

CHINESE AND CHINESE LANGUAGE

Paper 9715/02
Reading and Writing

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. Centres should remind candidates that wherever it is reasonable to do so, they should use their own words when phrasing their answers and avoid merely lifting chunks from the original text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

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

Question 2

Candidates had few problems coping with (b) and (c), but (a) sometimes caused problems.

Questions 3 and 4

The majority of candidates were able to show very good to excellent levels of comprehension. Where candidates did not score full marks for a question it was often because the answer they provided, though correct as far as it went, was incomplete. Candidates should be reminded to take note of the mark allocation when they write their answers, in order to ensure that they provide sufficient detail to gain the maximum marks for each answer.

It is also worth reminding candidates that reading comprehension questions are intended to test the extent to which candidates have understood the texts on the question paper. Therefore marks are only awarded for information taken from these texts. Marks cannot be awarded for answers drawn from personal knowledge.

Question 5

Once again there were many excellent answers in which candidates drew relevant material from both texts in response to the summary question and added to this a convincing personal response.

Where candidates did not do as well it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- not referring to the information in the texts for the summary element
- not incorporating their own ideas or experiences in the answer as required by (b)
- writing a general summary of the two texts rather than answering the specific question.

CHINESE AND CHINESE LANGUAGE

Paper 9715/03

Essay

Most candidates could write fluently showing that they were competent in the use of Chinese.

In terms of their language skills, many candidates scored a mark in the 16-20 range, demonstrating good command of the language, though with some lapses. To achieve a mark in the highest band, candidates needed to be able to show that they were not just competent users of the language but that they could produce a more sophisticated piece of writing, e.g. by making use of appropriate idiom and varied vocabulary.

Most candidates seemed to have researched around the Set Topics published in the syllabus and knew their chosen subject well. As a result they had plenty to say on the various issues raised by the questions. In order to achieve a mark in the higher bands for content, it is important that candidates give the essay a clear focus and argue their case coherently with proper transition from one point to another. Bullet points and lists do not provide a suitable structure for an answer and cannot be highly rewarded.

Candidates should be reminded that on the question paper they will see the general Set Topic, as stated in the syllabus, followed by the specific question they must answer. In some cases, candidates wrote on the broad topic area instead of answering the specific question, e.g. for **Question 1** instead of writing on the specific issue of arguing with parents, candidates wrote on the much broader Set Topic, which was the 'Generation Gap'.

CHINESE AND CHINESE LITERATURE

Paper 9715/04

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 competent essay planning, but in many 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 at 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 in 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.

Some candidates did not do as well in this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed virtually no evidence that they had ever read the text for which they were answering the question. One or two continue to refer only 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. It was surprising that, occasionally, candidates seemed to think that writing a page of competent Chinese which bore no relation to the question or the text would suffice.

It is disappointing to note that a number of candidates are still misreading the rubrics. Candidates should answer **three** questions in total (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 two will be marked etc. If a candidate's script ends up being marked out of 50 because only 2 answers could be considered, then this is a very serious handicap to the achievement of a good grade.

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, but too many candidates still quoted overly long chunks of texts in their essays, sometimes without any quotation marks to indicate 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 any quotation which might have some bearing on the question, however tenuous the link, and then quote them without any explanation.

In many questions on literature, no one answer is right or wrong; the Examiners are 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 《茶馆》. There were some very good answers. Unfortunately, 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) The short questions meant that the answers were better organised, but some answers were mostly based on the part of the play quoted in the question, rather than referring – as was necessary – to other parts of the play. The quoted passage in the question is merely intended to act as a stimulus. There was often insufficient knowledge of the historical and political context of the play, particularly with respect to the whereabouts of Uncle Dali in this question.
- (b) In answering **1(b)**, many candidates simply wrote a little bit about each character, but didn't actually answer the question itself. They seemed to have insufficient knowledge of the overall impact and meaning of the play.

Question 2

Candidates found the questions on poetry quite difficult to answer and in general only those who were struggling to find a third question to answer attempted them. 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 a poem question unless they really know the poems well and have discussed and analysed the imagery with teachers and fellow students in class.

