



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
FRENCH.....	2
GCE Advanced Level.....	2
Paper 9716/01 Speaking.....	2
Paper 9716/02 Reading and Writing	4
Paper 9716/03 Essay	6
Paper 9716/04 Texts	8

FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

FRENCH

GCE Advanced Level

Paper 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

It is pleasing to note that most Centres conducted the examination according to the instructions in the syllabus, marked it with care, and despatched their samples with all the appropriate paperwork. For new Centres, there are a few administrative points which sometimes cause problems.

Before recording examinations, it is worth considering possible locations, as not all will provide suitable recording conditions. Large, high-ceilinged rooms do not provide ideal acoustic conditions, nor do rooms next to playgrounds or music rooms, next to building works, or those otherwise subject to external noise. It should be possible to close the door to the room, prevent interruptions and turn off all telephones, including mobiles.

The tape recorder and volume levels should be checked before the examination – Moderators need to be able to hear both candidate and Examiner clearly. The position of the microphone is often critical, since candidates tend to speak more quietly than Examiners, so the microphone should be positioned to favour candidates.

At the beginning of the examination, Examiners should make sure that the leader tape has passed before announcing the Centre name and number, the syllabus details, their own name, and the candidate's name and number. These details should also be written on the labels stuck on the cassette and on the cassette box. It is very helpful to Moderators to be able to see which candidates appear on which side of the cassette.

Centres are asked to keep to the timing of the examination as set out in the syllabus (an approximate total of 20 minutes for each candidate). Only 2 candidates should be recorded per side of a 90 minute cassette and only one per side of a 60 minute cassette. In this way, disruption to the flow of the examination and disturbance to a candidate caused by the need to turn to the other side of a cassette in the middle of the examination can be avoided.

Centres should check the recording before submitting it, as Moderators frequently receive tapes for different syllabuses, with one or both sides blank, interference, and hissing or mechanical noise from the tape recorder, all of which make Moderation very difficult. Moderators can only assess what they actually hear on the tape.

Examiners are reminded that they should mark the examinations themselves and send a taped sample of the candidates to be Moderated, spread as evenly as possible throughout the mark range. It is difficult for Moderators to offer advice on marking levels without detailed information as to how marks have been awarded, so a mark for each element of the examination should be entered in each column of the Working Mark Sheet, with a final total, rather than just a section total.

The marks from the Working Mark Sheet should be transferred to the correct MS1 and the addition of marks and their correct transcription are checked as part of the Moderation process for the sample. A copy of the MS1 and of the Working Mark Sheet should be despatched with the cassette for Moderation.

Presentation (about 3 minutes)

This should be about 3 minutes long, on a subject of the candidate's own choosing, and should be connected in some way with France or francophone culture. There was the usual variety of topics, tending more towards the social this year, ranging from Cinema in Quebec, evolution of family life, scientific developments, the position of women, to Céline Dion, Paris, and Sport.

Candidates generally made some reference to France, either by quoting French statistics in support of their theme, or clearly basing it within francophone culture, but in fact it was sometimes less easy to make specific references within the wider topics. There were one or two instances where the presentation mark was halved (see mark scheme) because of lack of francophone reference, in a topic on Sport, for instance. Teachers need to remind their candidates of this rule.

It was noticeable that the more factual topics gave fewer opportunities to express ideas and opinions, and candidates need guidance from their Teachers on the suitability of various topics. For example, a topic, when treated in a purely factual or personal way, would be classed as more appropriate to a GCSE examination, whereas *L'évolution de la famille en France au vingtième siècle* would be entirely suitable to A/AS level. In the topic discussion, the candidate would be able to make comparisons between the material in the syllabus and his/her own experience, and thus develop conversation.

Most presentations had been learnt by heart, which often affected the quality of pronunciation, and many were too long. Examiners need to be prepared to interrupt after 3½ minutes, and begin the topic discussion section.

