

CHINESE

Paper 8669/04

Texts

General comments

All candidates displayed a good or excellent standard of written Chinese, in terms of the level required for a Chinese as a foreign language paper. Overall there was evidence of essay planning, although the essays of some candidates would have benefited greatly from better organisation and competent paragraphing. In some cases, an inadequate knowledge of the texts or of the period in which they were set led to candidates not scoring as highly as they might otherwise have done. Many of the general comments below are similar in vein to those made last year, as many of these same comments are still valid.

Many candidates taking this paper did well, writing carefully organised short answers and essays, showing an in-depth knowledge of the text and an awareness of the social, political and historical context in China in the time it was set. Other candidates showed a good knowledge of the text, but were often unable to set the events they read about within the context of the period in mainland China to which the text was set, or seemed only to have a rather hazy knowledge of context. In order to do themselves justice, candidates must know the context of and background to the texts, as well as the texts themselves. However, a narrative description of the background to the texts is insufficient in itself. All essays should relate clearly and consistently to the question being answered and textual or background analysis and examples should add to the argument which the candidate is developing in response to the question.

Some candidates did not do as well in this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed little evidence that they had ever read the text for which they were answering the question. One or two continue to refer to the first few pages of a text in their answer, which made the Examiners question whether they had read any further. Even if a candidate's written Chinese is of a high standard for a foreign language Chinese examination paper, if they have not read the text for which they are writing an answer, then they cannot score highly.

A number of candidates are still misreading the rubrics. Candidates should answer **three** questions (choosing **either (a) or (b)** in each case). They should answer one question from **Section 1**, one from **Section 2** and one other of their choice. Each answer should be on a different text. It is important that all candidates are aware of this. If a candidate answers two questions on the same text, only one will be marked. If a candidate answers three questions from one section, only the first two will be marked etc. If a candidate's script ends up being marked out of 50 because only 2 questions could be considered, then this is a very serious handicap to the achievement of a good grade.

A few candidates mixed up **Questions (a) and (b)**, particularly in **Section 2**. In other words, while answering **Question (a)**, they seemed to be answering **Question (b)** and vice versa. Attention to detail and careful essay planning is required before starting to write.

The essays of most candidates would have benefited from a judicious use of well-chosen brief quotations from the texts to illustrate the points they were making. The apt use of quotation has continued to improve, but a number of candidates still quoted overly long chunks of texts in their essays, sometimes without any quotation marks to say that they were actually using the words of the text. Even where there were quotation marks, there was often insufficient reference as to how the quotation was contributing to the argument in the candidate's answer. The purpose of a quotation is to back up or illustrate the argument of a well-planned essay and to show an in-depth knowledge of the text. The examination questions frequently ask the candidate to (literally) 'give examples to explain'. This means that the candidate should first have a point to make (as part of the argument running through the essay) and that to back up this point the candidate should make very close reference to the text or choose a short quote to illustrate it, then go on to explain why the quotation or reference supports the argument/discussion running through the essay. In some cases, candidates appear to go through the text looking for quotations which have some tenuous reference to the question and then quote them without any explanation.

In many questions on literature, no one answer is right or wrong; the Examiners are looking for an essay from the candidate, backed up by evidence from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

A large number of candidates answered a question on 《茶馆》 and did well. There were some very good answers. Some candidates answered **1 (a)** and **1 (b)** and as a result only one of their answers could be awarded marks. Candidates must illustrate their answers with brief but apt quotations and concrete references to the text.

- (a) In **1(a)(i)**, many candidates could have improved their marks by giving their own opinion as was required, rather than just quoting from the text.
- (b) Most candidates were able to analyse their chosen character – generally 王利发 – well and gave good illustrative examples.

Question 2

In Centres where Xu Zhimo had been taught, there were some very good answers to this question. Some candidates who were struggling to find a third question to answer attempted **Question 2** and found it hard. Many candidates were unable to give detailed and thoughtful analysis of imagery, even though the standard of their Chinese appeared to be sufficiently high to cope with such expression. Candidates should not attempt a poem question unless they really know the poems well and have discussed and analysed the imagery with teachers and fellow candidates.

- (a) Despite the fact that the Question Paper only printed a small section of the poem and clearly asked for comments on other parts of the poem as well, some candidates restricted themselves to discussing the part of the poem printed on the Question Paper. The explanation and analysis of metaphor was generally weak; there were some good answers for **(iii)** and **(iv)**.
- (b) Not many candidates chose to answer this question. There were some very good answers, but a few did not focus on the two poems, but focused more on the poet's own life. Candidates should always make an essay plan which relates to the question before starting to write.

Question 3

There were some good answers to this question.

- (a) There were some very good answers to this question with only a few showing evidence of not having read the text.
- (b) There were some very good answers to this question, with well chosen and apt illustrations. Most candidates knew the meaning of 牺牲 and talked about the sacrifices made, but some forgot to address analysis of the 矛盾 which arose.

Section 2

Question 4

There were some good answers to **Question 4**.

- (a) There were some good answers to this question. Some candidates answered the first part of the question without paying attention to the second part. Candidates should ensure adequate planning of an essay before they start writing.
- (b) Candidates made some good points when answering this question, but often would have benefited from more careful essay planning.

Question 5

Not very many candidates chose to answer on this text.

- (a) Not many candidates chose this question and those who did often needed a more in-depth knowledge of the period about which Mao Dun was writing. In other cases, answers tended to be non-specific comments on China at the time without specific reference to the text.
- (b) Whilst candidates were able to discuss and analyse the character 老通宝; many failed then to go on to analyse why Mao Dun had made the choice.

Question 6

There were some good answers to the questions. However, the work of many candidates suffered from lack of analysis and understanding of the character of Kong Yiji and the author's intentions.