture beyond a mundane level of vocabulary were features that marred some essays in this range. Many sentences were poorly controlled and frequently began with 'And', 'Because' or 'But'. In a number of cases, candidates seemed not to realise that sentences must begin with a capital letter. Spelling, however, was usually correct across the limited range of vocabulary.

In the weakest scripts, passages of multiple error, chaotic syntax and unstructured sentences blurred or even obscured meaning entirely and communication broke down. Such candidates had only a very generalised idea of the language but they wrote a great deal, with much repetition. The language used was often phonetic suggesting a better aural knowledge : 'first a fall'(first of all); 'snowkilling boads'(snorkelling boats). The sounds of the letters 'd' and 't' were frequently confused: 'accidend'; 'we have spend the money...'. The word 'kept' was almost always used for 'put' and 'know' for 'learn'. In extreme cases the words of the question were repeated, in random order, again and again, making little or no sense to the reader.

Some candidates were unwise in their choice of topic, selecting subjects where they proved to have insufficient material and therefore resorted to repetition or claimed a word-count that was patently not fulfilled in the script. Others were over-ambitious and struggled to express complex and lively ideas beyond their linguistic ability. Some over-long, rambling essays took so much time to write that candidates had no time left to check for error.

Nevertheless, the essay topics of **Part 1** provided the opportunity for candidates to write from personal experience or conviction and most seized the chance eagerly and attempted to write lively and original essays, varying the tone and register according to the subject matter. The more abstract topics of **Questions 4 and 5** attracted a number of candidates but presented greater difficulty to all but the best. Weaker candidates might have fared better with the narrative options but, perhaps, sensibly avoided them, as the questions included vocabulary with which they were unfamiliar e.g. 'unlock the front door' or 'embarrassing situation'. No topic was conspicuously avoided.

Many candidates found difficulty in understanding the task and the terms used in **Part 2** and some had left insufficient time to deal with this part of the Paper. No doubt as Teachers and candidates become more familiar with the format of the Paper, better preparation will allow the Directed Writing task to be approached with greater confidence.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

Describe the sights and sounds as students gather on the first morning of a new school term.

Candidates write more easily when they draw on their own experiences and this was reflected in responses to this topic. Most adopted a simple narrative approach, with little or no descriptive detail. There was a heavy reliance on lifting and repeating phrases from the question.

Typically, essays began as the student woke to witness the sunrise. However, the interest of the account came from the evocation of the mood of pupils as they re-grouped after the holidays. There was some focus on new sights and sounds provided by the journey to school, holiday gossip and renovated buildings. The better candidates attempted to offer the impressionistic word picture of the first day of term which the question sought. The balanced focus on both sights and sounds was pleasing. In many instances, candidates wanted to include dialogue but, in some Centres, lack of understanding of correct paragraphing and punctuation and frequent blurring of the distinction between direct and indirect speech led to considerable confusion.

Sadly, confusion of tense often detracted from the impact of these accounts. Candidates found it difficult to be consistent and to sustain the immediacy afforded by the present tense. Many lapsed intermittently into the past or future or even used the inappropriate modal 'would': 'As students gather on the first day of a new term, some will greet their friends while others would stand outside the gate and looked around.' A few described the day entirely in the past tense. The writing began to flow and have greater impact as the narrators focused on the scenes at their schools, of which they wrote with genuine appreciation and affection.

Question 2

'Mother knows best'. What sort of problems do you discuss with your mother? Do you always take her advice?

This was the most popular question in the Maldives Centres, particularly with girls, and attracted responses across the ability range. There was no shortage of ideas. Most were happy to admit that there were occasions when mother had, indeed, known best. Strong family ties, mutual respect, filial loyalty and a deference to adult opinion were much in evidence. Without exception, candidates wrote about their mothers in a very complimentary manner. There were many heart-warming responses despite linguistic difficulties.

Some candidates ignored the question and wrote loving pen-portraits of their mothers or wrote on 'motherhood' in general terms. Others wrote narratives of their lives with their mothers from birth to the present day. Some distorted the question to 'Mother knows me best' and wrote of their gratitude to their mothers for their upbringing. In all responses, respect for the subject shone through, even in the weakest scripts.