Topic conversation (7/8 minutes)

There were some very interesting discussions following on from presentations, and many candidates had prepared more material than they could use in the presentation itself, which allowed them to develop their responses in this section and gave added depth and new directions to the conversation. This requires a great deal from Examiners, who cannot rely on a prepared set of questions, but need to react to the candidate's views and opinions. When this is the case, conversation is much more natural and spontaneous.

There were some instances where a candidate, in spite of interruption and questions from the Examiner, continued to deliver pre-learnt material. This clearly limits the marks available for this candidate for comprehension and responsiveness, as interaction with the Examiner is lacking.

Unfortunately, there are still many candidates who do not seem to be aware that they are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections. Examiners must prompt them to do so, in order to give them an opportunity to score marks for this element of the examination. They should not be penalised in terms of the marks achieved because they have been prompted, but where candidates do not ask questions in one conversation section, a mark of zero should be entered in the final column for that section.

It is important that Examiners try to keep to the timings suggested in the syllabus – topic conversations were often too long.

General conversation (8/9 minutes)

This section sometimes suffered because of the length of the topic conversation, and was consequently too short, not giving candidates enough time to deal with a variety of topics. Some Centres were under the misapprehension that this section should be more general conversation about the candidate's chosen topic, meaning that the candidate was never given the opportunity to show whether or not he/she could talk about, or was interested in other areas. This section is intended to deal with entirely different areas from those chosen by the candidate for the presentation, and might deal with future plans, politics, war, religion, or anything of current interest. For many, this was the case, and discussions ranged widely, taking in sport and leisure, the media, relationships and many other areas.

The best performances came from those who were able to move away from the factual and progress to dealing with issues. This is not intended to be a question and answer session, with the Examiner raising an issue, the candidate giving a response, and the Examiner then moving on to another issue. Neither should every candidate from a Centre be given the same questions or areas to discuss, as each candidate will have different interests and the examination should reflect this. Both Examiner and candidate need to engage, responding to each other, so that a conversation develops, but Examiners need to beware of saying too much themselves – their object is to give the candidate the opportunity to express ideas and opinions, without spending too much time explaining their own views. When a candidate asks a question, the Examiner should, of course, answer it, but briefly, since the aim is to allow the candidate time to elaborate and expand his/her responses.

Once again in this section, candidates were required to ask questions – Examiners needed to be ready to prompt again before the end of the section, but the most popular source for questions was clearly the war in Iraq, and there were interesting discussions and viewpoints on French attitudes expressed.

Conclusion

On the whole, candidates for this examination showed that they had generally been well-prepared, and were most able and mature in their attitudes. Centres are to be congratulated for the quality of their preparation.

<p style="text-align: center;">Paper 9716/02 Reading and Writing</p>
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General comments

The performance of candidates on this Paper was good. Few candidates struggled to understand the texts, and as a result they responded well to most of the questions. The quality of written French was high with large numbers of candidates writing fluently and accurately.

In **Questions 3** and **4** where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time copying out the question as part of their answer. No marks can be gained this way and a good deal of time is lost.

The rubric asks candidates to answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. They may use material from the passage in their answers but they are required to answer in a way which shows understanding of the text. Copying wholesale from the text does not show comprehension and therefore gains no marks. Candidates should try to express the relevant ideas using different vocabulary or structures but even small changes to the original will generally show that the candidate can handle the ideas and the language.

Answers should be relevant and as succinct as possible. The content mark indicated on the Question Paper shows the number of content points available and the length of the answer should be proportionate to it.

Quality of language marks are given for the whole performance on a set of answers to questions. If a candidate scores 0 for all content, it is impossible to award any mark for language. Therefore if individual questions score 0 for content, the final mark for language should be adjusted accordingly. Generally an individual question scoring 0 for content will lose 1 of the 5 language marks.

In **Question 5** the rubric states that both parts of the question should be answered in no more than 140 words. It is important that candidates observe the word limit because only limited latitude is allowed beyond this figure. Candidates will not be awarded content marks after the 140 words. Candidates do not need any introductory remarks for example stating that there are advantages and disadvantages: these will gain no marks and use up valuable words out of the 140 maximum.

