

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Reading, although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- 1 In responding to all questions, candidates are advised to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- 2 **Question 1(h)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the meanings of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, it is important to note that each component part of the question requires two separate words in the quotation to be explained (1 mark for each explanation) and that marks will not be awarded to responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word.
- 3a **Question 1(i)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, responses should attempt to explain *how* the choice of words conveys the aspect identified in the question (in this case, a sense of excitement). This question does not require a paraphrase of the words chosen as this skill is tested elsewhere in the paper.
- 3b When attempting to explain the effects of the writer's use of language for **Question 1 (i)**, candidates should be aware that merely identifying figures of speech and other literary devices, without a further attempt at explanation, is insufficient for the award of a mark. Similarly, it is expected that answers to this task will attempt to give developed explanations of how an effect is achieved. Answers on the lines of 'this phrase suggests the writer's sense of excitement because it is exciting' are insufficient as convincing explanations.
- 4 An informal or colloquial register was appropriate for the Writing task but responses should also show awareness of the need to demonstrate an ability to write accurately, using standard English, in order to have access to the highest bands of the Mark Scheme.

The above points will be considered in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

## General Comments

The passage about a visit to the rainforests of Peru proved to be generally accessible and responses gave clear evidence of positive engagement with it. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most were of adequate length for all questions. The most successful responses were those that paid attention to the precise requirements of specific questions. There was also very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of the reading passage. As in previous sessions, there was a comparatively large number of responses which did not achieve the full total of marks available for some tasks as they either did not respond to a specific detail required by the question or included an irrelevant point in their answer, possibly as a result of misreading the wording of the question rather than from misunderstanding the passage. It is important to note that this comment applies to both **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

Presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that candidates were taking the examination seriously and trying their very best to do well.

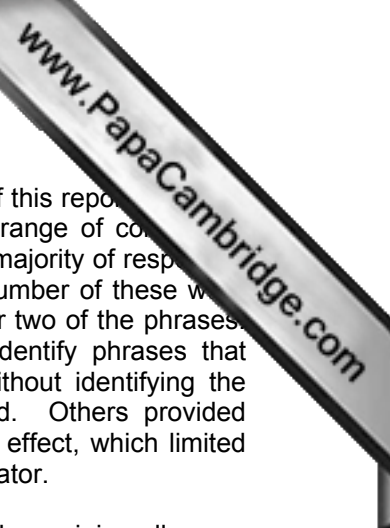
## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) In general, this 2 mark question was answered well and many answers gained the two marks by identifying (i) that the writer was afraid that her high expectations of the experience of visiting the country might lead to her being disappointed and (ii) that in the event, it exceeded her expectations.
- (b) The majority of answers scored the 1 mark available for this question by identifying that that the reason for the writer's visit was to see the nature and/or wild life of the country (or that it was a good destination for nature lovers or for eco tourism).
- (c) A large number of responses gained at least 1 mark out of 2 for this question by showing an understanding that the writer's use of the word 'elusive' meant that it is not easy to see jaguars and a reasonable number gained the full 2 marks by going on to explain that this is because they deliberately avoid human contact. Some responses that did not gain marks on this question may have mistaken the word and read it as 'exclusive'. This led to explanations that jaguars are special or rare, but without the sense that they are secretive creatures who keep themselves hidden.
- (d) The majority of responses to this 2 mark question gained at least 1 mark by saying that the writer wanted to remember the advice given by Elias. Those who went on to gain both marks linked this need to remember the possibility of the writer getting lost and/or needing to survive in the jungle.
- (e) This question also was generally answered correctly with a large number of responses gaining at least 1 of the 2 available marks. Details (about the differences between visiting the jungle in the night time) that might have been referred to were:
- it was dark.
  - the torchlight reflected from animals' eyes /the eyes gleamed.
  - the jungle and/or the wildlife seemed more menacing.
  - the golden flashes of the fireflies could be seen.
  - there were eerie/strange sounds.

Although most responses showed a good, overall understanding of this section of the passage, a number did not gain a mark as they stated that the writer saw animals that only appeared at night (some even used the word 'nocturnal'). However, there is nothing in the passage to support this detail - indeed, caimans were seen both at night and during the day.

