

**FORMAT OF THE QUESTION PAPER**

This paper consists of two sections - Section A and B. Candidates are required to answer questions in both sections. The time allocated is one and three-quarter hours.

**SECTION A** - This section is on directed writing. The candidate is required to write a response to a task in clear and accurate Standard English, using a style and tone appropriate to the task. The task requires the candidate to write a report to the principal to inform him/her of some matters in the school which need to be improved. The candidate is to provide details and examples.

**SECTION B** - This section tests writing skills. It tests the candidate's ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It also tests the candidate's ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a number of alternatives. The candidate has to choose one of the 5 titles to write a composition of about 350 words in length.

**GENERAL PERFORMANCE**

On the whole, candidates did not fare as well in this paper as in Paper 2. A big proportion scored below the median while not many belonged to the top range. This shows that the majority of the candidates have yet to master the writing skills in English.

**GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO GROUPS****Candidates in the High Achievement Group**

Candidates who scored high marks displayed very good linguistic ability and were able to address the task accurately and clearly. Few grammatical mistakes were made and a flair for the language was shown. Vocabulary was precise, Varied sentence types and structures were employed to achieve the intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation and paragraphs.

**Candidates in the Average Achievement Group**

Candidates with average performance understood the task before them but lacked the linguistic ability to write effectively. Serious grammatical errors are frequently made. They were unable to sustain accuracy for long. Vocabulary was limited and sentence structures repetitive. Answers generally displayed a lack of organization and coherence. Overall, reader's interest was lacking and responses might not always be relevant to the question.

**Candidates in the Low Achievement Group**

Candidates who scored low marks lacked the language competence and gave Sections A and B the minimal treatment. There was a high density of serious errors which caused blurring in meaning and in some places, meaning was hardly comprehensible. In extreme cases, candidates merely copied the rubric or did not attempt the question. Answers were sometimes irrelevant.

## DETAILED PERFORMANCE

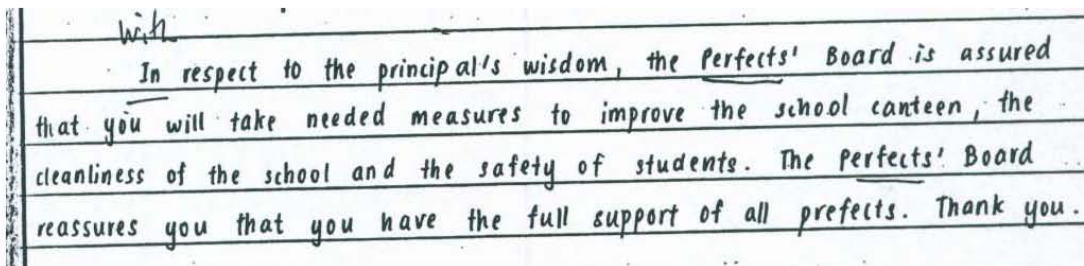
### SECTION A

#### QUESTION 1: DIRECTED WRITING

This question was attempted by almost all the candidates. Proportionately, candidates scored higher marks compared to continuous writing, being helped by the content marks.

#### STRENGTH

1. The candidates demonstrated good understanding of the task. Candidates were able to present the layout of a report. There was also an appropriate introductory paragraph.
2. Candidates were able to use an appropriate tone and style suitable for a report to a principal (Refer to example below)

