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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 and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8682/01 and 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

Once again, there has been an increase in the number of Centres entering for A and AS Level French, from all areas of the world. Centres have made a very creditable attempt to follow the instructions and assess their candidates according to the criteria in the syllabus. Moderators appreciate some of the difficulties faced by overseas Centres in administering these examinations, whether these difficulties lie in the nature of equipment or personnel. Some Centres may lack soundproof facilities and are obliged to make the best use possible of recording equipment which may not be ideal for their purposes, and some Centres have been obliged to seek a suitably qualified Examiner who may not be acquainted with the candidates, nor entirely comfortable with the format of the examination.

Centres are urged to find the quietest place possible for recording the oral examinations – where candidates will not be disturbed at lesson changeovers, for instance, or school breaks, so that candidates are given the opportunity to do their best. Examiners also need the chance to familiarise themselves with the timings, structure and requirements of the oral examination.

A tape should begin with the Examiner recording details of the Centre, the examination syllabus and component number, the name of the Examiner, and the correct details for the candidate, including name and index number – this should not be left to the candidate. If using a sixty minute cassette, please record only one candidate per side; if a ninety minute cassette, please record a maximum of two candidates per side, announcing the name and index number of the second candidate before beginning the second examination. At the end of the examination, the cassette should be checked for audibility, and both cassette and box should be labelled with the details announced at the beginning of the tape – it is only too easy for cassettes and boxes to arrive damaged, with no means of identifying them properly. It is also helpful to Moderators to be able to see which candidates are recorded on which side of a cassette. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, Examiners are asked to keep to the timings for the examination as recommended in the syllabus booklet:

- three to three and a half minutes for the Presentation
- seven to eight minutes for the Topic Conversation
- eight to nine minutes for the General Conversation.

The examinations of two candidates should then fit comfortably on one side of a ninety minute cassette.

When assessing candidates, the mark scheme for the oral examination printed in the syllabus booklet should be used, with particular note taken of the maximum mark available for each element. Each mark should be entered in one column of the Working Mark Sheet, so that Moderators are able to identify exactly how marks have been awarded and may be able to offer precise advice on marking pitch. The addition of marks should be checked, as should the transcription to the MS1, and a copy of the Working Mark Sheet, together with the Moderator's copy of the MS1, should be included with the cassette containing the oral examination(s).

Examiners need to be aware that their candidates may not, in fact, represent a full range. It is important not to assume that because some candidates are worse than others, they necessarily represent the lower end of the possible range, and should therefore be marked more severely than they perhaps deserve. Examiners need to be as consistent as possible in applying the assessment criteria, allowing their candidates to be placed within the full international range, while maintaining their rank order.

Examiners in oral examinations are faced with a complex task. Not only are they interested assessors, but also facilitators, enabling candidates to do their best. They have a difficult job, with an eye on the timing of the examination, reminding candidates of the requirement to ask questions in conversation sections, signalling the change from Topic Conversation to General Conversation, and bearing in mind the need to restrict their own contributions in order to allow candidates the maximum possible time to express their ideas and opinions. The important issue is that candidates should not be disadvantaged by any oversights on the part of the Examiner, and in general, Examiners approach their task, possibly with some trepidation, but extremely conscientiously.

Comments on specific areas

Presentation

This year, there was once again a wide variety of topics chosen by candidates. Most made reference to francophone culture, society or heritage, but there are still a few cases where candidates need to be reminded that if they do *not* do so, their mark for content and presentation will be halved. It is not sufficient merely to say '*...Ici, comme en France...*'. Candidates had prepared a variety of suitable topics, dealing with health, drugs, family conflict, war, racism, euthanasia, and cultural areas such as Impressionism, music, the media, French cinema, etc.

Topic Conversation

Very few candidates chose topics where the scope was too limited to allow discussion, and most were able to respond to some degree to the Examiner's questions. Candidates tended to be well prepared here, and few seemed to have fallen into the trap of over-preparation, so it was sometimes possible for Examiners to develop the candidate's choice of topic in interesting and unexpected ways. However, the most common comment in the reports to Centres was always that where candidates do not ask questions during the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt them to do so in order to give them the opportunity to score marks for this element of the examination. However good the candidates, where they do not ask questions in one of the conversation sections, a mark of zero must be recorded in the final column of the Working Mark Sheet for that section.