- (f) The majority of responses gained the 1 mark available by correctly identifying that the unusual aspect of the painting in the cathedral in Cusco was that the artist had included roast guinea-pig and local drink rather than conventional offerings, or that there was a mixture of European and Peruvian cultures in the picture.
- (g) A large number of responses gained the 1 mark available for this question by correctly explaining that Machu Picchu was unique among Inca sites in being the only one that was not destroyed by the Spanish.
- (h) Overall this 6 mark, three part language question was a good discriminator and it was important for responses to be made on the basis of a very careful reading of the question. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, in each part it is important to give an explanation of two key words. It is worth noting that in the third part, the majority of responses were focused on the use of the phrase in context, rather than the meaning of the phrase itself and this led to answers that did not gain a mark (in the passage the writer is saying that the area is **not** a tamed environment). Further exemplification of responses is provided below:
- (h)(i) The phrase 'luxuriant foliage' could be explained as 'very lush leafy growth'.
- (ii) The phrase 'the jungle without discomfort' could be explained as 'even though you are in the jungle, you are not suffering any of the usual hardships'.
- (iii) The phrase 'tamed environment' could be explained as 'a habitat which has been subdued by humans'.



- (i) This 6 mark language question (as mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report) required candidates to comment on the writer's use of language and led to a wide range of responses. There were a few excellent responses that achieved the full 6 marks and the majority of responses managed to identify some, if not three, appropriate phrases. A fairly high number of these were able to give reasonable explanations relating to excitement for at least one or two of the phrases. There were a relatively small number of responses which attempted to identify phrases that conveyed excitement and quoted words such as 'most exciting for me' without identifying the details that made the experience exciting. These could not be rewarded. Others provided explanations which explained the meaning of the chosen phrase, but not its effect, which limited the marks available. The explanation of writer's effects proved a key discriminator.
- (j) Many responses achieved at least 4 marks for this question, with a large number gaining all seven marks available. The majority successfully focused on details other than those relating to nature/wildlife; the most successful drew their points from the whole of the passage with the result that a good range of points was included. The majority of responses showed a clear awareness of the principles of summary writing and attempted to select appropriate points. The least successful responses tended to give details about nature and wildlife which were specifically excluded by the wording of the task. The points about what the writer did in Peru (apart from looking at nature and wildlife) that were credited in the Mark Scheme were as follows:
1. Stopped at the lodge/in a wooden cabin/at Inkaterra Reserva Amazonia.
  2. Went for a nature walk with/met Elias.
  3. Learnt what was safe to eat/discovered how to make tattoos/how to make mosquito repellent.
  4. Went for a twilight walk.
  5. Flew to Cusco.
  6. Went to the cathedral/looked at the paintings.
  7. Took a bus/travelled through the Sacred Valley.
  8. Took a train.
  9. Went to Aguas Calientes/Machu Picchu.
  10. Stayed in a hotel.

## Question 2

This question is assessed for both Reading (using and understanding the material, 10 marks) and Writing (10 marks).

In general, the majority of responses to the Writing task were clearly focused on the task and the detail with which the third bullet was addressed proved to be the main discriminator for the Reading mark. As in previous sessions, candidates performed to a reasonable standard on this task with many responses achieving in the Band 2/3 range for both elements; a considerably higher number of answers gained marks in the Band 2/1 range than fell into Bands 4 and 5. Overall, the average mark for Writing was slightly above that for Reading. The most successful responses adapted material from the passage quite seamlessly and managed to avoid the pitfall of lifting large amounts of the original passage; the less successful responses needed to be less reliant on the source material and avoid a tendency merely to repeat the article. These responses also needed to organise the material more carefully and address the three bullet pointed requirements for the piece of writing more clearly.

There was some evidence of responses successfully adopting an appropriate register for the task and producing lively writing. There were many examples of a very convincing sense of writing to a friend about a personal experience. To achieve high marks for reading, responses needed to include accounts which selected content about Peru, the rainforest or Machu Picchu from the passage and gave a reason why it was worth seeing, rather than repetitive exclamations such as 'What a place!' 'You must go there!' 'You won't regret it!' or 'I cannot describe in words how exciting it was!'