- (a) Despite the fact that the Question Paper stated that there was just one verse of six verses printed, nonetheless most candidates restricted themselves to discussing the single stanza printed. The discussion in **(ii)** on metaphor was generally weak. Many candidates were only able to make some general observations and did not give any in depth analysis of individual metaphors.
- (b) Not many candidates chose to answer this question, reflecting perhaps a lack of in-depth study of Xu Zhimo's poetry.

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, as candidates restricted themselves to comments on what was printed on the Question Paper. Hardly anyone answered **3(a)(ii)** well.
- (b) There were some very good answers to this question, with well chosen and apt illustrations. However, some candidates just found evidence of difficulties encountered by 阿信 and then quoted significant chunks of text, describing a particular scene or incident, amounting to 7-10 lines of continuous quotation in some cases.

Section 2

Question 4

Not many candidates chose **Question 4**.

- (a) There were some good answers to this question. However, many answers did not show much knowledge of the background of the story or enough understanding of the text. Again, an ability to analyse metaphor and use of language was required, which most did not attempt.
- (b) This question required candidates to take a view and then make an argument for it, with close textual analysis. Candidates found this hard and need practice in answering this kind of question.

Question 5

- (a) Not many candidates chose this question and those who did often needed a more knowledge of the period about which Mao Dun was writing.
- (b) Some answers to this question were very good, but others were quite often made up of semi-copied parts of the texts and had a tendency to be longwinded

Question 6

There were some good answers to both **6(a)** and **6(b)**. However, in their answers many candidates just wrote about 祥林嫂's sufferings and again did not really answer the questions themselves. It is important to make a careful analysis of the demands of the question and to have an essay plan before beginning to write.

CHINESE

Paper 9715/05

Prose

General comments

The overwhelming majority of candidates put in an excellent performance on this paper with some of the translations reaching a high level of sophistication through an almost elegant use of language. This might in part be due to the fact that the passage for translation was a universally familiar story – leaving a laptop in a taxi.

Centres preparing candidates for this examination are asked to remind them of the need to translate the title of the prose. Candidates who do not provide a translation of the title will lose marks unnecessarily.

Candidates should be trained to read the whole passage through before they start to translate it in order to understand where the 'story' is going. In this way, they will avoid providing a translation which has no internal logic.

Comments on specific questions

Certain parts of the passage presented few problems. For instance, most candidates received full marks for their translation of 'All I could remember was that it was a red taxi. Unfortunately there are so many different taxi companies in this city, and all the taxis are red'.

In addition, many candidates demonstrated good understanding of the compound structure in 'the call I had desperately been hoping for all night' and provided an acceptable translation with 的, e.g. 我苦苦等了一夜的电话. Interestingly, there was a marked trend for certain candidates to use 通 as a measure word for 电话, as in 打了一通电话. This was accepted by Examiners though it had not been anticipated as a possible alternative.

The translation of 'receipt' also proved interesting. Most candidates translated 'receipt' (as in 'I had not asked for a receipt') as 收据. This is the literal translation, but in real life what one would get from a taxi driver is normally 发票. Examiners decided to award the maximum marks available for that phrase to those candidates who provided something along the lines of 我没有索要发票. Those who translated it as 我没有索要收据 did not get the maximum marks available for that particular phrase.

The word 'laptop' in the title of the prose presented difficulties for some candidates and they translated it as 文件, instead of 笔记本电脑 or 手提电脑. Candidates also had problems translating 'preferred' in the phrase 'red is the preferred colour for weddings'. Some managed to provide an acceptable translation along the lines of 红色是婚礼的首选颜色, but others provided inaccurate translations such as 红色是代表喜庆的意思.

In certain cases, candidates showed a lack of awareness of the differences between the way in which Chinese and English verbs operate, e.g. 'to look up' and 'to find'. For the phrase 'looked up to find the hotel', a mark was awarded to 抬头看到 but not to 抬头寻找. Likewise in the case of the title 'Laptop found', a mark was awarded to 手提电脑找到了 but not to 寻找手提电脑.

Some candidates showed the influence of English in their writing of Chinese. For example:

- by using 和 between sentences, especially before the last sentence, as in 这个城市有太多不同的出租车公司, 和出租车都是红色的

- by inserting a clause starting with 因为 immediately after the main clause without a comma between, as in 出租车都是红色的因为红色是婚礼的首选
- by putting a clause indicating 'when' at the end of a sentence, 有人找到我的名片在翻看我的电脑包的时候.