

CHINESE

Paper 9715/02
Reading and Writing

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General comments

The majority of candidates performed well or extremely well on this paper. They engaged with the texts and were able to show good understanding of the information and ideas these contained. Although the quality of language demonstrated in written responses was generally good, there was some inappropriate use of expressions and grammatical structures.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a), (c) and (e) were usually answered correctly by candidates. (b) and (c) proved more demanding.

Question 2

Candidates had few problems coping with (a) and (b), but (c) proved more difficult.

Questions 3 and 4

Although the majority of candidates were able to show good levels of comprehension, there was a tendency for some to answer questions from general knowledge. These reading comprehension questions are intended to test the extent to which candidates have understood the texts on the question paper. Therefore marks were only awarded for information taken from these texts.

It is important that candidates try, wherever it seems reasonable, to use their own words when phrasing their answers and avoid merely lifting chunks from the original text.

Question 5

There were many excellent answers, where candidates were able to draw material from both texts in response to the summary element and add to this a convincing personal response.

Where candidates did not do as well, this was usually because they did not write a summary as required for (a) – instead they discussed their own ideas on the subject – or because they failed to provide the personal opinions required by (b).

CHINESE

Paper 9715/03

Essay

General comments

Overall, the performance was satisfactory. The majority of candidates demonstrated their ability to write in Chinese and to argue their case in a convincing and logical manner. Most could write fluently and showed good mastery of Chinese characters.

With regard to use of language, the highest marks were awarded to candidates who used varied vocabulary and more sophisticated language, such as idioms, in order to engage the reader's interest.

As far as content is concerned, attention should be paid both to the quality of the ideas and the organisation of these ideas. In some instances, candidates had interesting ideas, but these were presented almost at random, with not enough attention given to presenting a coherent argument

CHINESE

Paper 9715/04

Texts

General comments

All candidates displayed a good or excellent standard of written Chinese. Overall there was more evidence of competent essay planning than in previous years.

Many candidates taking this paper did extremely 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 which it was set. Other candidates showed a good knowledge of the text, but were often unable to set the text within the context of the period in mainland China to which it was referring.

Some candidates did not do as well in this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed no evidence that they had ever read the text for which they were answering the question. One or two just referred to the first few pages of a text in their answer, which made the Examiner question whether they were reading an unannotated copy of the text for the first time in the examination room. Even if a candidate's standard of written Chinese is high, if they have not read the text for which they are writing an answer, then they will not be able to score highly.

A number of candidates are still misreading the rubrics. Candidates should answer three questions (**either (a) or (b)**). 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 the first will be marked. If a candidate answers three questions from one section, only the first two will be marked etc.

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 improved over the years, but too many 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.

In many questions on literature, no one answer is right or wrong; the Examiner is looking for a well-argued 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 Chaguan. There were some very good answers. Unfortunately, some candidates answered both **1(a)** and **1(b)**, and as a result only the first of their answers could be awarded marks. Candidates must illustrate their answers with brief but apt quotations and concrete references to the text.

- (a) This question was a relatively straightforward choice and well-answered on the whole. To gain top marks, candidates needed to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the play; a general idea of the plot was not sufficient.

- (b) Candidates answering this question often struggled to organise their material, which was disappointing considering the ability of most of the candidates to write so fluently in Chinese. Candidates should plan their essay carefully before starting to write, giving context, explaining the questions posed and developing a well thought out response.

Question 2

Candidates found the questions on poetry the most difficult to answer. Most 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 these questions unless they really know the poems well and have been taught how to approach poetry.

- (a) There were some good and imaginative answers to (ii) and (iv) here, although many candidates did not give the impression of knowing much about Xu Zhimo's poetry and life in general. The discussion in (i) on metaphor was generally weak, especially as many candidates did not seem to realise that there are more verses in the poem than those printed. Candidates were only able to make some general observations and did not give any in depth analysis of individual metaphors. Few were able to make any relevant comment for instance on the use of repetition in the poem in response to (iii).
- (b) Not enough candidates answered this question for a comment to be made. This perhaps reflects the lack of in-depth knowledge of Xu Zhimo's poems set on this syllabus.

Question 3

There were some good answers to this question.

- (a) There were some very good answers, but again there was some evidence that the text had not been read in some cases.
- (b) Those candidates choosing this question answered well. Candidates must choose specific examples from the text to illustrate their answers.

Section 2

Question 4

- (a) There were some excellent answers to this question. However, a few candidates chose to base their entire answer on Han Shaogong's views on rural life on the quote given in the question, which meant that they did not score highly.
- (b) Too few candidates answered this question to make any general comment.

Question 5

Both essays for **Question 5** were answered well. However, all candidates would have benefited from a better use of well-chosen quotations to illustrate their points, although the tendency to copy out large chunks of unacknowledged text was much improved in comparison to previous years. A few candidates had insufficient background knowledge of China at the time, which was necessary to add depth to their answers.

Question 6

- (a) This question was answered well on the whole, but some candidates showed very little knowledge of China at the time or of Lu Xun's intentions in writing the story.
- (b) Some candidates managed to analyse the roles of Fourth Uncle and Auntie in the story. However, a significant number just wrote a narrative of their appearances as the story unfolded without any attempt to explain their role.

CHINESE

Paper 9715/05

Prose

General comments

Overall, candidates did well in this year's examination, demonstrating a high standard in translation from English into Chinese.

Comments on specific questions

Every candidate received full marks for the translation of the following phrases: *'...is busy every day from morning until night'*, *'if friends invite him to go out somewhere, he never goes'*, *'they have a high income now'*, *'...get a bit of fresh air'*, *'they go to watch a film or go ice-skating at the sports centre'*.

Other sentences, however, were less successfully attempted. A number of candidates overlooked the need to translate the title, *'Cantonese Sundays'*, and amongst those who did attempt it, few were able to provide a satisfactory version in Chinese, eg 广州人的. They might have assumed that if *'Cantonese'* as a dialect is 广东话, *'Cantonese Sundays'* in Chinese should be 广东人的星期天.

'Young Wang' and *'Young Zhang'* also caused problems. Many candidates used *'young'* as in *'a young person'*, eg 年轻的, and seemed unfamiliar with *'young'* as in *'Young Wang'*, eg 小. Centres should address this gap in candidates' knowledge.

A sizeable number of candidates used 中午 (midday) for *'afternoon'* in response to *'sleep in until the afternoon'* instead of the correct 下午.

In some cases, it was not clear whether candidates had understood the meaning of the English text they were translating:

- (a) *'...make it through to Sunday with difficulty'* (好不容易遇上星期天) was not well understood. Often candidates' responses in Chinese were along the lines of *'He finds Sundays boring as he doesn't know what to do on Sundays'*.
- (b) A considerable number of candidates translated *'a married couple in their thirties'* as *'the couple got married when they were thirty'* or *'the couple have been married for thirty years'*.
- (c) As for *'...are keener than ever to be together'*, only a few candidates understood *'are keener than ever'* and translated it as 比平时更喜欢. Candidates tended to omit *'than ever'* and instead provide something along the lines of *'... are keen to be together'*, eg 喜欢在一起.
- (d) *'as far as the food and drinks trade is concerned'* also caused some problems and was often translated as 自从饮食业被人们关注. Examiners were hoping to see something along the lines of 就饮食业而言.