Although nearly all responses were written with sufficient accuracy to communicate their ideas to their readers and there were many examples of very competent writing skills, there was evidence of non-existent punctuation (and the use of commas instead of semi-colons or full stops). There was some misspelling of basic vocabulary and responses needed to discern between acceptable, formal language and slang: *gonna*, *'cause* etc. Contractions such as *aswell*, and the lower case *i* for the first person singular pronoun should all be avoided, especially by responses hoping to achieve marks in the highest bands. Centres are encouraged to emphasise these points to their candidates because, in many cases, it is the making of these avoidable

basic technical errors which prevents responses achieving marks in the grade C range for this part. It was evidence that responses were structured and vocabulary choices were carefully considered. Careful work, with concentration on accuracy in spelling and punctuation would bring rewards.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

## General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates found both passages accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band candidates were required to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** some candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but occasionally responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. Other less secure answers included repeated information, but phrased differently. It is important that candidates use their own words since to do otherwise suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong: the mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve higher mark bands, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to understand what the couple in the passage had intended to do, what actually happened and what advice the writer would give to others going on such a trip.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. There was some evidence that Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of **Question 3**, where the two halves of the question were generally better balanced this session.

Most answers were in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length.



### Comments on specific questions

**Question 1: Imagine that you are Rosemarie Alecio, the writer of the article. You have just returned home from your trip to the Andes and have agreed to be interviewed by your local radio station. The interviewer asks the following three questions only: What did you hope to experience in the Andes? Was the trip everything you expected? What advice would you give to anyone intending to go on such a trip? Write the words of the interview, beginning with the first question.**

**(20 marks)**

Most responses took the form of interviews between a presenter of a radio programme and Rosemarie Alecio, restricting the questions to the three listed in the instructions. A few contained additional reactions by the interviewer to what Rosemarie had just said before asking the next given question, and a few did ask supplementary questions, usually clearly linked to the task. Better responses captured and synthesised Rosemarie's ambivalent attitude to the trip, aware that many of its features made it one of the most stimulating of her life, yet she had found it arduous for various reasons. Only a few responses captured the notion that a gruelling walk in a remote landscape in testing climatic conditions can induce a tremendous sense of achievement.

Less confident responses either made little attempt to adapt the material, or used the passage as a springboard into creative writing, with digressions on the charm and generosity of the Andean people, the range of wildlife and the need for Rosemarie and Alfred to spend quality time together. The first section of the answer required two key facts to be retrieved from the passage: the couple's first objective was to take a cable car to the top of the Venezuelan Andes, and their second was to undertake a trek across a mountain pass. Responses which did not initially identify these tended to expand on the views and beautiful landscapes without stressing the nature of these views or what made this landscape so special. A common misunderstanding was that the couple wished to 'exercise' rather than trek, because the passage stated that the first 'object of the exercise' was to take the cable car. This first section did yield some reasonable developments, for example that the couple wanted to challenge themselves and/or escape from the pollution and noise of city life. However, too often a response which did not clearly identify the two basic objectives in the first section of the answer re-told some of the couple's experiences in terms of the extremity of the climate and altitude or the difficulty of the walk, not having focused on the specifics of the interviewer's first question. Such an answer then repeated the information in tackling the second question. There was a common misunderstanding that the couple had to walk over ice or snow. Less assured responses were usually more secure when answering the third of the interviewer's questions, but tended to rely heavily on lists of items to be taken, e.g. windproofs, sun hats, bottles of water, often lifted straight from the text.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the response. It was not possible to use all the details from the passage in the space available, but good responses managed to include all the main ones, involving the two distinct aspects of the trip, the anticipated uniqueness of the location, the reality of the physical demands of the terrain and the impact the elements had on them. The best responses clearly differentiated between the problems experienced at the top of Pico Espejo and those on the trek. Many responses contained comment on the huge scale of the vistas and the relative insignificance of human beings. Better responses to the third question developed points and details, in some cases in quite small ways, but nevertheless showing inferential understanding. Thus the need to have the correct equipment in the form of stout walking boots was necessary in order to make scrambling over boulders easier. Effective planning ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading, and development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

Better responses captured a convincing voice for Rosemarie, conveying an enthusiasm for what had been seen and experienced as well as reflecting on the rashness of the couple's insufficient preparation. Some of these answers made it clear that the couple were experienced walkers (14.5 km was 'normally well within a day's walking distance') yet they had encountered problems and suffered afterwards. Advice to others and reflection of how the couple might have done things better included the advisability of taking a guide (human or in the form of a book or map), the need to train before going to the Andes and the sense in going with more than one other person in case of an emergency, with sprained ankles and worse being a possibility in such terrain. Tech-savvy candidates noted that a GPS device would have helped.