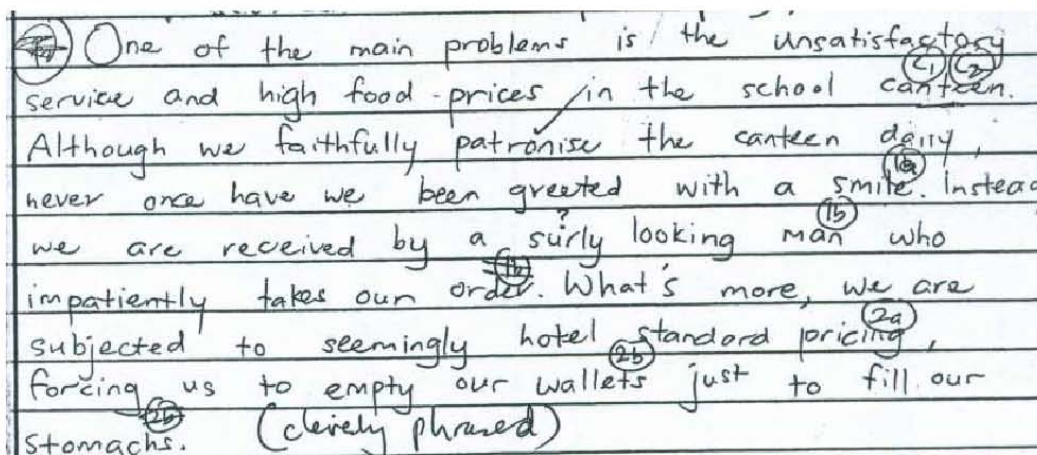


With  
In respect to the principal's wisdom, the Prefects' Board is assured that you will take needed measures to improve the school canteen, the cleanliness of the school and the safety of students. The Prefects' Board reassures you that you have the full support of all prefects. Thank you.

From the example, we can see that the tone is formal, respectful and polite, as befitting a report to the principal.

Further examples from candidates' answers:

- I hope our dearest principal will take matters stated above into consideration.
  - We also hope the necessary action will be taken.
  - We hope the Principal will look into the matters.
  - We would like to draw your attention to a few matters in our school that need improvements.
  - On behalf of the Prefects' Board, I would like to highlight a few matters.
3. Points were advanced and duly elaborated on. Relevant details and examples were provided, as required in the question (Refer to example below).



One of the main problems is the unsatisfactory service and high food-prices in the school canteen. Although we faithfully patronise the canteen daily, never once have we been greeted with a smile. Instead we are received by a surly looking man who impatiently takes our order. What's more, we are subjected to seemingly hotel standard pricing, forcing us to empty our wallets just to fill our stomachs. (clearly phrased)

In the above example, the candidate had effectively stated two main points (i.e. unsatisfactory service and high food prices in the school canteen) followed by further information on the two points.

Further examples from candidates' answers:

- *Food is prepared an hour before recess and is left uncovered, attracting a host of flies which hover over it. This can lead to food poisoning.*
- *The canteen workers are rude and scold students who do not have the right change.*
- *The road in front of our school is a busy one and poses a great danger to students.*
- *Food is expensive and is certainly beyond the means of the average students who come from middle-class families.*

4. Good candidates were able to advance their points effectively through the use of precise vocabulary and varied sentence structures (Refer to the example above).

Here, the candidate is able to provide vivid details of the unsatisfactory service by using words such as: 'surlly-looking', 'impatiently', 'seemingly hotel standard pricing' and 'empty our wallets'.

Further examples from candidates' answers:

- *The prefects heard numerous complaints and grouses from a lot of students.*
- *Our students deserve a conducive and appropriate environment for them to excel in their studies.*
- *The rude remarks are certainly uncalled for.*
- *Prices are exorbitant and beyond our means.*

5. The sentences were suitably linked to give a smooth flow of ideas through the use of conjunctions and connectors (Refer to example below).