In general candidates should aim to use 90-100 words for the résumé and 40-50 for the personal response. This relates closely to the content marks available for each part.

The same 5 point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4** and **5**. This means that candidates must maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the Paper if they are to score high marks overall.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 5 | Very Good Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order). |
| 4 | Good Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures. |
| 3 | Sound Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions. |
| 2 | Below average Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions often incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives. |
| 0-1 | Poor Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error. |

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates had little problem relating the words given in the text to one of the difficulties suggested.

- (a) *Concilier* was well done
- (b) *S'engueuler* created some difficulty and was not well known.
- (c) Was very well done but **1 (d)** and **1 (e)** were sometimes misunderstood. Candidates should be aware of the rubric which states *la définition qui correspond le mieux au sens du passage*.

Question 2

This type of task requires a sound knowledge of indirect speech and some candidates found this extremely difficult. Item **2 (a)** was most accessible. Candidates showed that they were able to change the disjunctive pronoun.

Items **2 (b)** and **2 (d)** were generally well done. Item **2 (c)** required the use of the conditional perfect and this proved too difficult for some candidates. Item **2 (e)** required the imperfect tense of *plaire* and though many were able to construct the imperfect, they retained the circumflex from the present tense.

Question 3

Candidates made a much greater effort to manipulate the vocabulary and structure than last year and were, therefore, able to demonstrate their comprehension of the text. Far less copying from the passage meant better marks were obtained. Items **3 (a)**, **(b)**, **(c)**, and **(d)** required factual responses and needed candidates to find information in the passage. Item **3 (a)** was well answered and candidates had few problems finding two points. Most candidates offered the difficulty of combining the work of a student with that of an employee as well as a lack of free time while their friends could go out on the town. Some referred equally correctly to the long hours and the problem of the tiring work.

Item **3 (b)** was well handled by many candidates but included a great deal of irrelevant information which had nothing to do with 'exploitation'. Most candidates managed the fact that there was no rest day but some thought that it meant that there was no opportunity for rest during the day. The second point for overtime being unpaid brought a lot of copying. It required manipulation of the text which some did very well by replacing/rephrasing *les heures supplémentaires non payées* by *les heures supplémentaires non rémunérées!* In some cases a failure to express the idea clearly lost the mark. There is a big difference between working extra hours *sans payer* and *sans être payé*. The remaining two marks were given for staff being given trivial tasks and for not having the chance to talk about problems. Item **3 (c)** was centred on the relationship between *le patron* and *l'apprenti*. It required some description of the responsibilities of each one. Many candidates gave an answer that was logical in itself but did not reflect precisely what Loic meant. Item **3 (d)** was well answered.

Item **3 (e)** proved to be much more difficult because it demanded a definition of *mon mal* which most failed to give and what was meant by *en patience* indicating the future, the end of the apprenticeship. The final point of becoming his own boss was well done. A number of candidates confused *son père* with *son patron* and therefore missed the point.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates realised that they needed to make the link between work, study, training and pay. Some candidates misunderstood *mi-salarié* thinking that the apprentice received half pay or a low salary.
- (b) Was well answered.
- (c) This question proved difficult because few candidates knew *engueulades* and there was, therefore, much guessing. Other candidates failed to rephrase *quotidiennes* though they almost certainly understood it.

- (d) This was well answered with most candidates concentrating on the poor relationship between the employer and apprentice but some gave equally acceptable answers of other employees and the apprentice and even amongst the apprentices themselves.
- (e) Candidates defined *le patron à l'ancienne mode* very well and also gave a legitimate reason for the need to change their thinking in the future but failed to say what the problem was with the *patron à l'ancienne mode*.