Tenses proved less of a problem in this topic as candidates could rely on the present tense throughout but vocabulary tended to be repetitive, with key words like 'problem', 'discuss' and 'advice', 'advise' or, frequently, 'advices' being obtrusively over-used.

Question 3

- (a) *Write a story about what happened when a family moved to a new home and found that the keys provided did not unlock the front door.*

The narrative choices proved to be popular with some candidates in the Maldives, although, as already noted, far from exclusively so. The form of the question here helped candidates to structure their narratives. Generally, they had thought about their conclusions before beginning to write and this gave the stories purpose and shape. Balance was sometimes lacking, with too much stress and space allocated to packing before the move at the expense of focus on the problem of unlocking the door. A few narratives took the reader into the realm of ghosts and murders. Unfortunately, there was some confusion over the concept of unlocking the door to enter a house: 'unlock' was confused with 'lock'. Some candidates wrote of attempting to lock the door after moving in but failing to do so properly so that burglars were able to get in – or the family could not get out again.

Most candidates used the narrative past tense without too much difficulty but selecting appropriate vocabulary posed some problems. Many wrote vaguely about 'shifting' their 'stuff', 'things', 'luggages', 'furnitures' or 'properties'. There was confusion over a set of keys or a single key: 'I reached for the keys and inserted it into the door'. Some weaker candidates got side-tracked and found it difficult to work the key incident into the story at all. Many wrote at length and would have done better to have written shorter stories with greater care and accuracy.

- (b) *Write a story about what happened when an accident in a restaurant led to a very embarrassing situation.*

This was not a very popular or successful question in the Maldives Centres. Some candidates did not understand the word 'embarrassment' but seized upon the word 'accident' in the question and wrote about fires, cars crashing into shops or even attacks by armed criminals. Sometimes these dramatic events took place outside a restaurant, or were in a suitable setting but were tragic rather than embarrassing, involving food poisoning, a heart attack or the announcement of a divorce.

There was general misunderstanding about how to call a waiter or how to order food. Many wrote of 'ordering the waiter'. Food was served 'on the table' and guests often sat 'on the table' too. Some diners went 'to the toilet to wash up' and 'knocked onto a waitress' on the way.

Others did not know the meaning of 'restaurant' but dutifully copied the word from the Question Paper whilst describing accidents in market places, shops, villages or even on the beach. Candidates should always try to write from their own experience, in settings with which they are familiar. If the narrative situation of the question set does not allow them to do so, they would be wise to select a different topic.

Question 4

Which aspects of your education do you think will be most useful to you in adult life?

Unfortunately, this difficult topic was quite a popular choice with Maldivian candidates. Obviously recognising the term 'education' but failing to understand 'aspects', many simply gave a history of their own education to date, basing their answers firmly on the school curriculum, or wrote about the importance of education in general. These answers tended to be repetitive in both content and expression, especially in frequent copying of the wording of the question.

Discursive writing, coping with abstractions and ideas, always presents difficulties of organisation and expression. Several candidates wrote of the value of an education in general, rather than of particular aspects. The word 'aspects' created problems in itself: some took it to mean specific subject areas, some to suggest periods of development such as childhood, whilst others took the expression to mean particular qualifications. Whilst all these interpretations were acceptable, the best essays were philosophical in approach and showed some maturity and a linguistic competence well beyond the reach of most candidates who, with the best of intentions, foundered badly and wrote incoherently.

Question 5

'Animals and birds should never be kept in cages.' What is your opinion?

This topic was, surprisingly, as popular as the narrative options with candidates in the Maldives Centres. Those who chose it often held passionate views that they were eager to express and some of the most interesting, though not the most accurate, responses were seen on this topic. It was felt necessary to cage animals or birds for reasons of public safety, research or conservation but it was generally considered cruel and unnatural.

Some candidates presented well-balanced arguments on both sides. Support for the idea that keeping animals and birds in cages was unnatural was found in simple comparison with Man: 'Could you imagine yourself staying in a cage until the day you die?' 'They are like prisoners of war.' On the other hand, if not caged, dangerous animals and pets might cause harm to human beings or the environment. There were some emotive, sentimental and very repetitive responses, with the phrase 'animals and birds' constantly reappearing. In weaker candidates, poor control of structure and syntax led to major problems in sustaining an argument and to the obtrusive repetition of ideas and phrases, as candidates realised that they had run out of material on the topic. Spelling errors were often basic e.g. 'creaches' (creatures) and 'human beens' and sometimes multiple error confused the reader, but the topic clearly engaged those candidates who tackled it, one of whom ended, quite effectively, with 'The life of these magnificeient creatures are in our hand'.

