ICSE Class 10 English Language Specimen Paper 2

Written by the Future Topper subject team on the CISCE examination pattern. Not an official CISCE paper.
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Maximum Marks: 80 | Time Allowed: Two hours | Reading Time: 15 minutes

All five questions are compulsory. Where alternatives are offered inside a question, attempt only one of them.

General Instructions

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided. The first 15 minutes are for reading the paper, and you may not write during that time. Marks for each question, or part of a question, are shown in brackets. Attempt all five questions. Where alternatives are offered inside a question, choose only one of them and write its number clearly at the top of your answer. Keep to the word limits given, since work that is much shorter or much longer than the limit loses marks. Neatness, correct spelling and correct punctuation carry marks throughout the paper. Do not use short forms such as can't or didn't except inside dialogue, and do not use abbreviations in a formal letter.

Question 1 [20]

Write a composition of between 300 and 350 words on any ONE of the following subjects. Write the number of the subject you have chosen at the top of your answer. You are reminded that marks are given for the ordering and development of your ideas as well as for the language you use.

(i) Write an original story with the title The Borrowed Key.

(ii) Describe the inside of a railway waiting room on a night when a train has been badly delayed. Write about the room itself and about the people in it, and try to give your reader the feeling of the long wait.

(iii) Competitive sport does more harm than good to young people. Express your views either for or against this statement.

(iv) Write a short story that begins with the following sentence. The dog had followed me home for three days before I understood that it was not lost at all.

(v) Give an account of an occasion when you broke a rule and were found out. Describe what you did, how it came to light and what followed.

Question 2 [10]

Select ONE of the following and write a letter of about 120 words. Do not write your own name, the name of your school or your address anywhere in the letter.

(a) A friend of yours has moved to a new school and has written to say that she is finding it hard to settle in. Write a letter telling her about something similar that happened to you, and give her some advice about the first few weeks.

(b) You bought a pair of sports shoes from a shop in your town and the sole came away within a month of buying them. The shop has refused to replace them. Write a letter to the Manager of the shop setting out what you bought and when, what went wrong and what you want done about it.

Question 3 [10]

(a) Your school is holding a blood donation camp in cooperation with the district hospital, and parents and senior students above the age of eighteen may take part. As the Secretary of the Social Service Club, write a notice of about 50 words for the school notice board giving the date, the place, the timing and the conditions for donors. **[5]**

(b) Using the information in the notice you have written, draft an email of about 50 words to the Medical Superintendent of the district hospital, informing him of the arrangements and asking him to confirm the team and the equipment the hospital will send. Set out the email in the proper form. **[5]**

Question 4 [20]

Read the passage given below and answer all the questions that follow. Your answers to parts (a) and (b) must be in your own words as far as you can manage it.

The tailor's shop stood at the turn of the lane where the pavement gave up, and it was so narrow that two customers could not stand in it at the same time. The second one waited outside with one shoulder against the doorframe. Inside there was a treadle machine, a wooden table worn pale in the middle, a bench and above the bench a shelf holding bolts of cloth that had been there so long that the colours on the outer folds had faded while the colours inside had not. The tailor's name was Faizal, and he had cut and stitched in that one room for as long as any of the neighbours could remember.

He worked without a pattern. A customer would come in and stand on the square of floor he kept clear for the purpose, and Faizal would walk round him once with a strip of yellow tape, saying the numbers aloud as he took them but writing none of them down. He kept, he said, about nine hundred people in his head. He knew which of his customers had one shoulder lower than the other, which of them had put on weight since the winter and would not care to be told so, and which of the boys would grow two inches before the clothes were wanted. He allowed for all of it without ever being asked to.

What held me at that door as a child was not the cutting but the sound. The treadle machine had a rhythm quite unlike anything else in the lane. It would start slowly, pick up until the needle was a blur and the whole table trembled, and then stop dead on the last stitch without slowing first, as though the machine itself had known that the seam was finished. Between seams there was the snip of the big shears, which he never put down but hung on a nail by one blade, and the small tearing sound of cloth being parted along a fold. He hummed while he worked, always the same few notes, and he did not know he was doing it. Once I told him he was humming and he looked at me as though I had made it up.

