

CHINESE

Paper 9715/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The majority of candidates performed well or very well on this paper. They engaged with the reading passages and were able to show good understanding of the information and ideas that these contained.

The quality of language demonstrated in candidates' responses was generally good. There were some instances of inappropriate use of expressions and grammatical structures, and a few candidates copied out long portions of text from the reading passages, which was not always selective enough to indicate sufficient comprehension. Candidates should be reminded that, as far as possible, they should use their own words in response to **Questions 3, 4 and 5**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally tackled well. Some candidates were unable to answer parts **(c)** and **(e)**.

Question 2

There was a mixed response to this question. Part **(a)** was handled well by the majority of candidates and part **(b)** was answered correctly by many. Fewer candidates were able to provide a suitable response to part **(c)**.

Question 3 and 4

The majority of candidates were able to show very good to excellent levels of comprehension in their responses to these questions. 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 reading passages in the question paper. Therefore marks are only awarded for information taken from these reading passages. Marks cannot be awarded for answers drawn from the candidate's personal knowledge.

Question 5

There were many excellent answers to this question. Many candidates drew relevant material from both reading passages 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 reading passages for the summary element
- not incorporating their own ideas or experiences in the answer as required by part **(b)**
- writing a general summary of the two reading passages rather than answering the specific question asked.

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Paper 9715/03

Essay

General comments

This is an Essay paper in which candidates are required to compose one essay from a choice of five topics. The essay is marked out of 40, with 16 marks available for Content and 24 marks available for Quality of Language.

Most candidates could write fluently showing that they were competent in the use of Chinese. In terms of their language skills, many candidates demonstrated good command of the language, though with some lapses. To achieve a mark in the highest band for Quality of Language, 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.

Some candidates wrote empty rhetoric and flowery language that made little contribution to the development of ideas, thus limiting the mark for Content. In order to achieve a mark in the higher bands for Content, it is important that candidates give their 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 rewarded highly.

Many candidates adhered to the character limits specified in the question paper. A few candidates exceeded the specified character limits: candidates should be reminded that going beyond this does not improve the quality of the work presented and may indeed increase the likelihood of errors occurring.

Candidates need to remember that where a question has two elements, they need to address both parts of the question in order to have access to the highest marks, e.g. **Question 5** asked about the impact of environmental pollution on humans *and* ways that the situation can be improved.

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 attitudes towards money, candidates wrote on the much broader Set Topic, which was 'Human relationships'.

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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 set 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 set text, but were 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 set texts, as well as the texts themselves.

Some candidates did not do as well on this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed virtually no evidence that they had ever read the text on 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 question paper 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 must be on a different set text. It is important that all candidates are aware of this.

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 support or illustrate the argument of a well-planned essay and to show an in-depth knowledge of the set 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 support this point the candidate should make very close reference to the text or choose a short quotation 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, supported by evidence from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1: 老舍:《茶馆》 (“Chaguan” by Lao She)

- (a) This was a popular question and there were some very good answers here. Most candidates answered the question well and their answers tended to be well organised. Some candidates could have improved their marks by analysing the characters 秦二爷 (Qinerye) and 崔久峰 (Cuijiufeng). Candidates need to remember to illustrate their answers with relevant quotations and reference to the set text.
- (b) This was another popular question. Many candidates lost marks because they simply stated that they agreed (or disagreed) with the statement; they needed to provide illustrative examples to explain the reason why people needed (or did not need) to learn the knowledge of the background.

Question 2: 徐志摩:《诗选》 (Selected poems by Xu Zhimo)

- (a) Some candidates gave detailed and thoughtful analysis of 比喻 (trope) and imagery in their answer to this question. Many candidates needed to provide a more detailed analysis of these and, even though the question paper mentioned that just one of the six verses was printed, most candidates restricted themselves to discussing just that one verse. Candidates can improve by giving a more in-depth analysis and discussion.
- (b) Candidates demonstrated that they had understood the poetry well and produced an in-depth analysis on the content of the poetry. In some cases, candidates focused on Xu Zhimo's life rather than on 《叫化活该》 itself.

Question 3: 王安忆:《本次列车终点》 (“Benci lieche zhongdian” by Wang Anyi)

- (a) This was a popular question and there were many very good answers, with some excellent ones.
- (b) There were some very good answers to this question, with well-chosen and apt illustrations. Some candidates used their knowledge of Chinese history and literature from the period 1980–1990 to enhance their response. In a few cases, candidates' answers focused on the quotation given in **Question 3(a)**, but not on the whole set text.

Section 2

Question 4: 余华:《我没有自己的名字》 (“Wo mei you ziji de mingzi” by Yu Hua)

- (a) There were some good answers to this question. Some candidates answered the first part of question but did not discuss the second part, thereby limiting their marks. Candidates need to receive further practice in analysing metaphor.
- (b) This question required candidates to take a view and explain the reasons with close analysis of the text. There were some good answers here; some candidates needed to show more in-depth knowledge of the background of the story and further understanding of the author's intentions.

Question 5: 茅盾:《春蚕》 (“Chun Can” by Mao Dun)

- (a) Generally, this question was not answered well. The majority of candidates needed a more in-depth knowledge of the period about which Mao Dun was writing.
- (b) Some answers to this question were very good: most candidates analysed the character very well, referring to his industriousness and conservativeness. The best answers discussed 老一代 (the old generation), comparing it with 阿多 (the new generation).

Question 6: 鲁迅:《孔乙己》("Kong Yiji" by Lu Xun)

- (a) There were some very good answers to this question. A few candidates seemed to have read the question and focused only on analysing 孔乙己 (Kong Yiji) but not on the character 我. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the question carefully before beginning to write their answer.
- (b) Again, there were many excellent answers to this question. Some candidates needed to discuss and analyse the author's intentions in order to gain higher marks.

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Paper 9715/05

Prose

General comments

In this paper, candidates are required to translate a short passage from English into Chinese.

Overall, candidates performed very well on this paper, with some of the translations reaching a high level of sophistication through an almost elegant use of language. Some candidates put in an excellent performance on this paper and found expressive solutions to the translation, producing phrases such as 然而, 对于生活, 我们还要奢求什么呢? for the last sentence in the passage.

The phrase '*In the basket next to her there was only one rose left*' presented difficulties for some candidates and this was frequently translated as 左边的篮子里仅有一只玫瑰. Candidates also had problems translating '*I didn't have much that evening*', with some providing inaccurate translations such as 没有太多这样的夜晚.

The following is a list of common errors seen in candidates' answers, and are areas in which candidates would benefit from further practice.

- A number of candidates translated '*square*' as 公园, 正方形, or 十字路口.
- Many candidates translated '*gloves*' as 丝袜 or 靴子.
- The word '*bench*' was frequently translated as 沙滩.
- The phrase '*dozing off*' was commonly translated as 打鼾.

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. For example, a number of candidates translated '*platform*' in the third paragraph as 平台 or 报刊亭 rather than 月台 or 站台. If candidates had read the whole passage first, then the sequence of events narrated – from a kiosk in the square to the subway entrance, then down to the platform, then onto the train, and then walking out of the station – should have indicated that 平台 or 报刊亭 could not be a correct translation for '*platform*'.