Part 2

This Directed Writing task proved too complicated and unfamiliar for most Maldivian candidates. Some were not familiar with the idea of a school club or a social club providing sport and leisure activities. Some wrote about football clubs and found it difficult to incorporate or even understand 'leisure facilities'. One candidate was hoping for the Maldives to take on Newcastle United. Others wrote of more cultural clubs for dance or music and found it difficult to fit in the sport.

Many candidates failed to grasp the purpose of the letter. Some asked the businessman for advice on spending the money or thought he was investing in a business venture, seeing the club as a shop which sold sports equipment. Most candidates adopted the appropriate polite but 'friendly' tone mentioned in the rubric, although they struggled to cope with the conventions of the letter format. The expected salutation in such a letter would include the business man's name, with a complimentary close of 'Yours sincerely', though some began over-familiarly: 'Hi Sammy', while others used the very formal business letter greeting: 'Dear Sir'. 'Dear Sir/Madam', carelessly adopted by a few candidates, was clearly unsuitable in the context, as were 'Yours friendly'; 'Yours thoroughly' or 'Yours lovely', all three frequently seen in Maldivian scripts.

The word 'equipment' led to many problems, often being referred to in the plural (as with 'furniture' and 'luggage' in **Question 3 (a)**), with consequent agreement difficulties. Some candidates failed to realise that 'facilities' and 'equipment' referred to two different things. They did not give specific details, or thought merely copying the phrases from the Question Paper was sufficient to gain the content points, which was not the case. 'Leisure facilities' was a phrase frequently mis-understood and many candidates simply omitted it from their letters completely.

Tense and verb forms also caused confusion for some candidates, particularly the intrusive use of the conditional 'would' for 'will': 'We would invite you to the club on Saturday.', and the misuse of the pluperfect when explaining improvements that were meant to have taken place 'recently' according to the rubric: 'We had used the money to encourage our members to stay fit.' or 'We have brought(sic) ten footballs and we had improvised(sic) our pitch.'

Generally the money was spent in an effort to increase membership, although many candidates omitted reference to the reason for the purchases and so missed another content point. Invitations to visit the club were suitably warm and friendly though not always linked to the specific purpose: 'to see the facilities in use.' In the last resort, some candidates just wrote out the question several times.

Final comments

Teachers preparing candidates for future examinations will have noted various linguistic weaknesses mentioned in considering the individual questions in this report and will, no doubt, advise their pupils accordingly.

Many Maldivian candidates lack the range of vocabulary and command of English structures and idiom necessary to cope with English Language at this level and find difficulty in understanding the questions as well as in conveying their ideas in their responses.

Problems with sequence, inconsistency of tense, incorrect verb forms, the increasing use of 'would' for 'will' and failure to separate sentences correctly with appropriate punctuation, have emerged as areas of particular difficulty. This year's Paper has also highlighted the problems of singular and plural form and agreement associated with some irregular, abstract and collective nouns:- hair, trousers, jeans, pants, clothing, advice, furniture, luggage, property, laughter, equipment.

It was disappointing to find text-messaging symbols, particularly 'u', in use. Some candidates are too eager to use an informal tone and colloquial contractions: isn't; can't; I've; don't; etc. Whilst acceptable in direct speech, this practice is not appropriate in presenting a formal descriptive, discursive or narrative essay in **Part 1** of this examination.

Teachers should emphasise the importance of candidates choosing topics that allow them to write from personal experience, in familiar settings, wherever possible.

It is disappointing to Examiners, Teachers and candidates alike, to see such a high percentage of the entry in the lower range of the results. Candidates who are clearly not yet ready for the rigours of 'O' Level might be advised to try an examination at a lower level or to delay their entry to allow for more practice and increased fluency in the language.

