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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **9093/12**

Paper 1 Reading **February/March 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the February/March 2026 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **18** printed pages.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

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GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5: Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).
GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6: Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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9093/12 Mark Scheme March 2026

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English & Media subject specific general marking principles
(To be read in conjunction with the Generic Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptors:

- We use level descriptors as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptors are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content, and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Assessment Objective 1
	Assessment Objective 2
	Assessment Objective 3
	Good point
	Error (analysis)
	SPAG error
	Unclear expression / errors throughout
	Good language
	Lifted material
	Purpose

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Annotation	Meaning
Q	Addressing the question
Q 	Uncertain relevance to the question
R	Repetition
TE	Tense error

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English Language specific marking instructions:

AO1 Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. (Understanding)

- Marks should be awarded for the accuracy of the candidate's understanding of the text and its features, **not** for any analysis of them which is recognised under AO3.
- Where comparison is required, marks should be awarded for the candidate's recognition of similarities and differences between the texts and their features, **not** for any consequent analysis.
- When awarding a 'best-fit' mark within a Level for each AO, consider each bullet point equally.

AO2 Write effectively, creatively, accurately and appropriately, for a range of audiences and purposes. (Writing)

- Marks should be awarded equally on the basis of the level of the candidate's written expression (range of features used and accuracy) and the development of their writing (its organisation and relevance to task and audience).
- When awarding a 'best-fit' mark within a Level for each AO, consider each bullet point equally.

AO3: Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style. (Analysis)

- Marks should be awarded equally on the basis of the level of the candidate's analysis of the text's elements (form, structure and language) and of the writer's stylistic choices (including how style relates to audience and shapes meaning).
- When awarding a 'best-fit' mark within a Level for each AO, consider each bullet point equally.

In response to **Question 1(a)**, candidates are required to write between 150 and 200 words. While there is no direct penalty for failing to adhere to this requirement, examiners should consider this an aspect of the response's 'relevance to purpose'. As such, adherence to the word limit is assessed as part of the second bullet point of AO2.

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Section A: Directed response

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	**Read the following text, which is taken from an article in the wellbeing section of a lifestyle magazine.** **You decide to try 'habit stacking' for a week and write a blog about your experience. Write the first blog post for your followers, informing them about the benefits of 'habit stacking'. Use 150–200 words.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria in Table A. **Additional guidance:** The comments below are illustrative and are not intended to be exhaustive. Candidates may make other valid comments that should be credited. **Responses might feature the following:** • form, audience, purpose, style, conventions, language and structure will be appropriately adapted to suit the task • content may include thoughts/feelings, personal experience, descriptive details, as well as other relevant ideas • tone will be used to have an impact on the reader and to create an effect.	**10**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	**Compare your blog post with the article, analysing form, structure and language.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria in Table B. **Additional guidance:** The comments below are illustrative and are not intended to be exhaustive. Candidates may make other valid comments that should be credited. Candidates may organise their response in any appropriate way. They are not required to focus on form, structure and language in separate sections. **Responses might compare and analyse the following:** **Form** • the typical text conventions used in the original article and the candidate's own blog post • the ways in which the different purposes affect the content and style of the two texts • the ways in which the article and blog post appeal to their respective intended audiences, e.g. through the register used in each text • any other relevant aspect of the form of the two texts **Structure** • the ways in which paragraphs or sections are used in each text • the ways in which any change in sentence types or functions might be used by the writers to achieve effects • the significance of opening or concluding sentences or sections • the use of headings, sub-headings and bullet points to guide the reader through the text • any other relevant structural features in the texts, including chronological order, etc.	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	**Language** • the potential use of first-person pronouns and first-person narrative voice in the blog post to engage and involve the reader from the outset • the use of direct address and first-person plural in the article to involve and persuade the audience more directly • the reference to facts, named individuals and examples – such *as 'habit stacking' (building upon pre-existing habits)*; *Yale-trained psychiatrist and therapist, Dr Marlynn Wei*; *pair a new skill with an existing habit like brushing your teeth or getting a cup of coffee in the morning* – to add credibility to the article • the use of high-frequency lexis to render the topic more user-friendly and appealing to a wider audience – *daily routine, noticing all of your senses, a few minutes a day* • repetition of vocabulary such as *mindful* and *habit-stacking* to emphasise the subject matter under discussion • the use of questions to address the reader and include them in the topic – *What do you see around you?* • Triads are used to reinforce the message of the text – *It might be on your way to work, getting your mail, or during your lunch break* • any other relevant language features used in the texts.	

