

2023 Common Test Paper 1 Marking Notes

Note: These notes were adapted from the official marking notes used for the respective questions. They are meant to function as a GENERAL guide and should not be taken as exhaustive.

2023 Common Test Question 1

- Response should provide some elaboration on what is understood by ‘narrative voice’, e.g. through style, tone, perspective, etc. and ‘sense of wonder’, e.g. awe, amazement, excitement, anticipation, etc.
- In **stronger** responses, candidates detailed how the narrative voice of the writer invites readers to actively participate in his journey and experiences to the North Pole through the first-person narrative perspective. The **best** responses included an appreciation of the brief but subtle shift when Templar addresses the readers from the second-person point of view in lines 9-10, when he tells the reader, “but this is about as far as you can get from a ‘standard’ summer holiday.” In **weaker** responses, candidates did not answer the guiding question or showed some understanding of narrative voice but struggled to analyse it in detail. While rich evidence was selected, it was often treated in a superficial manner.
- Also, in **top** responses, candidates showed sensitivity to how the narrative was told in an itinerary or diary-like fashion. There were some nuanced insights about how the narrative was told from an aerial point of view or bird’s eye view of the changing landscape while journeying by plane from Helsinki to Murmansk, which evoked Templar’s and readers’ sense of wonder with experiencing something new and unexpected at every turn of this adventure.
- In **strong** responses, candidates detailed the writer’s excited tone of voice while marveling over the sights and sounds of the landscape through his accompanying em-dash punctuation and repetition of the words “vast”. There was some elegiac analysis on how the tricolon structure of “personal, perfect, polar moment” creates a sense of wholeness, completeness and a sense of tranquillity and fulfilment while the writer reflects about living in the moment “lying down flat in the snow”, physically separating himself from his travelling group. In **weaker** responses, candidates usually only commented on the writer’s enthusiasm in general and repeated points instead of moving onto a wide breadth of insights.
- The **best** responses articulated the writer’s transformation in the narrator’s perspective from preconceived ideas of the North Pole as being a hostile, gloomy and lifeless/dull to the narrator’s sense of wonder at how the North Pole is one that

is teeming with life, beauty, movement and vibrance. This was usually accompanied by some analysis of the shift in the narrator's tone of voice from a lively conversational tone that showed knowledge and confidence of the landscape to that of a more contemplative, meditative, reflective tone at the end of the experience.

- There were a few **excellent** responses that showed keen awareness of how the narrator initially begins in medias res, then flashbacks through direct speech from the local guide before a chronological and sequential description of the travels to the North Pole/ passing of time within the day and across days. This was supported by the analysis of the use of adverbs or adverbial clauses and other descriptive markers to demarcate the chronological passing of time within the day and across days. In **weaker** responses, candidates often attempted to cover too much of the text, which resulted in very descriptive responses.

2023 Common Test Question 2

- Multiple audiences: The answer should consider more than one kind of audience. Weaker scripts did not display a clear distinction between the different target groups and treated the notion of multiple audiences in a broad manner.
- Audiences could range from mature audiences who enjoy satirical political humour, to audiophiles who are keen on high-quality noise-cancelling headphones, to those who are tired of the political theatre and want to disengage from the escalating tensions.
- The conspicuous absence of the product suggests that the text aims at a secondary audience beyond just potential buyers, possibly serving as a broader social commentary on modern life in general.
- Candidates are not expected to know the historical context of the text. However, a clear understanding of the characters represented and the tension between them should be demonstrated.
- Text is visually dominant, barely featuring any text except the names of the company and the product.
- Of the three figures present in the advertisement, two are world leaders – former US president Donald Trump and North Korean premier Kim Jong Un. The third figure in the middle is a non-descript young person, wearing glasses.
- The sharp contrast between the grotesque and enraged expressions on the world leaders and the serene expression on the face of the person wearing the headphones reinforces the effectiveness of the headphones. The person's eyes are closed, suggesting that they can get rid of all their concerns about their surroundings thanks to the headphones.

- The world leaders are portrayed in an exaggerated manner, whereas the figure in the centre is calm and depicted more naturally. This contrast helps highlight the effectiveness of the headphones.
- The text relies on humour to convey its point, as it represents the metaphorical noise generated by political conflict in literal terms, as loud noise, that could be effectively muted by a consumer electronic product.
- The political leaders are presented as childish – holding weapons of war as if they are toy with wailing/screaming expressions. The tie is sloppily taped on Trump – suggesting a dependence on other people to maintain his appearance.
- The wide-open mouths form the shape of the headphones, indicating that the headphones forms a barrier between the politicians and the individual – who could be taken as a stand-in for the common people who witness the brewing conflict between these leaders.
- The person in the middle could represent younger consumers of college or school-going age, who may adopt the use of noise-cancelling headphones for its functionality.
- The ad plays on the stereotype that young people desire to disengage from the tense political discourse surrounding contemporary geopolitical tensions by immersing themselves in a private world of music.
- The outline created by the negative space is an evocative visualisation of the product as it emphasises its functionality as a noise-cancelling device.
- The details are extremely dense – from the beads of sweat to the pores in the skin. These features distinctly mark the two political leaders as unlikeable figures by exaggerating them in a grotesque manner. The ad uses bodily horror to evoke disgust at these political figures and the ubiquity with which their discourse has seeped into everyday life.