Question 5

It is important that candidates stick to the word limit in this question. Part of the exercise is to get the candidate to focus on a summary of the main issues. It would be unfair to candidates who do find ways of summarising succinctly, if lengthy essays in excess of 200 words were given full marks. Similarly, if candidates write significantly less than 140 words, they cannot be expected to be awarded the full language mark. No introduction to the answer is required and, given the amount of information to be summarised, they should not waste words on general reflections. It is vital to recognise the importance of the rubric defining the task. There are two clear questions to answer: a summary of the two texts and a personal response to the subject. 140 words is the aim for the two sections and only limited latitude is allowed beyond that figure - the completion of the sentence. Clearly candidates should consider writing a summary consisting of 90-100 words which can gain 10 content marks and a personal response of 40-50 words which can gain 5 marks. There were two clear areas indicated for the summary; *les avantages et les désavantages de l'apprentissage*. The mark scheme is constructed to take account of this dual task. The question also states *Comme suite à votre lecture de ces deux textes* so candidates can only gain marks by making reference to specific details in the passages. No marks can be gained by writing a general essay. The remaining five marks for content require candidates to give a brief personal response to the topic, which is marked as mini-essay taking account of ideas, personal point of view and interest of response. To be able to score 5 marks, candidates must have enough words left. Language is marked on a global assessment out of 5 (see language grid).

Paper 9716/03

Essay

General comments

Overall, the general standard of candidates' performance was satisfactory and similar to that of the previous year. Scripts reflected a considerable spread of linguistic ability, from the consistently accurate and fluent to a minority which showed little or no ability to go beyond the level of competent use of (I)GCSE/O Level grammar. Most, however, contained some evidence of at least some complexity in language structures and a fair degree of accuracy. Few essays were excessively long or unduly short, most candidates only marginally exceeding the recommended 400 word limit. Apart from **Question 1**, which attracted only a few answers, most of the topics attracted a more or less equal number of candidates from across the full ability range.

Towards the top of the range, candidates produced fluent scripts that read easily, and that were characterised by controlled handling of more complex structures couched in varied and interesting vocabulary. Their answers were clearly relevant to the question and contained apt references and examples in competently structured arguments leading to a conclusion. The following are examples of work in this category.

- *Les secteurs de la construction de bâtiments et d'autoroutes, de la sidérurgie, ont surtout bénéficié de cette main d'oeuvre maltraitée et mal payée.*
- *Dans ces circonstances les médias abusent de leur pouvoir, et manipulent les téléspectateurs en leur ôtant la liberté d'esprit.*
- *Dans tous les pays du monde il existe des tribunaux judiciaires qui veillent à ce que la loi soit respectée.*

Candidates in the middle of the range reached a fair level of accuracy though their work was somewhat uneven and inconsistent, but with some attempt to use more complex structures. Some constructions were mastered, but scripts showed some difficulty with irregular verbs and in the use of prepositions and some pronouns. Answers in this category were not consistently relevant, though they were usually reasonably well paragraphed, with an attempt to argue towards a conclusion. Examples of the types of errors found in this category follow.

- *Les pays riches sont dans l'obligation d'aider les pays en voie de développement pas parce que ces une question de moralité mais car sa leurs donnent une bonne image.*
- *C'est pour cette raison que les jeunes, découragés, préfèrent de manger ou préparer des choses qu'ils plaisent.*
- *Il est hors de doute que chaque individu a le droit de donne leur point de vue.*

Scripts of less able, but by no means the least able candidates, were characterised by persistent serious grammatical errors, misspellings, consistently simple sentence patterns with little or no use of subordinate clauses, and limited vocabulary. Limited factual knowledge tended to be couched in generalisation. Characteristically, paragraphing was weak, and essays were inclined to contain a considerable amount of irrelevance. It was regrettable that in quite a number of cases, however, sound ideas and knowledge in a reasonably well structured essay, were let down by an inadequate level of accurate French. Examples of errors of the type mentioned follow.