In less assured answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of

the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the Reading mark would be high. Responses were most prone to lifting in sections two and three. In section two, lifts included a narration of the stages of the cable car, the heights gained and the names of the peaks reached and seen. Another popular section was the description of the route with its 'slippery gravel and sand' and so on. In section three as well as the list of items in the backpack, popular lifts were the various types of clothing and protections against UV light. There is a difference between details from the text and wholesale copying of long phrases or complete sentences.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the interview, and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of awe Rosemarie felt. The better written responses had a lively, engaging and convincing style, and Rosemarie's personality and views did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus. Such responses were well structured and avoided repetition.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections;
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response;
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas;
- Develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly;
- Create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona(e) in the response.

**Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the scenery in paragraph 4, beginning 'What wonderful views...' and (b) the challenges of the walk in paragraph 6, beginning 'The journey ahead...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

Responses that achieve the top mark bands require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question were mostly answered equally well, and responses provided relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Nearly all responses said something about 'majestic, ancient and wise' in paragraph 4 (although sometimes as three separate choices) and 'stretch to infinity' in paragraph 6. Comparatively few showed understanding of what 'meandering' means, and many thought that the couple literally walked across ice because of the reference to an 'ice rink'.

A wide vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Explaining an image in the form of another image is not helpful.

The first level of approach is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 4 was the 'silver thread': strong responses introduced the notion of the material in which the mountain is clothed having been decorated by precious and sparkling stitch work; weaker responses simply quoted the phrase or noted it showed the river was narrow from that height.

Some responses were approximately three-quarters of a side long. Other candidates chose to use page 6 of the answer booklet for (a) and page 7 for (b). Length of itself is no guarantee of a quality answer. However, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. Many responses were limited to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph.

Most responses selected individual words and short phrases and treated them separately, but some gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. 'an obstacle course' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'obstacle'. Overviews were given that showed an understanding of the huge height of the mountains in paragraph 4 and the arduous and seemingly endless walk in paragraph 6, but these needed to be supported

by a range of individual examples and comments for the full dramatic effect to be conveyed. Responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several items, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain.

There was a dependence on the idea of the vulnerability of the walkers, their insignificance in this vast landscape. Both words were from the text, one from each paragraph. Whilst they were not part of a listed choice in the mark scheme, responses which relied on these words were not demonstrating clear understanding of the choices to which they were attributing these qualities.

The key to paragraph 4 (section **(a)**) is the idea of an omnipotent figure which is clothed in a dark, intricately ornamented fabric, wearing a white cloak across its shoulders. The best explanations tended to focus on the qualities of the mountain. Very few responses focused on the extended imagery. Weaker responses offered the quotation 'we could almost touch the snow-clad Pico Bolivar' and dealt with the couple's closeness to it rather than the image.

In section **(b)**, based on paragraph 6, 'stretch to infinity' and 'no bigger than ants' were often quoted, but not explained as exaggerations. The choices 'stern sky' and 'whims' of the elements were rarely selected. However, many candidates were able to explain the effect of the image 'luxury of a grassy cushion' was to accentuate the hardness of the rest of the path. Successful **(b)** responses should focus on evocative or unusual words that carry connotations additional to general meaning. The list of items the couple carried and the distance being 14.5 km were not appropriate choices.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

**(a) The appearance of the scenery in paragraph 4**

*The writer creates an awesome grandeur for the mountain, contrasting it with tiny landscape features far below. The central image is of a 'majestic, ancient and wise' being. These adjectives could be applied to priests or monarchs, people who are looked up to and revered. The mountain is clothed in a priest-like white cloak, hence it is 'snow-clad'. Initially its presence is seen as gracious as it 'greet's' the visitors, but soon the couple appreciate a more ominous side to the mountain as it is a 'giant lording it'. In legends giants are generally feared creatures, and this one is able to exercise considerable power and authority over the lesser peaks, and no doubt over humans, too. Their attention is then taken by the 'meandering' river, a curvaceous water course, a term usually associated with mature rivers – like the mountain itself, this river has been in existence for a long time. It is a slow word with long vowel sounds, a paradox given that earlier the verb 'rushed' was used. For it to both 'rush' and 'meander' it must be a very powerful river indeed, from a powerful source. The dominance of the mountain is enhanced by the images of the 'silver thread' and the 'dark fabric'. Once again, the mountain is clothed, but a contrast to the snowy cape on its shoulders. As with the clothing of any great being, this one is ornamented with precious threads of silver which have been stitched on, so the line of water appears and disappears from view as rocks and indentations are skirted. Finally, the writer feels that 'no superlative' is capable of describing the scene, that no words can describe its captivating magnificence with the implication that readers must visit for themselves to appreciate it.*