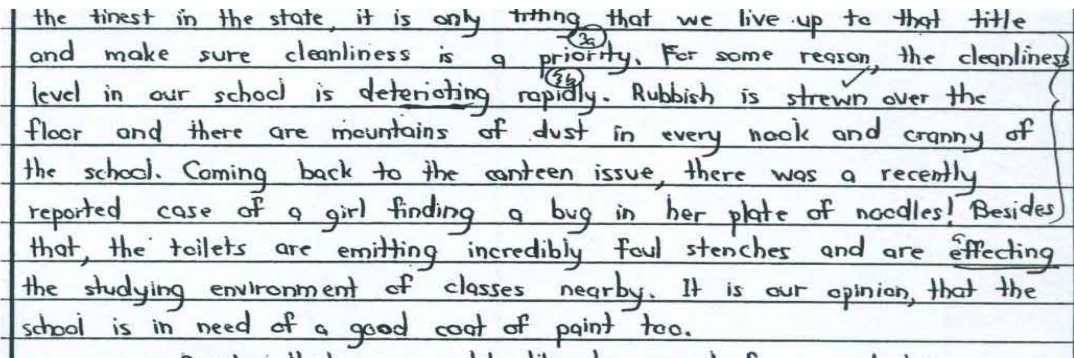
the finest in the state, it is only trying that we live up to that title and make sure cleanliness is a priority. For some reason, the cleanliness level in our school is deteriorating rapidly. Rubbish is strewn over the floor and there are mountains of dust in every nook and cranny of the school. Coming back to the canteen issue, there was a recently reported case of a girl finding a bug in her plate of noodles! Besides that, the toilets are emitting incredibly foul stench and are affecting the studying environment of classes nearby. It is our opinion, that the school is in need of a good coat of paint too.

Here, the candidate used phrases like 'Coming back to the canteen issue....' and 'Besides that...'. There was also apt use of punctuation marks, in this case the exclamation mark.

Further examples from candidates' answers:

- Our next complaint is .....
- Moreover, .....
- In addition to that, .....
- Another aspect that needs improvement .....
- Also, the toilets are .....
- Lastly, .....
- Not only... but also .....

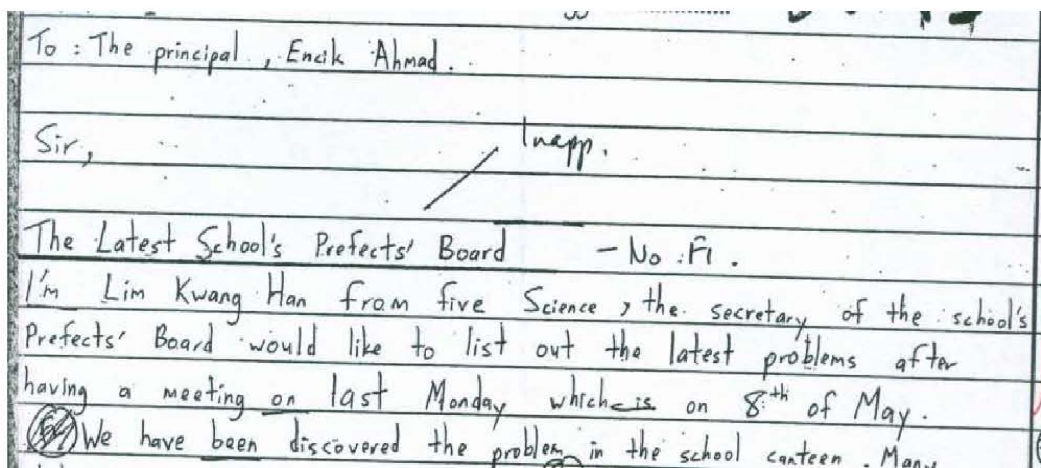
6. Most importantly, good candidates were able to present answers with few or no errors. (Refer to the example below)



The message is clearly stated and the reader has no problem understanding it and is convinced that the response truly represents a report to the principal.

## WEAKNESS

1. Weak candidates often gave an inappropriate layout due to lack of practice or poor understanding of the task. Many weak candidates did not use the format of a report. Some used the format of a letter, minutes of a meeting, a newspaper report, while a substantial number did not have any format at all. Title given was not suitable or there was no title at all. There was no paragraphing. (Refer to the example below)



The candidate has included the salutation (Sir) which is not required in a report format. There is a title but it is not relevant to the task which is to address certain matters in the school which need to be improved.