- *Le média fait un grande parte de nos vies, n'est pas?*
- *Quand je vais au cinéma il y a les jeunes obèses, ils sont dans tout les places. Je suis certainement pas le seul person qui vue ca.*
- *J'espère que les gouvènements réalise ça et essayer aider les jeunes dans ecolé avec sports et activites.*

Common mis-spellings of common words in scripts of weaker candidates include: *indépendent, resources, nayanmoins, apparance, comettre, nourir, apauvrir, audience, person, petetre, recenment, dangerous, government, boucoup, la plus part, journeaux, problem, exemple, concluire, chac' un.*

General areas of difficulty or confusion not necessarily restricted to weaker candidates include the use/misuse of *parce que/à cause de, venir/devenir, comme/depuis, entre/parmi, mall/mauvais, bien/bon, les/des, leur* (adjective) and *leur* (pronoun). Many candidates had difficulty with the use of *on* and its related adjectives and pronouns.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of leaving sufficient time for a careful and systematic check through what has been written. It was felt that this is particularly applicable to candidates in the middle of the range whose accuracy was inconsistent; quite often certain types of errors reflected carelessness rather than a fundamental lack of ability, as in, for example *J'ai pu constaté* for *J'ai pu constater*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

As stated above, this was not a popular question. Most of those who attempted it tended to limit their references to immigration in France and to make no reference to any other French-speaking countries. Those who did make reference to French-speaking Africa, for example, tended to turn the question round and argue that money earned in France and sent back home to families in the country of origin contributes to the economy of that country. Most essays were rather unsubtle, ignoring the economic dimension of the title and stressing the cultural impact of immigration.

Question 2

Most candidates agreed with the statement, a quite common approach being to make quite impassioned references to dictatorships. Stronger candidates tended to make comparisons between democracies and dictatorships, usually making the point that the statement does not apply to the former. However some answers did make reference to the relatively lenient judgements made on multi-national countries in democratic, westernised areas of the world.

Question 3

This was quite a popular question. Most candidates made relevant points, but quite a few found it difficult to balance the various elements of the question, some ignoring '*liberté d'esprit*', others not addressing the issue of grave danger. A minority of scripts appeared to be largely pre-prepared answers designed to be applicable to any question on the topic, usually in the form of a generalised survey of the function of the media. Those who did address the question more fully examined the impact of advertising and fashion magazines on young people in particular, and of the power-potential or otherwise, of government-controlled television, radio and press.

Question 4

Answers to this question generally fell into two categories. On the one hand some candidates wanted to make the point that rich countries help developing countries not from a sense of moral obligation but rather for what is or may ultimately be in it for themselves, then proceeding to denounce the various ways in which rich countries take advantage of Third World countries. On the other hand, candidates tried to show the historical reasons for and background to the present disparities between rich and developing countries, and to find reasons why a sense of moral obligation should be a driving force.

Question 5

This question attracted the second highest number of candidates. The weakest answers addressed only the first statement and wrote about the importance of being *en forme* and ways of being so. Most candidates, however, addressed all parts of the question, showing themselves to be well-informed and illustrating their answer with well-chosen facts and references. Stronger candidates also demonstrated good use of subject-specific vocabulary such as *le diabète*, *les maladies cardio-vasculaires*, *les matières grasses*, *les sucreries*, *les produits laitiers*, *s'immobiliser*, *une alimentation saine et équilibrée*.

Question 6

This was the most popular topic. Whilst it would have been almost impossible to write irrelevantly, nevertheless some candidates ignored the *pour vous* element of the question and produced a rather factual essay on the various types of families in contemporary society in different countries. At the other extreme there were a number of analyses of the dynamics of relationships between various members of the candidate's own family, with rather too much personal comment and criticism, in contrast with the rather more common and somewhat pedestrian *cocon familial* responses.

Paper 9716/04

Texts

General comments

The majority of candidates wrote a maximum of 600 words in line with the recommendation on the front page of the Paper. Those who wrote at excessive length often did so at the expense of relevance to the question, and thereby did themselves no favours. Answers were attempted on all the prescribed texts. Once again, there was a strong preference for *Le Grand Meaulnes* and *Tartuffe*. A substantial number of candidates answered questions on *Les Mouches*, but in a good many cases they appeared to find the text challenging. There were relatively few answers on *Le Curé de Tours*, and although most candidates were familiar with the plot, they were less adept at analysing characterisation and social satire. Predictably, the majority of answers to questions in **Section B** were on *Un Sac de billes*, a text which candidates invariably enjoy and know well. Their knowledge of the text is not always matched by an ability to focus this on the question. Those who have studied the other texts in this section produced work of widely varying quality.