Finally, it should be remembered that this was the first attempt at this examination for Maldivian candidates. There will be lessons to be learned from their experience and from this report. Growing familiarity with the format and demands of the examination will, no doubt, serve to focus the preparation and increase the confidence of candidates and lead to greater success in the future.

<p>Paper 1123/02 Comprehension</p>
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General comments

There was a marked difference in approach to the Paper in the candidates' work. There were those who were obviously trying to consider the question wording and locate the appropriate area of the passage for their answers, while many others relied heavily on the wholesale transcription of the text, no doubt trusting that what they copied over would contain details that were relevant to the question. Answering questions by this method resulted in some reward if candidates had managed to find areas of text which were broadly in line with the direction of the question. However, in many cases, en bloc copying of the text would not yield any marks, especially in those questions that specifically asked for own words. It was noticeable that candidates who had clearly attempted to weigh up the meaning of a question and then aligned it with an appropriate area of the text built up a reasonable body of marks, especially in those questions which tested factual understanding.

The candidates' level of understanding shown in response to **Question 9**, the vocabulary test, often matched that which had been demonstrated in tackling earlier questions of the Paper. Those whose linguistic skills were strong enough to appreciate the essential elements of the rubric and to locate relevant areas of the passage usually made a sound showing in the vocabulary test, while candidates who had previously resorted to a heavy transcription of the text in their answers nearly always experienced difficulty in gauging the meaning of words set in this question.

The differing abilities to appreciate the direction of the rubric was underlined further in the main body of responses to **Question 10**, the summary question. There were answers which contained a spread of points derived from the whole area of the text specified for the task, indicating that candidates had understood the three main heads of the rubric and were able to identify the relevant areas of text. Many other answers concentrated on the copying out of paragraphs 5 and 6 of the passage, without getting much beyond that material. This suggested that candidates had understood the general idea of 'difficulties' faced by our ancestors in the first limb of the rubric, but not the subsequent directions for the task. Material sitting in paragraphs 8 and 9 relating to our ancestors' solutions to their difficulties and their acquired skills rarely appeared in these heavily transcribed answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question set a test which was beyond the range of a considerable number of candidates; their language understanding was not strong enough to interpret the term. Instead they turned to copying lines from paragraph 1 which referred to the remains of animals and what had happened to them. Those with a more secure grasp of idiom were able to offer apt expressions such as 'by chance' or 'accidentally'.
- (b) A straightforward test of deduction followed in this question. Lines 5-8 supplied the answer, centring on 'food'. The number of responses reproducing irrelevant material about the discovery of animal remains or the use of stone tools indicated that the wording of the question 'what was the possible reason for killing them' had not been fully understood. Only the word 'remains' in the question had been picked up, it would seem, which took candidates into irrelevant detail about the fate of animals. Candidates who had appreciated the lead of 'possible reason' in the question wording were able to make a simple deduction from lines 5-8 about 'food'.

Question 2

The first purely factual test came in this question. Not only had candidates to make an accurate selection of relevant detail, but they also had to express this material concisely. Though many answers were within or on the prescribed 10 word limit, they did not always embody the essence of lines 15-17 which supplied the required details of other animals eating the remains and crushing the bones. Some scored one mark for other animals eating the remains, but were unable to marry this with the bones being crushed by animals. Candidates hastily copying out the text never got much further than line 16, i.e. 'the scent of its decay sooner or later attracted other animals', and so missed the required details altogether.

Question 3

- (a) This part continued the factual testing. There was greater success in answers here, mainly because the relevant paragraph was short and close copying could yield marks. Nevertheless, it was important to distinguish the separate actions of the sun and wind. Those who copied the text indiscriminately failed to make the distinction and incorrectly assigned the action of 'flushing the last bit of dirt away' to the sun; they had missed its revealing action in shining down on the fossils.
- (b) Going too quickly to the text led a number of candidates to offer the action of the sun once more in answer to this part. They had not seen that 'Nature' in **Question 3 (a)** embraced the sun, and something else was needed in **(b)** to help fossil hunters in their search. Some got as far as seeing that a fresh agent was required but then mistakenly copied out the essence of lines 27-29, with the details of fossil hunter seeing a 'fragment gleaming in the ground'; they had gone quickly to these lines and not read on to see that 'luck' was the answer.