2. Some candidates were not aware of the underlying tone of the writing and gave the impression of being disrespectful. (Refer to the example below)

*There's all for the prefects' discussing. We really hope that principal will solve the problems before it get worst. Think of the students' safety and name of the school.*

Here, the candidate seemed to imply that the principal did not think of the students' safety and was not being responsible.

Further examples from the candidates' answers:

- *We want to tell you some problems.*
- *We want you to take action or we will report to other people.*
- *Our school is dirty because you are not strict. The neighbouring schools are clean because the principals always check the condition of their schools.*
- *At last, we want you to solve the problems.*
- *You should change the canteen workers.*

3. Some weak candidates showed a lack of or no understanding of the given points.

Further examples from the candidates' answers:

- *Our school needs many urgent to work in the school.*
- *Students are scared to go to school when they see zebra crossing the road.*

4. There was no or limited attempt to give details/examples for basic points. Many weak candidates merely strung the key words from the rubric together. There was no elaboration. Some even resorted to wholesale copying of the rubric. (Refer to the example below)

*Report the unsatisfactory service and high food prices in the school canteen, the urgent need to improve the cleanliness of the school, the request for the pedestrian or zebra crossing in front of the school.*

5. Candidates showed limited vocabulary. (Refer to the example below)

*firstly we would like to make a report about the unsatisfactory service and also about the high food prices in the school canteen. the canteen of the school is the food are not so good and not so clean. the prices of the food are so expensive. they are a lot of poor student in the school that can't afford to buy the food.*

The candidate here repeated the word 'food' in every sentence. Food was described as 'not so good', instead of *delicious, appetizing, etc.*

6. There was also evidence of interference from the candidate's mother tongue.

Examples from the candidates' answers:

- Many people say the food can give they a sick.
- The canteen up the price high and you should ask them to make price come down.

7. At times there was a mixture of English and Bahasa Melayu in the candidates' responses.

Examples from the candidates' answers:

- We must turun the prices.
- It is not good for students and will menjejaskan school.
- Many students not disciplined mengotorkan school and the student need dihukum.

8. Weak candidates had low marks because of the errors made in their writing. These errors often disrupted meaning. (Refer to the example below)

In the begining, the school's Prefects' Board has had a meeting. We improved about prefects at school for students. For example, the unsatisfactory service and high food prices in the school canteen. Students can happy and come to school every day. However, students and teachers very important for improved about school. The urgent need to improve, the cleanliness of the school. The students can happy

Here, the reader has a difficult time trying to understand the ideas. We are unsure of the point the candidate is trying to put forward. Thus, this candidate deserves no marks for content and will only get a very low mark for language.

Further examples from the candidates' answers:

- So, it is too heavy the student to walking.
- The unsatisfactory service is but because she away meet everybody angry.
- The class give improve why did the class clean, because the cleaning the class to student for, what is learnt can in the brain student.

In some cases, candidates were able to convey meaning in their writing but their responses were littered with frequent and serious errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement, numbers, prepositions, articles, omission of verbs, tenses, sentence separation, word order and wrong parts of speech. There were also spelling errors where words were spelt according to their pronunciation. (Refer to the example below)

Firstly, the unsatisfactory service from the school canteen make us had the feeling not to take in any food at the school canteen. The food prices - in the school canteen are too high, some of the student does not afford. Besides that, the food are unclean. Last week, there was a student food poisoning after having food in the school canteen. The school canteen area are very dirty.

Here one can understand the intended meaning but it is not always clear. It shows that the candidate has yet to master the basic rules of the language.