The overall level of performance was satisfactory. However, rather more candidates scored very low marks than was the case last June, and there were few scripts which could be described as consistently good or excellent. This was because factual knowledge was not supported by analytical skill or the ability to structure essays convincingly. A significant number of candidates gave the impression that they were producing rehearsed material with only a tenuous link to the question. Commentaries on the set passages were again bedevilled by excessive and often irrelevant narrative with insufficient analysis in relation to the precise points raised by the questions.

It was pleasing to see that Centres appeared to have taken note of comment in last year's report and to the observance of rubrics and in particular the labelling of answers. However, some scripts and commentaries in which the subsections were not indicated. Most candidates make it clear in the first paragraph of their answer that they are intending to address a particular issue. Many return to this conclusion. Examiners welcome and reward consistent evidence in the body of the essay that the candidate has not neglected the set topic in favour of a general discussion of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Alain-Fournier, *Le Grand Meaulnes*

As always, a very large number of candidates had studied this text, and their answers produced a wide range of marks. The passage was easily identified by most candidates. They should be reminded that the first question on each passage does not demand a lengthy answer, let alone a paraphrase of the text up to the point at which the passage occurs. Most were able to explain Meaulnes' *désarroi* in terms of his encounter with Frantz. The better answers included reference to the fact that Frantz unburdened himself to Meaulnes despite their never having met and also to the appearance of the revolver. Most understood the reasons for the guests' preparations for departure, but weaker candidates thought that they were already fully informed about the collapse of Frantz's plans. The last question gave the opportunity to able candidates to discuss the essential ambiguity of Meaulnes' position at this point, situating it in the context of his continuing restlessness throughout the novel rather than focusing solely on the ambitions which he had fulfilled. It was important to see the irony implicit in the rhetorical question. Answers to the essay question were, on the whole, mediocre, often because they attempted to reach a value judgement about each relationship rather than taking an overall view of the author's position and evaluating it with examples. There was a tendency in one or two Centres to produce prepared essays on the relationships between Meaulnes, Seurel and Frantz. Candidates who did so found it difficult to convince Examiners that these friendships were strictly relevant to the theme of love.

Question 2

Molière, *Tartuffe*

The majority of candidates were able to identify the *crime* referred to in the first question. A number of answers failed to specify Tartuffe's attempt to seduce Elmire, others unnecessarily reviewed his behaviour throughout the play. The circumstances of Orgon's discovery were accurately described by almost all candidates. Mme Pernelle's reaction was appropriately discussed, although only a minority of candidates were minded, and rightly so, to describe the character as grotesque, bigoted, and above all ridiculous. Commenting on Orgon's behaviour in relation to his earlier insistence on Tartuffe's saintly qualities, some candidates again rehearsed the *Et Tartuffe...le pauvre homme* scene (among others) whereas the more astute concentrated on the irony of the situation in which Orgon is hoist with his own petard. Few candidates seemed well acquainted with Molière's comic techniques, exemplified here by Mme Pernelle's mechanical responses and the predictability of Orgon's rage at not getting the response he required. Answers to the essay question fell broadly into two categories: those who correctly addressed the issues of false piety and blinkered bigotry and those who failed to take account of the crucial point spelled out by Cléante, namely that true and discreet piety is not the object of Molière's satire. The best essays showed knowledge and understanding of both Orgon and Mme Pernelle as examples of piety gone mad, and Tartuffe as a caricature of piety who cannot conceal his true nature from anyone but the most blind and obsessive.