I came back to the lane in my twenties, and the shop had become a shop that sold mobile phone covers. The doorframe was the same and the step was the same, worn into a shallow dip in the middle by forty years of feet. A man told me that Faizal had gone to live with a son in another city, and that for the last two years the work had dried up because people bought their clothes ready made and only came to him to have a hem taken up.

I thought about that for a long while afterwards, and what troubled me was not the closing of the shop, since shops close. It was the nine hundred sets of measurements. They had never been written down anywhere, and when he shut the door for the last time they simply stopped existing, like a language that nobody else had learnt to speak.

(a) Give the meaning of each of the following words as it is used in the passage. One word or a short phrase will do.

(i) bolts (paragraph 1) **[1]**

(ii) allowed for (paragraph 2) **[1]**

(iii) dried up (paragraph 4) **[1]**

(b) Answer the following questions briefly, in your own words.

(i) What shows that the shop was extremely small, and what did a second customer have to do? **[2]**

(ii) Why were the colours on the outside of the bolts of cloth different from the colours inside them? **[2]**

(iii) How did Faizal take a customer's measurements, and what did he do with the figures? **[2]**

(iv) Give any two things Faizal remembered about his customers without being told. **[2]**

(v) What was it about the sound of the treadle machine that held the writer at the door? **[2]**

(vi) Why had the tailoring work fallen off in the last two years before the shop closed? **[2]**

(c) Using the material in paragraphs 2 and 3 only, summarise in about 100 words the way Faizal worked and what the writer noticed about his shop. Begin your summary with the words: Faizal worked without a pattern of any kind... **[5]**

Question 5 [20]

(a) Fill in each blank with the correct form of the verb given in brackets, or with the correct preposition. Write only the word or words needed.

(i) The list of selected candidates _____ (be) put up on the board yesterday. **[1]**

(ii) If I _____ (know) her address, I would have written to her. **[1]**

(iii) She apologised _____ her rudeness. **[1]**

(iv) The old man is suffering _____ a bad cough. **[1]**

(v) He has lived in this town _____ eleven years. **[1]**

(b) Join or rewrite the following sentences as directed. Do not change the meaning.

(i) He was very tired. He went on walking. (Rewrite as one sentence, beginning: In spite of...) **[1]**

(ii) The question was very easy. Everybody could answer it. (Rewrite as one sentence, using so ... that) **[1]**

(iii) Switch off the fan. You will waste electricity. (Rewrite as one sentence, beginning: Unless...) **[1]**

(iv) This is the village. My grandfather was born here. (Join into one sentence, using where) **[1]**

(v) He is too weak to climb the stairs. (Rewrite, using so ... that) **[1]**

(c) Rewrite the following sentences as directed.

(i) The carpenter is making a new cupboard. (Change to the passive voice) **[1]**

(ii) The prize was won by a girl from our class. (Change to the active voice) **[1]**

(iii) They will announce the results on Monday. (Change to the passive voice) **[1]**

(iv) Mother said to me, "Shut the window before you go to bed." (Change to indirect speech) **[1]**

(v) The guide told us that we could not enter the cave without a lamp. (Change to direct speech) **[1]**

(d) Choose the correct word from the brackets, or correct the error in the sentence, as the instruction requires.

(i) Mathematics (is / are) his favourite subject. (Choose the correct word) **[1]**

(ii) One of the windows (was / were) left open all night. (Choose the correct word) **[1]**

(iii) He prefers tea than coffee. (Correct the error) **[1]**

(iv) She has been working here since five years. (Correct the error) **[1]**

(v) The nurse took great care (of / for) the patient. (Choose the correct word) **[1]**

ANSWER KEY AND MARKING SCHEME

Questions 1 and 2 are marked on the bands given below. The notices, emails, comprehension answers and summaries printed here are models, not the only acceptable answers. Accept any answer that is accurate, relevant and expressed in the candidate's own words. In Question 5 accept only the answer given, unless the key says otherwise.

Question 1 [20]

(i) The Borrowed Key. Reward a story in which the key and the act of borrowing it actually drive the events, rather than one in which a key is mentioned once and forgotten. Look for a clear line of events and a resolved ending. A dream ending, or an ending in which the writer wakes up, is weak and should not score in the top band.