Further examples from the candidates' answers:

#### Parts of speech

- *Students are very unsatisfactory with the service of the canteen.*
- *Students are not from wealth families.*
- *The school toilets are not cleanliness.*
- *It is danger to cross the busy road.*

#### Subject-verb agreement

- *The food are very expensive.*
- *Many students uses the road daily.*
- *The foods are little.*

#### Number

- *We hope you can solve this problems.*

#### Prepositions

- *At 12 October we had a meeting.*
- *I have decided to report for you.*
- *They all agree about my suggestion.*
- *Why do they sell food with high prices to the students?*
- *I would like to complain with the unsatisfactory service.*

#### Articles

- *We want to give suggestion.*
- *Pedestrian crossing is important.*
- *I hope school authorities will do something.*

#### Omission of verbs

- *Students no money.*
- *There a lot of rubbish at the back of the classroom.*
- *The road very busy.*

#### Word order

- *We also can punish the students.*
- *We already have told you the problems.*

#### Examples of spelling errors

- *cheep (cheap)*
- *importand (important)*
- *excident/eksident (accident)*
- *orait (alright)*
- *avery (every)*
- *probelms (problems)*

## SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

1. Expose students to the different formats (letter, speech, etc.) that they are required to know for directed writing.
2. Devote more time on grammar so that the students will be able to write grammatically correct sentences.
3. Drill students in the commonly confused parts of speech for common words, e.g. advice/advise, suggest/suggestion, complain/complaint, etc.
4. Teach students to use varied sentence structures.
5. Train students on error identification. Introduce 'peer-editing' in the classroom so that the students learn to identify and rectify errors, thus improving their own linguistic skills.
6. Give enough spelling exercises.
7. Encourage reading

## SUGGESTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. Read the instructions/rubric carefully before answering any question – be sure of the task and format before writing
2. Elaborate on content points so that more marks can be awarded for content.
3. Improve spelling – use a dictionary when necessary.
4. Do not take punctuation lightly. Punctuation errors can be serious errors.
5. Answer all the questions in the examination. Any attempt, however weak, will merit some marks. No attempt = '0' mark.
6. Read widely to improve general knowledge and vocabulary
7. Organize time well. Candidates tend to provide answers which are too lengthy for Section A (Directed Writing) at the expense of the other section. Often irrelevant information or details are included.

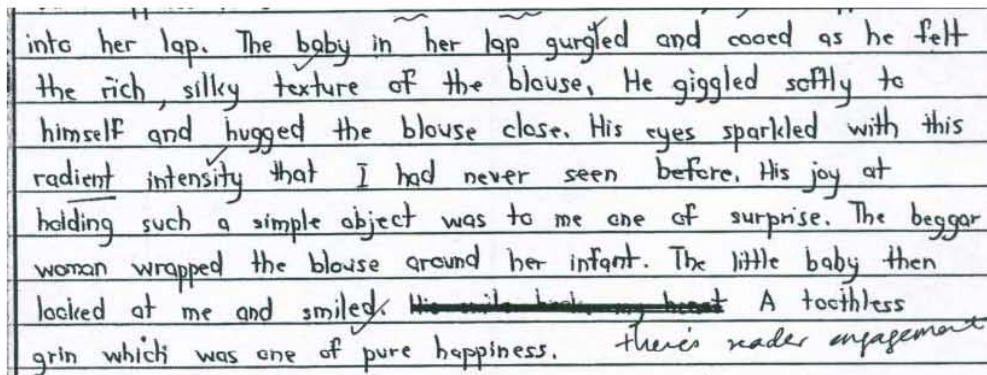
## SECTION B

### QUESTION 2: CONTINUOUS WRITING

The majority of the students attempted this section. The comments made for Directed Writing would generally apply for this section.