**(b) The challenges of the walk in paragraph 6**

*The challenges of the walk are extreme. The path is of 'steep, snaking climbs', the alliteration stresses the double difficulty of this precipitous, winding route. It seems to 'stretch to infinity', an exaggeration which corresponds to the lowering of spirits as the trekkers cannot see the top of the climb. Although they are not crossing a pass and not climbing a peak, the heights gained are phenomenal: they feel 'no bigger than ants', tiny insects. Such insects are easily squashed and are defenceless against humans; this couple are similarly tiny in this huge landscape and also at risk of being damaged. The 'stern sky' is lowering down at them, appraising them and possibly finding them wanting. They are subject to the 'whims of the elements'. Just like the giant which lorded it over time and space in paragraph 4, so the elements of wind, sun and temperature can play with the pair as they choose. Underfoot the route is virtually impossible – it is an 'obstacle course'. Nature has deliberately designed the layout of boulders, gravel and stone to test the walkers. Slips and falls are inevitable. Moreover, the couple feel as though the trek is 'across an ice rink'. It is impossible to maintain one's footing on the smooth ice in a rink unless on skates; many obstacles in the way make it impossible. The occasional 'luxury of a grassy cushion' emphasises the hardness of the rest of the route as a cushion is soft and aids comfortable sitting. Normally over-looked grass has become a rare treat.*

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks.
- Re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- Try to remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording.
- Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. That can give you some marks for the question if the meaning is accurate. Explain in your own words what the word or phrase means in the context of the passage.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

**Question 3: Summarise (a) what makes the eastern Himalayas special and why measures are needed to protect them, according to Passage B; and (b) what made the trek difficult and uncomfortable, according to Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Section (b) was generally better done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Weaker responses concentrated on Passage B and were dominated by statistics with some answers to this part of the question being nearly a full page in length. Good responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition and listing explanatory information. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the need to monitor threatened species would follow logically from the range of species to be found and that new ones are discovered every year. Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of Reading marks in both sections, although

points 6, 11 and 12 from the mark scheme were less commonly offered. Point 16 had to be about a boulder rather than an impediment to progress and point 14 needed to be about the length of the climb rather than the apparent infinity of the climb. Candidates who said the walkers might slip on the ice did not gain marks for point 18.

Good responses used complex sentences with different beginnings and avoided presenting points in lists or long explanations. In Passage B, much of paragraph three is a list of the fauna and flora to be found in the Himalayas. Likewise, later reference to the comparison of the Namcha Barwa Canyon to the Grand Canyon was unnecessary, as were the discoveries made in it. Detailed explanations tended to not only reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost Writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the dimensions of the Himalayas, that 'some of Asia's greatest rivers spring to life in the Himalayas' and the descriptions of the latest discoveries of the frog, scorpion and deer were often lifted word for word or were very closely paraphrased; there was also some copying from Passage A of the 'steep, snaking climbs' and of the way 'strewn with slippery gravel, fine sand and boulders'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, it would prove difficult to find an economical substitute in Passage A for 'blisters' and 'cold' and a paraphrase was not expected.

Section (b) asked what made the trek difficult and uncomfortable, but some responses included the occasional grassy cushion and that the couple was carrying a pack, inferring that the latter would make the trek uncomfortable. It could be argued that having the pack with these items probably made the trek easier, and, in any case, the grass provided a welcome break from the boulders and gravel. The inclusion of extra points like these reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks not only for Reading but also for Writing.

Higher marks for Writing are awarded where there are varied and fluent sentence structures, and just enough information is given about the points to convey each one clearly. Summaries which were written clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of Writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

### **Section (a)**

*The Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world, spanning five countries and containing a deep canyon. They are the source of many great rivers and home to an amazing range of rare animals and plants, many new varieties of which are discovered every year. Understandably, they are regarded as sacred by many of the peoples who inhabit the region, and for whose lives the natural resources they offer are essential. Protective measures are essential due to climate change which, along with persistent trade in wildlife and deforestation, is threatening the survival of several species.*

### **Section (b)**

*The Andean trek was difficult owing to its sheer length and the fatigue it produced. This was partly due to the cold brought on by the high altitude and the ensuing difficulty in breathing. The strong sunlight was also problematic. The route was often steep with slippery gravel or enormous boulders to be negotiated, and blisters were experienced. It was a barren landscape virtually devoid of human habitation.*

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- Use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting; small handwriting will not deceive the Examiner.
- Write informatively and never comment on or add to the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- Make a point only once.
- Be specific; do not generalise.