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Marking criteria for Section A Question 1 (a)

Table A

Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. **5 marks**	AO2: Write effectively, creatively, accurately and appropriately, for a range of audiences and purposes. **5 marks**
5	• Sophisticated understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Insightful reference to characteristic features 5 marks	• Sophisticated expression, with a high level of accuracy • Content is fully relevant to audience and purpose; ideas are developed throughout in a sophisticated manner 5 marks
4	• Detailed understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Effective reference to characteristic features 4 marks	• Effective expression, with a few minor errors which do not impede communication • Content is relevant to audience and purpose; ideas are developed in an effective manner 4 marks
3	• Clear understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Clear reference to characteristic features 3 marks	• Clear expression, with occasional errors which do not impede communication • Content is relevant to audience and purpose; ideas are developed clearly 3 marks
2	• Limited understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Limited reference to characteristic features 2 marks	• Expression is clear but may not flow easily, with frequent errors which generally do not impede communication • Content is mostly relevant to audience and purpose; ideas are developed in a limited manner 2 marks
1	• Basic understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Minimal reference to characteristic features 1 mark	• Basic expression, with frequent errors which impede communication • Content may lack relevance to audience and purpose; minimal development of ideas 1 mark

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9093/12 Mark Scheme March 2026

Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. 5 marks	AO2: Write effectively, creatively, accurately and appropriately, for a range of audiences and purposes. 5 marks
0	• No creditable response 0 marks	• No creditable response 0 marks

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Marking criteria for Section A Question 1 (b)

Table B

Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. **5 marks**	AO3: Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style. **10 marks**
5	• Sophisticated comparative understanding of texts (meaning/context/audience) • Insightful reference to characteristic features 5 marks	• Sophisticated comparative analysis of elements of form, structure and language • Sophisticated analysis of how the writers' stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning 9–10 marks
4	• Detailed comparative understanding of texts (meaning/context/audience) • Effective reference to characteristic features 4 marks	• Detailed comparative analysis of elements of form, structure and language • Detailed analysis of how the writers' stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning 7–8 marks
3	• Clear comparative understanding of texts (meaning/context/audience) • Clear reference to characteristic features 3 marks	• Clear comparative analysis of elements of form, structure and/or language • Clear analysis of how the writers' stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning 5–6 marks
2	• Limited understanding of texts (meaning/context/audience), with limited comparison • Limited reference to characteristic features 2 marks	• Limited analysis of form, structure and/or language, with limited comparison • Limited analysis of how the writers' stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning 3–4 marks

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Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. 5 marks	AO3: Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style. 10 marks
1	• Basic understanding of texts (meaning/context/audience), with minimal comparison • Minimal reference to characteristic features 1 mark	• Minimal analysis of form, structure and/or language, with minimal comparison • Minimal analysis of how the writers' stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning 1–2 marks
0	• No creditable response 0 marks	• No creditable response 0 marks