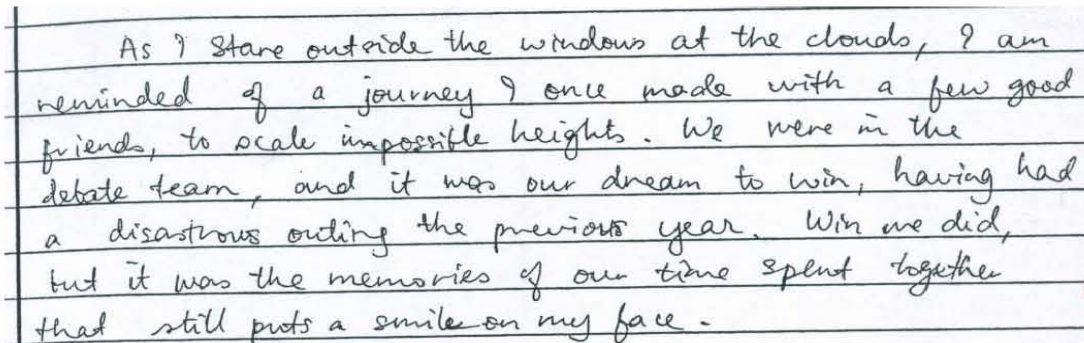
### STRENGTH

1. Good candidates were able to use the English language with flair and competence. They had the ability to use precise vocabulary and phrases to show intended meaning. (Refer to the example below)



The candidate was able to describe precisely the sounds made by the baby with the use of *gurgled, cooed and giggled*. This helped the reader to form vivid pictures of the narrative.

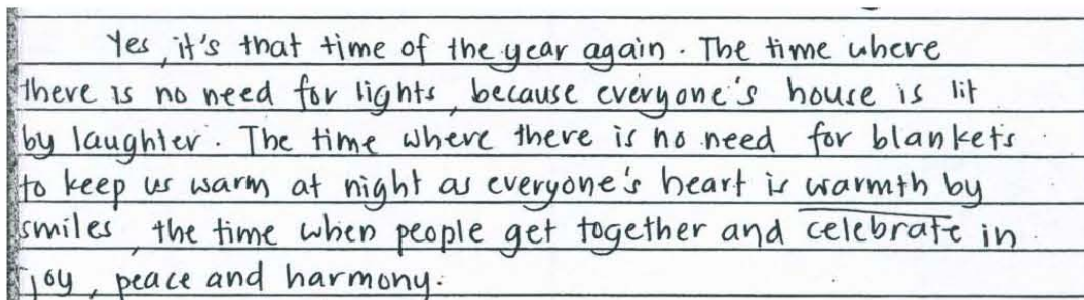
2. Candidates attempted to vary sentence structures. Sentences of different length and types were employed to achieve an intended effect. There was evidence of shaping or crafting in the piece of work. (Refer to the example below)



As I stare outside the windows at the clouds, I am reminded of a journey I once made with a few good friends, to scale impossible heights. We were in the debate team, and it was our dream to win, having had a disastrous outing the previous year. Win we did, but it was the memories of our time spent together that still puts a smile on my face.

The candidate's writing is not monotonous but lively due to the varied sentence structures used.

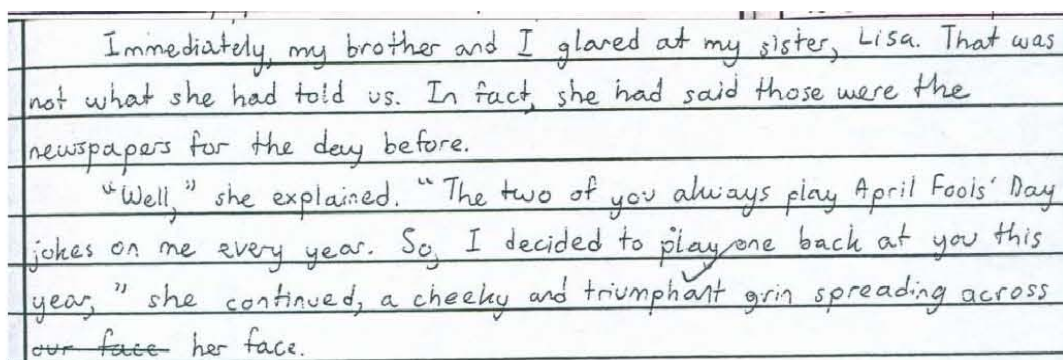
3. Subject matter is relevant and the reader's curiosity is aroused and sustained. (Refer to the example below)



Yes, it's that time of the year again. The time where there is no need for lights, because everyone's house is lit by laughter. The time where there is no need for blankets to keep us warm at night as everyone's heart is warmed by smiles, the time when people get together and celebrate in joy, peace and harmony.