Question 4

This question set another test of factual appraisal, though this time in sterner fashion. Candidates had to note the question wording 'undergo a great change' and then find the reference to that 'change' inside a fairly long paragraph. Those who saw that lines 33 onwards marked this 'change' sometimes went on to isolate the first of the effects, that of diminishing food, but a good many stopped before this, limiting their answers to a transcription of the dying off of the forests from lines 33-37. Candidates who had tried to distil the features rather than rely on heavy text transcription frequently named the diminishing food as the first effect, though the second one, namely the constant search for food, appeared less frequently. Clearly, the bulk of lines 37-40 could be copied wholesale and earn both marks efficiently. Even so, it required a sound measure of skill to note that these lines supplied the essential answer, and to avoid the irrelevance about diminishing forests.

Question 5

- (a) In handling this part of the question, it was important once again to read the question wording with due care: 'Explain... the contrast the author is making ...' formed the heart of the question rubric, i.e. to look at the text and to see the wording there which makes the contrast between 'our ancestors and such people'. The first limb of the contrast comes in line 45 where 'stake a claim in empty territory' refers to 'such people'. Lines 45-46 refer to 'our ancestors', and their 'competing for a place in an environment already significantly populated with other animals'. Candidates were directed to use their own words, with reward being assigned to a suitable recast of the key expressions 'stake a claim' and 'empty' and then of 'compete' and 'significantly populated'.

The best that some candidates could do here was to write in very general terms about the attitudes and behaviour of either animals or our ancestors, thereby ignoring the lead of the rubric 'the contrast the author is making'. Many other answers indicated that candidates had been unable to appreciate the true nature of the task; they offered a phrase or two about the animals and ancestors, often divorced from anything in the text itself.

Although some candidates followed the lead of the rubric and named one or other of the differences of experience as set out in the text, they overlooked the rubric requirement to write in own words; despite the basic accuracy of their selection, it could not be rewarded. A small number managed to reproduce the contrast, even if in a limited measure, and composed their own words, e.g. 'our ancestors had to fight with animals' or 'people could seize the empty land'; they had done well in tackling a question that tested skills of question evaluation and text appreciation. Answers scoring full marks were rare, usually confined to scripts where a secure understanding of question wording had already been demonstrated in earlier questions.

- (b) The wording of this part, 'experience had given other animals a clear advantage', related to line 47, where the answer lay: 'experts by now in exploiting the food resources of the open plains'. Candidates who duly correlated 'had given' in the question wording with the text 'by now' saw the relevance of the line and were given full reward for a simple transcription. Candidates who had already relied on text transcription for many of their answers were sometimes fortunate enough to begin their copying at that point in text and duly earned two marks. Others concentrated on lines 48-49, with their details about animals snapping at the feet of our ancestors or stealing their food. This was not an 'advantage' animals had *already* acquired and so could not be rewarded.
- (c) This part took candidates to lines 50-51 of the passage and the reason why our ancestors had to 'stay out of the reach' of big animals. The rubric required that the answer be set in the candidate's own words. The essential details sit in the wording 'it was physically impossible to master them'. Here candidates had to draw the inference from 'physically impossible' in terms of our ancestors' weakness or lack of strength. Very few candidates were able to draw this inference. Many concentrated instead on the animals and wrote about their size, ferocity or aggression, which did not state the weakness of our ancestors. Nevertheless, correct equivalents for 'master' were seen at times, e.g. 'our ancestors could not defeat them' or 'they were unable to control them'. Close copying of lines 50-51 appeared frequently enough to suggest that some candidates had aligned the lead of the question with the appropriate area of the text, though their failure to follow the rubric requirement about the use of own words meant reward had to be withheld for their unaltered transcriptions.

Question 6

A test of factual understanding followed where candidates needed to read the question wording patiently in 'what made these scientists think that they possessed these powers'. The text at lines 65-69 supplied the answer; the stones found at Olduvai and their use as tools were 'evidence' of 'invention'. Candidates who aligned 'invention' from the question wording with the text 'evidence...of invention' correctly isolated the use of stones as tools. Again, a great number of answers relied on text transcription from somewhere near the close of paragraph 7, but the importance of 'invention' in the question wording had clearly been overlooked. As a result, either the use of stones was quoted, without the completing idea that they served as tools, or reference was made to the use of tools without the qualification of stone.