(ii) The waiting room at night. This is a description and should not become a story with a plot. Reward the use of more than one sense, detail of the kind only an observer would notice and a sense of time passing slowly. A list of objects without shape scores in the middle band at best.

(iii) Competitive sport. Either side may be argued. Reward a clear stand taken early, three or four developed reasons rather than many undeveloped ones, some recognition of the opposite view and a conclusion that follows from the argument. Unsupported assertion stays in the lower bands.

(iv) The dog that followed the writer home. The given sentence must be used as it stands and must be the first sentence. Reward a story that grows from the discovery that the dog was not lost, and that gives the reader a reason to accept it.

(v) Breaking a rule and being found out. This is an account of a real experience and should be written in the first person. Reward honesty of detail, a clear sequence of event, discovery and consequence and a closing reflection drawn from what happened rather than a moral tacked on at the end.

Content 8. Expression 8. Accuracy 4. Within Content, award the top band only for relevant, well ordered and fully developed matter that keeps to the subject throughout. Within Expression, judge vocabulary, sentence variety and the handling of the chosen form. Within Accuracy, deduct for errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation, grouping repeated errors of the same kind as one fault. Deduct up to 2 marks from Content for work well outside the limit of 300 to 350 words.

Question 2 [10]

(a) Informal letter to a friend. Correct informal form: the writer's address at the top, the date, a greeting such as Dear Meera, three or four short paragraphs and a close such as Yours affectionately or With love. The content should sympathise with the friend, give an account of a similar difficulty the writer faced and offer practical advice about the first few weeks. The tone should be warm and personal, and contracted forms are allowed here.

(b) Formal letter of complaint to the Manager. Correct formal form: the writer's address, the date, the receiver's designation and address, the salutation Sir or Madam, a subject line, three paragraphs and the close Yours faithfully. The content should state what was bought and when, describe the defect and how soon it appeared, mention the refusal already met with and state plainly what remedy is wanted. The tone must stay firm and civil. No abbreviations, no contracted forms and no rudeness.

Content 4. Expression 4. Accuracy 2. Within Content, give 2 marks for covering every point the question asks for and 2 for the form of the letter being right throughout. Within Expression, reward a register that suits the reader, and penalise a formal letter written in a chatty tone or an informal letter written stiffly. Within Accuracy, deduct for errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Deduct 1 mark from Content for a letter very far from 120 words, and deduct 1 mark if the candidate has given a real name, school or address.

Question 3 [10]

(a) Model notice. ST ANDREW'S SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL. NOTICE. 9 August. BLOOD DONATION CAMP. A blood donation camp will be held in the school hall on Saturday, 23 August, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., with a medical team from the District Hospital. Parents and students above eighteen years of age may donate. Donors should weigh above 50 kg, should be free of infection and should eat before coming. Names may be given to the undersigned by 20 August. Rohit Saxena, Secretary, Social Service Club.

Format 2, which is 1 for the name of the school, the word NOTICE and the date, and 1 for a heading and the signature with the writer's post. Content 2, which is 1 for the date, place and timing of the camp and 1 for who may donate and on what conditions. Expression and accuracy 1, for a notice in impersonal language and within about 50 words. A notice written as a paragraph of continuous prose without a heading loses the second Format mark.

(b) Model email. To: ms.districthospital@nic.in. Subject: Blood donation camp on 23 August. Sir, Our school will hold a blood donation camp in the school hall on Saturday, 23 August, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. About sixty parents and senior students have offered to donate. Kindly confirm the size of the medical team you will send and the beds, screening kits and storage units the hospital will provide. Rohit Saxena, Secretary, Social Service Club.

Format 1, for a To line and a subject line. Content 2, which is 1 for the date, place and timing taken from the notice and 1 for the request about the team and the equipment. Expression 1, for a polite and businesslike tone with no text message spellings. Accuracy 1, for correct grammar, spelling and punctuation within about 50 words.

Question 4 [20]

(a) (i) bolts: long rolls or lengths of cloth. (ii) allowed for: made room for it in his cutting, took it into account beforehand. (iii) dried up: fallen away to nothing, come almost to an end.

(i) 1. (ii) 1. (iii) 1. Accept any wording that carries the sense the passage requires. Do not award the mark for a dictionary meaning that does not fit the passage, such as bolts explained as fastenings for a door.