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Section B: Text analysis

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**Read the following text, which is taken from a lifestyle magazine, about the depiction of dragons across the world.** **Analyse the text, focusing on form, structure and language.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria in Table C. **Additional guidance:** The analysis should address the style, form, genre, structure and language of the text (including specific and relevant references), explaining how they create meaning in relation to audience and purpose. The comments below are illustrative and are not intended to be exhaustive. Candidates may make other valid comments that should be credited. Candidates may organise their response in any appropriate way. They are not required to focus on form, structure and language in separate sections. **Responses might analyse the following:** **Form** • the typical text conventions used • the ways in which the purpose affects the content and style of the text • the ways in which the text appeals to its intended audience, e.g. through the tone and register used in the text • any other relevant aspects of the text's form **Structure** • the use of a title to introduce the text – *Here be dragons* • the way in which the opening paragraph clearly establishes the introduction to the text and begins to broaden its scope – *The Lunar Year of the Dragon*, *Asia*, *from Scandinavia to Central America* • the way in which subheadings help to shape and organise the material in the text – *LAIRS OF THE DRAGON*, *CULTURAL ICONS* • the lack of chronological structure, as indicated by the movement between dates	**25**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	• the way in which discourse markers and anaphoric references are used in the text for cohesion and to develop the text • the way in which the concluding paragraph is structured to draw in readers with reference to popular modern culture – *Lord of the Rings*, *Game of Thrones* and *How to Train Your Dragon* – in addition to historical references • any other relevant structural features in the text **Language** • the way in which historical details are presented with examples from across the world – *To the Norse they were a symbol of strength*, *First Nations cultures in Australia venerate the Rainbow Serpent* – and these are mixed with modern references – *communities still gather to celebrate dragon tales* • the effect of the use of the lexical field concerned with dragons and serpents, and their mythical homes – *giant mythological reptiles*, *fearsome monsters*, *supernatural lizard-like beings*, *serpentine monster*, *watery landscapes*, *spring*, *well*, *marsh or lake*, *mountain caves*, *dark holes*, *monsters in wild and dangerous territories* • positive vocabulary describing dragons is connected to strength and good fortune – *dragons bring good luck*, *and children born during dragon years are traditionally thought to be destined for success and prosperity*, *a symbol of strength*, *a revered god*, *a creator of life*, *benevolent deities* • negative and sinister associations link dragons to fear, harm and destruction – *frighten enemies*, *brings death and destruction*, *preventing the population from accessing fresh water*, *monsters in wild and dangerous territories* • the effect of the use of a lexical field of myth and legend – *giant mythological reptiles, according to legend, may or may not fly and breathe fire*, *supernatural lizard-like beings*, *acted as cautionary tales to discourage wandering children* • the inclusion of facts about how people across the world have embraced the mythology of dragons – *Wales, Bhutan and Malta depict them on their flags*, *the patron saint not only of England but Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta and Ethiopia*, *For 2000 years, dragon boat racing has been a popular pastime in China and across Southeast Asia* • the effect of the use of language linking humans with dragons – *lie deep in human consciousness* • the use of disturbing or sinister verbs associated with the creatures – *lurk, vanish, haunt* • the effect of the interrogative sentence at the end of the introductory section of the text • any other relevant language features used in the text.	

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Marking criteria for Section B Question 2

Table C

Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. 5 marks	AO3: Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style. 20 marks
5	• Sophisticated understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Insightful reference to characteristic features 5 marks	• Analysis is sophisticated, coherent and very effectively structured • Insightful selection of elements of form, structure and language for analysis • Sophisticated awareness of writer's stylistic choices, including how style relates to audience and shapes meaning • Uses precise and fully appropriate language to link evidence with explanatory comments 17–20 marks
4	• Detailed understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Effective reference to characteristic features 4 marks	• Analysis is detailed, coherent and effectively structured • Effective selection of elements of form, structure and language for analysis • Detailed awareness of writer's stylistic choices, including how style relates to audience and shapes meaning • Uses effective and appropriate language to link evidence with explanatory comments 13–16 marks
3	• Clear understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Clear reference to characteristic features 3 marks	• Analysis is clear, coherent and well structured • Appropriate selection of elements of form, structure and language for analysis • Clear awareness of writer's stylistic choices, including how style relates to audience and shapes meaning • Uses clear and appropriate language to link evidence with explanatory comments 9–12 marks
2	• Limited understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Limited reference to characteristic features 2 marks	• Limited analysis, with some structure and limited coherence • Some appropriate selection of elements of form, structure and/or language for analysis • Limited awareness of writer's stylistic choices • Attempts to use appropriate language to link evidence with explanatory comments 5–8 marks

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Level	AO1: Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts. 5 marks	AO3: Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style. 20 marks
1	• Basic understanding of text (meaning/context/audience) • Minimal reference to characteristic features 1 mark	• Basic analysis, with minimal structure or coherence • Minimal selection of elements of form, structure and language for analysis • Minimal awareness of writer's stylistic choices • Minimal use of appropriate language to link evidence with explanatory comments 1–4 marks
0	• No creditable response 0 marks	• No creditable response 0 marks

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