Question 7

This question required that candidates study the details of the differing behaviour of animals and our ancestors from lines 74-81 and then sum up the contrast of this behaviour, to be expressed in their own words. The rubric warned against a mere transcription or reproduction of descriptive details. Even so many answers were seen where references to animals sleeping or browsing appeared, often followed by a text-based description of our ancestor's knowledge of where to find food, in writing such as 'they were drawn to the lakeside because they knew that was where energy-giving food resided' or 'they knew that adult antelopes left their young in the grass which they could pluck like ready fruit'. The nature of many transcriptions such as these indicates that the true direction of the question wording had not been appreciated, and that candidates had quickly fastened on something within the question to take them to an area of text which they thought relevant. Answers which accurately summed up the relaxed or idle behaviour of the animals were rare, and even more so those naming our ancestors as busy or hard-working; the text at lines 78-79, with its reference to our ancestors 'darting quickly' in their constant search for food, typified their busy behaviour.

Question 8

In answering this question it was again necessary to consider the question wording and see how it related to the text before attempting an answer and to note that the rubric specified the use of own words. 'Enabled to become superior' in the question wording was deliberately framed to align with 'gave them the edge over... rivals' in lines 88-89. Noting this alignment could lead observant candidates to the essence of the 'superiority' spelt out in line 87, i.e. 'communicating knowledge'. Though a number of candidates saw this alignment, they went too quickly to line 88 and overlooked the important addition of 'knowledge'; 'communication' by itself did not provide the necessary answer. Thus they simply wrote out 'communication', ignoring the rubric requirement for own words; even when some added 'knowledge' they could not score, since own words had not been used.

Nevertheless, such answers showed that candidates were making a relevant distillation of the text, as opposed to many which were derived from line 90 and beyond, nearly always in text wording. These closing lines had nothing to do with the way 'superiority' had been achieved in the first place. Effective equivalents for 'communicating knowledge' were confined to the better scripts, often in the work of candidates who went on to do well in the vocabulary test. Examiners readily credited partial equivalents for the phrase such as 'they passed messages', which embodied 'communication', and quickly gave two marks for complete renderings seen along the lines of 'they conveyed information', where 'information' was felt to be a strong enough implication of 'knowledge'.

Question 9

In answering this question, the test of vocabulary understanding, candidates needed to set the words they chose against their particular use in text and not offer meanings which were out of tune with the text settings. Candidates who had already demonstrated good linguistic skills in their appreciation of previous tasks produced accurate equivalents for most of their chosen words; they were clearly being careful to align them with their text settings. 'Secret', though, in line 89 was not always correctly interpreted. Its setting in 'secret scraps of ...food' carried the idea of food being 'hidden' or 'concealed'. Answers frequently contained the wrong notion, e.g. that of not telling anybody about them, or keeping them private. 'Promised' in line 83 also conveyed a special meaning, that the vultures indicated or showed that there were remains of animals nearby; it did not have the meaning of 'ensured' or 'made certain' which appeared in a number of scripts. The limited linguistic skills already appearing in the work of many candidates meant that the test of vocabulary understanding would be especially demanding for them. False equivalents for 'likely', namely 'similar' or 'same as', were very common, as they were for 'attracted'; answers such as 'forced' or 'get noticed by' suggested that the candidates had some idea of what the word meant but could not frame an accurate re-cast from their own run of vocabulary. Answers for other words did not get this far, but were clearly guesses at the meanings of chosen words. 'Live in' for 'rivals' and 'gaps' for 'trace' typify those that were way off line. One or two marks out of five were the totals recorded by a significant number of candidates; their linguistic abilities had clearly been stretched by the demands of the question.

Question 10

Comment has already been made in the opening section of this report on the widely differing approach of candidates to the summary task in this question. The better summaries indicated that the lead of the rubric had been appreciated, which meant that points collected were spread throughout the specified parameters of the text. In the best scripts this selection was very well sustained and earned a good mark for the overall content. The first point came fairly easily as a run-on from the given opening words, namely 'animals' or 'creatures' and was seen in the majority of the better summaries. Not nearly so many included the next point, namely the expertise of animals in exploiting the food resources of the open plains, probably because candidates could not gauge the inference here as a 'difficulty' our ancestors faced in competing with the animals. Though a number saw that lines 48-50 were relevant to the task, with their reference to the particular threats posed by animals, they handled the subsequent point less confidently; they referred simply to the need to avoid animals, failing to include the important qualification of size or ferocity.