(b)(i) The room was too narrow to hold two customers at once, so a second customer had to stand out on the lane, leaning one shoulder against the doorframe while he waited his turn.

Room too narrow for two customers 1. The second one waiting outside against the doorframe 1.

(b)(ii) The cloth had lain untouched on the shelf for years. Light and air had reached only the outer folds and bleached them, while the folds underneath had been shielded and had kept their original colour.

Cloth kept there for a very long time 1. Outer folds faded by exposure while the inner folds were protected 1.

(b)(iii) The customer stood on a cleared square of floor and Faizal walked once round him with a yellow measuring tape, calling out each measurement as he took it. He wrote nothing down at all and carried the figures in his memory, keeping, as he claimed, about nine hundred people in his head.

Walking round the customer with the tape and saying the numbers aloud 1. Nothing written down, all kept in his memory 1.

(b)(iv) Any two of the following. He remembered which customers had one shoulder set lower than the other. He remembered which of them had grown heavier since the winter and would not want it mentioned. He remembered which boys would gain a couple of inches before the clothes were needed.

1 mark for each of two correct points.

(b)(v) The machine had a rhythm unlike any other sound in the lane. It began slowly, gathered speed until the needle could not be seen and the table shook, and then it halted outright on the final stitch without slowing down first, as though it knew by itself that the seam had come to an end.

The rhythm, starting slowly and building to a blur 1. The sudden stop on the last stitch without slowing 1.

(b)(vi) People had taken to buying clothes already made up in the shops, so there was no longer any call for garments to be cut and stitched. The only work left was small repair work such as shortening a hem.

Ready made clothes taking the trade away 1. Nothing left but small alterations 1.

(c) Model summary. Faizal worked without a pattern of any kind. A customer stood on a cleared square of floor while he walked round him once with a yellow tape, speaking each measurement aloud and recording none of it. He claimed to hold nine hundred people in his memory, with their uneven shoulders, their added weight and the inches a growing boy would gain, and he made the necessary allowances unprompted. The writer was held at the door by the sound: a treadle that began slowly, raced until the table shook and stopped outright on the last stitch, the snip of shears hung on a nail and the tailor's unconscious humming.

Content 3, awarded for the points drawn from paragraphs 2 and 3: cutting without a pattern, taking measurements aloud and writing nothing, holding about nine hundred customers in his memory, the particular things he remembered and allowed for, the rhythm of the treadle and its abrupt stop, the shears and the cloth and his humming. Award 3 for five or six of these, 2 for three or four, 1 for one or two. Expression 1, for

connected prose in the candidate's own words and in the third person, with no dialogue and no quotation. Accuracy 1, for correct grammar and spelling and for keeping to about 100 words. Deduct the Expression mark for a summary made of material taken from paragraphs 1, 4 or 5.

Question 5 [20]

(a) (i) was. (ii) had known. (iii) for. (iv) from. (v) for.

(i) 1. (ii) 1. (iii) 1. (iv) 1. (v) 1. No mark for a correct verb in the wrong form or tense.

(b) (i) In spite of being very tired, he went on walking. (ii) The question was so easy that everybody could answer it. (iii) Unless you switch off the fan, you will waste electricity. (iv) This is the village where my grandfather was born. (v) He is so weak that he cannot climb the stairs.

(i) 1. (ii) 1. (iii) 1. (iv) 1. (v) 1. In (i) accept In spite of his great tiredness, he went on walking. In (iii) do not award the mark if the candidate has kept a second negative, as in Unless you do not switch off the fan.

(c) (i) A new cupboard is being made by the carpenter. (ii) A girl from our class won the prize. (iii) The results will be announced on Monday. (iv) Mother told me to shut the window before I went to bed. (v) The guide said to us, "You cannot enter the cave without a lamp."

(i) 1. (ii) 1. (iii) 1. (iv) 1. (v) 1. In (iii) accept The results will be announced by them on Monday, though the agent is better left out. In (iv) accept asked me to shut for told me to shut.

(d) (i) is. (ii) was. (iii) He prefers tea to coffee. (iv) She has been working here for five years. (v) of.

(i) 1. (ii) 1. (iii) 1. (iv) 1. (v) 1. In (iii) and (iv) the mark is for the whole corrected sentence written out, and no mark is given for the corrected word on its own.