In describing a festival, the candidate above had put in a lively introduction and was able to connect with the reader through the sharing of feelings and experience. Very good candidates will be able to sustain the interest of the reader throughout the rest of the writing. Furthermore, the subject matter will be relevant. Ideas are generated and well developed. There will be evidence of good planning and the composition is organized cohesively into paragraphs.

4. Most importantly, candidates obtained high marks because they were able to write accurately. They made few or no errors. (Refer to the example below)



Immediately, my brother and I glared at my sister, Lisa. That was not what she had told us. In fact, she had said those were the newspapers for the day before.

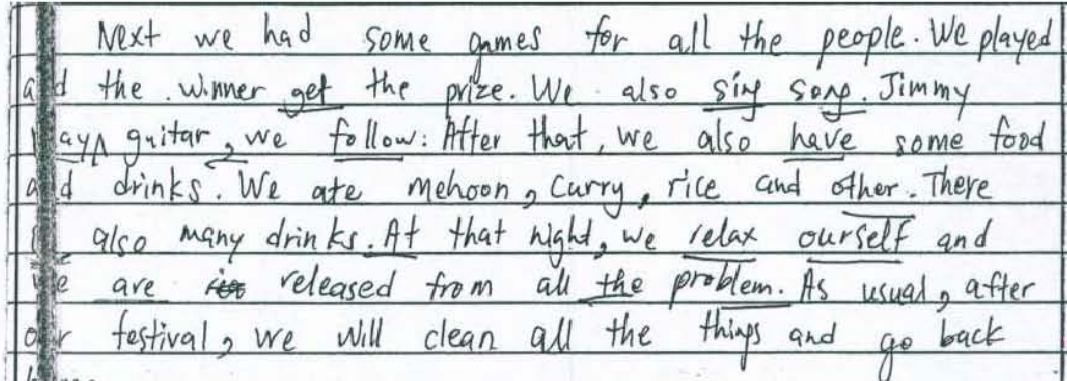
"Well," she explained. "The two of you always play April Fools' Day jokes on me every year. So, I decided to play one back at you this year," she continued, a cheeky and triumphant grin spreading across ~~our face~~ her face.

Here, the candidate was able to present a piece of error-free writing with varied structures and precise vocabulary to engage the reader's interest.

## WEAKNESS

Comments made for language in Section A would generally apply for this section.

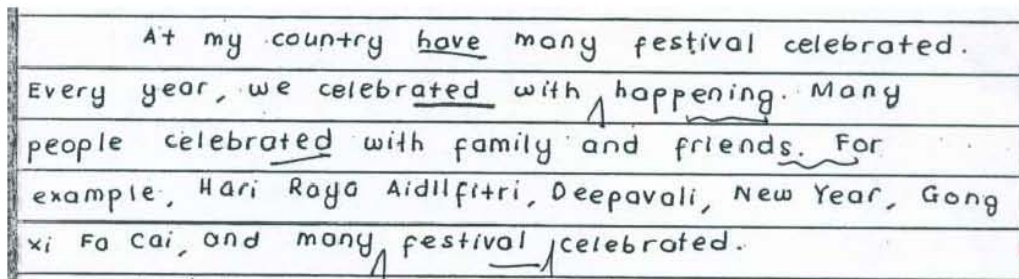
1. Weak candidates wrote in an uninteresting way, hampered by limited vocabulary and structures that were usually simple and repetitive.