Paragraph 6 continued the theme of the 'difficulties faced'. The relevant points here centred on the sparseness of food in dry seasons, the way it was limited to low-quality vegetation, the refusal of our ancestors to go on depending on it and their search for tastier foods. The differentiation and selection of relevant points from this paragraph set a sterner test for the better candidates. Many of them could not fully understand 'the dry season meant lean times', even though lines 59-60 re-set the expression, i.e. the scarcity of food. Nevertheless, keeping an eye on the rubric heading of 'difficulties faced' enabled them to include some of the apposite details about the low quality of food and the determination of our ancestors to find better alternatives.

The content of paragraph 7 dealt with the next section of the rubric, how our ancestors overcame their difficulties. Again, the differentiation and selection of relevant points required careful reading of the text. Precision was necessary in re-casting our ancestors' *discovery* that plants hid their juicier parts underground; stating simply, as many did, that they *were* underground did not pin-point the ancestors' ability to overcome difficulties. It also needed care to re-cast our ancestors' invention of stone tools and the use of sticks correctly; the less observant referred simply to the use of tools to dig out the underground roots and bulbs. Despite these shortcomings, the sustained attempt by the better candidates to select points judiciously contrasted markedly with the work of many candidates. Their summaries were mostly en bloc transcriptions of the text, confined to a narrow area of the text.

Paragraph 8 supplied material that referred to the third section of the question rubric, i.e. the summary of the further skills our ancestors acquired in overcoming their difficulties. The opening section of the paragraph concerned the knowledge our ancestors developed regarding their habitat (lines 70-72). While a number of the more competent summaries began with this point, they strayed into the subsequent text content of lines 72 to line 78, with its irrelevant descriptions of the habits of animals. Having wasted words like this, candidates were unable to do proper justice to lines 82 onwards and the ways in which our ancestors used the behaviour of animals to their advantage. The best candidates by-passed the distraction and went on to the close of paragraph 8 where they could gain marks for recording the knowledge our ancestors gained about their habitat and the benefit from noting the habits of animals.

Relevant details from paragraph 9 centred on our ancestors' ability to communicate their knowledge, avoid unknown dangers and to survive. Candidates making a conscious attempt to summarise neatly closed their summaries with one or two of these details. It was evident, also, that in attempting a summary proper they were trying to compose in their own words as far possible, as the rubric directed. This earned them reward under the mark assigned for style, even if errors of expression crept in. In general, most of their work was free from seriously ingrained errors. Uncertainty in developing clause structures appeared, such as 'they made stones to dig the roots as well as which cut flesh' 'communication enabled them to hunt and so making ways to overcome danger' 'the roots provided healthy food which the ancestors ate the fruits'. Errors in tense and agreements were also noticeable, e.g. 'they found that the plants underground is also healthy' 'they got these food by digging'. False use of prepositions was seen, as well as omissions of words in writing, such as 'they stayed out of reach with the big animals', 'they fashioned a stick from which to get at the food', 'communication enabled better means to hunt', 'in dry season food was scarce'. However, the incidence of such errors in the more competent summaries was never serious, and for the most part was offset by accurate spelling and punctuation. Examiners give full credit to a recognisable attempt at own words and assess the accuracy of English separately, especially when the writing overall is comparatively free from serious errors.

In contrast, very many summaries could earn little or nothing for the use of own words since they were mostly word for word copying of the original text. In doing so candidates soon used up the allotted span of 150 words allowed and so the mark for content suffered as well. Some of the relevant material set in lines 46-60 of the text would be copied over, but gaps of sense would often occur and clinching details of points were omitted which robbed candidates of possible reward for the content of these lines. Clearly, this heavy copying was adopted by a significant number of candidates since they either lacked the understanding required to follow the different heads of the rubric or their language skills were too uncertain to allow any attempt at originality in a sustained run of 150 words.