Question 3

Sartre, *Les Mouches*

Rather more candidates opted for this text than was the case last year. For some, it seemed to have been problematic, in that they apparently experienced difficulty in grasping the philosophical issues sufficiently well to be able to adapt their knowledge to the demands of the passage and the questions. However, there was some very good work here too, with apposite comments on the lives of the people of Argos and the defiant behaviour of Electre. Fewer answers dealt confidently with the question about Oreste's behaviour in the passage: those who asserted that it was indeed typical of him missed the point that this is the first occasion in the play on which he identifies himself with the situation and expresses a degree of involvement. Candidates who understood the implications of this defining moment scored high marks. Those who attempted the essay question showed a sound understanding of the role of authority and supported their argument with relevant references

Question 4

Balzac, *Le Curé de Tours*

This work was studied by only a small number of candidates. The guided commentaries generally display a fairly clear awareness of the situation, although not all commentaries focused successfully on Mlle Gamard's frustrated social ambitions. There was a good level of understanding of the character of l'abbé Troubert and the irony of his description of Mlle Gamard. Not many attempted the essay question, and there were few among them who went beyond a narrative level to explore the self-seeking aspects of the characters' activities or to analyse Balzac's portrayal of the motivating forces underlying their changes of allegiance.

Section 2**Question 5**

Devi, *Le Voile de Draupadi*

Candidates' work on this text seems to have improved steadily since it first appeared. Option (b) was a popular choice, and most answers demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the reasons for Anjali's decision. The better answers avoided dwelling at length on the obvious factor of her son's illness, and the best addressed the second part of the question in relation to her resolve to determine her own fate. Those answers which glossed over the very important issue of emancipation were less able to come to a view about whether or not admiration was an appropriate response.

Question 6

Joffo, *Un Sac de billes*

This text has clearly been read and enjoyed by many candidates. Whereas the existence of past essay questions on the Devi text seems to have had a positive effect on the quality of examination answers, the same cannot be said of this (ultimately much more straightforward) option. Examiners have repeatedly been faced with pre-learned essays which offer only a mention of the current question. Thus, at the lowest level of attainment, a conventional study of the negative features of the war and the Nazi occupation was not appropriate as a response to either of the questions set in this Paper. Mutual support within the family and the generosity of spirit shown by complete strangers offered good evidence of the positive aspects evoked by the first question, and it was particularly good to find the occasional answer offering a sense of the darker side of events in order to show that this is outweighed by an ultimately affirmative mood. Answers on the humorous elements were mostly superficial and often failed to go beyond narrative accounts of incidents which the boys simply enjoyed. Examples of humour offered by candidates were not always appropriate, and many essays gave the impression of producing a random sample of the boys' experiences. Examiners found only occasional evidence that a candidate had appreciated the nature of the author's sense of humour.

Question 7

Lainé, *La Dentellière*

There were more competent answers on the work as a critique of society than on the *mélange de styles différents*. Those who were aware of the feminist theme and the author's agenda were able to do well on the former question. That said, some who attempted it only wrote a series of character sketches which did not usually constitute an argument. Examiners expect candidates to be aware of any 'message' explicit or implicit in a work studied at this level, and award high marks to those who can discuss the text in this light. It must be repeated that candidates are at liberty to challenge in an informed way the validity of an author's agenda, but appropriate credit is not available to those who distort or misunderstand it. Answers on the novel's mixture of styles were almost all very disappointing, and Examiners were surprised that candidates who appeared to have little or no understanding of this aspect had opted for this question.

Question 8

Duras, *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*

The overall improvement in candidates' performance on the Devi text is also true of this one. There was some good work in response to both these questions. Option **(a)** gave the opportunity to write a balanced account of two contrasting aspects, and Examiners were happy for candidates to weight their argument in either direction provided that their case was clearly argued and supported by suitable examples. Answers on **(b)** similarly generated plenty of appropriate detail, and most candidates were able to place the three objects in the context of the themes of the novel. Answers on this text were found to be relatively well focused on the question. Once again, this feature of an essay is highly significant in the awarding of marks.