Next we had some games for all the people. We played and the winner get the prize. We also sing song. Jimmy play guitar, we follow. After that, we also have some food and drinks. We ate mehoon, Curry, rice and other. There also many drinks. At that night, we relax ourself and we are released from all the problem. As usual, after our festival, we will clean all the things and go back.

As can be noticed, the sentences above are more or less of the same structure. This gives the writing a monotonous effect.

2. Answers were stereotyped, lacking in interest value and originality, showing a lack of creativity in writing. (Refer to the example below)



At my country have many festival celebrated. Every year, we celebrated with happening. Many people celebrated with family and friends. For example, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Deepavali, New Year, Gong xi Fo cai, and many festival celebrated.

The introductory paragraph above does not do much to create interest on the part of the reader. It is predictable and unexciting. For weak candidates, the subject matter is often limited or sometimes not relevant to the topic.

3. Basically, the main reason for the candidate's failure to obtain high marks was the frequent serious errors made in their answers. There was a high incidence of errors in most of the weak scripts, for example, errors in spelling, tense, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, pronouns etc. These numerous mistakes impeded the reading of the essay. (Refer to the examples below)

### Example 1

Since I was a little girl, I've never had a real  
smile on my face and my heart was always blue. This  
is because my parents <sup>were</sup> ~~always~~ quarelling almost every  
night and <sup>so</sup> my father coming back home very late at  
night eve in drunk condition. I don't like to see this.  
I'm always jealous to all my friends <sup>Stephy, has</sup> ~~who have~~ a good  
family life. I even blame to God <sup>for</sup> giving me a bad

The writing is littered with errors but at least it is still comprehensible. The errors show that the candidate is not sure of the basic rules of the language.

### Example 2

In the world many clothes for examples ~~make~~ ~~modern~~ clothes  
and 'trasisional' clothes. very big clothes design in the world.  
for examples Valentino from Italy ~~he~~ we look he clothes very high class  
brandel.

In example 2, the errors are even more frequent and we find it difficult to understand what the candidate is trying to express. Answers like this will only deserve a low mark.

4. Apart from the above, other short-comings of the weaker candidates include the following:
  - a) Sentences were mostly simple sentences and in most cases, basic errors were evident. Complex structures that were attempted generally collapsed or faltered thus blurring meaning.
  - b) Some candidates resorted to the use of Malay words.
  - c) Many candidates were not able to use punctuation correctly, e.g. using lowercase after a full stop. They also used ICQ language: "i" for "I" and "u" for "you".
  - d) Use of slang e.g. *cool, gonna, wanna* etc..
  - e) Direct translation from candidates' mother tongue.
  - f) Ideas were not organized. There was little evidence of planning.
  - g) Tendency to repeat vocabulary and structures. Sometimes ideas were also repeated.
  - h) Far short of the required number of words
  - i) Resorting to memorized answers.

## **SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

1. Teach students to plan their work. e.g. mind mapping, brainstorming.
2. Incorporate different teaching strategies to teach writing especially for weak students e.g. parallel writing, paragraph writing, process writing.
3. Cultivate the reading habit to enrich their vocabulary and improve their command of the language
4. Students should be encouraged to write the required number of words, as some wrote far short of the required number of words.
5. Organize the essay in paragraphs.
6. Edit the essay after completing it.
7. More emphasis on grammar and spelling. Have sufficient grammar practice.
8. Journal writing could be a good way for students to express their ideas and by having more writing practice; they may not encounter writer's block.
9. Correctional fluid/tape not encouraged as writing can be smudged or words omitted.
10. Remember to indicate the question number of your answer
11. Listen to English songs or news
12. Watch English documentaries
13. Students should try to be more ambitious in terms of using a variety of sentence structures, sophisticated and extended vocabulary and interesting expressions.