It is helpful to both Moderators and candidates if the Examiner signals the end of the Topic Conversation and the beginning of the General Conversation section, and it also provides a reminder of timing.

General Conversation

This section is not intended to be merely a continuation of the Topic Conversation: it should deal with different topic areas. In order to do well, candidates need to be able to express themselves about other areas than the single one chosen for their presentation. Examiners should aim to develop a few topics in some depth – it is not enough to say to the candidate 'tell me about x...', allow the candidate time to say a sentence or two and then move on to another of the topics discussed in class during the year. The Examiner should be prepared to engage with the candidate and try to establish some two-way communication.

Examiners must remember to prompt for questions in this section as well, in order not to deprive candidates of the opportunity to score marks for seeking information and opinions. Candidates may need reminding that if the Examiner prompts them for questions and they say they have none, they have deprived themselves of a possible five marks.

Summary

In general, Examiners are to be congratulated on their attempts to ensure that examinations are conducted in the appropriate manner and that candidates are given the opportunity to do their best, and candidates on their preparedness and attempts to express themselves on all manner of topics.

<p>Papers 8682/02 and 9716/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p>
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General comments

There was a good spread of performance on this paper. The best candidates set very high standards giving full and accurate answers in fluent and idiomatic French. Some of the weaker candidates struggled to express themselves clearly but very few were unable to cope with the task of comprehension of the texts and thereby succeeded in making relevant mark-bearing points.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time repeating the question as part of the answer. No marks can be gained in this way.

Candidates should not copy extended sections verbatim from the text in answer to comprehension questions. The rubric clearly states that they should not copy word for word from the text. They may, and should, use material from the passage in their answers but, in such a way as to show understanding. Copying wholesale does not show comprehension. The candidate must manipulate the linguistic material: even quite small changes will show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language. If an answer consists of an extended quotation with no indication of understanding, the marks will not be awarded.

The quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers to questions. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If a candidate scores zero for content on an individual question, the language mark for the whole performance on the set of answers is reduced by one. The mark scheme gives more details about the way in which the balance of credit for language and content is achieved.

With regard to **Question 5**, the first task is a summary of specific points made in the original texts. Candidates must make general comments in the personal response.

It is important that candidates observe the word limit, for only limited latitude is allowed beyond that figure. Candidates will not be awarded content marks if they make the points after 140 words. Candidates should not waste words on an introduction to this task; those who write significantly less than 120 words will be penalised in the language mark.

Few candidates failed to complete the paper. Time allocation and preparedness for the different tasks on the paper were good.

The same five point language grid is used for assessing the 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. The categories for quality of language are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 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. |
| 1-0 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 very well answered. Few candidates found difficulty in matching the words to their definitions. Where mistakes did occur, they usually were a result of failing to follow the rubric which indicated that candidates should choose the definition closest to the use of the word in the text "*au sens du passage*". Part (a) was a case in point where most candidates answered *projets politiques*, but some chose the definition which did not match the text *lieux où s'effectue la construction d'un bâtiment*. (b), (d) and (e) were generally well answered. In (c) some candidates chose *prioritaires* instead of *insuffisants*. Minor spelling errors were tolerated. The number of the definition or the written definitions were accepted.

Question 2

This question proved to be extremely difficult and only the best candidates scored well on this question. It is however, a test of grammatical knowledge and accuracy. Candidates should not omit significant parts of the sentence.

The use of the subjunctive in (a) and (d) caused great difficulty for most candidates. In (a) the form *aboutisse* was not known and in (d) both *fût* and *ait été* were accepted.

(b) was well done. Candidates showed that they were able to restructure the original phrase into *c'est le devoir de ceux qui ont la charge des transports de les assurer pour tous*.

The use of the agreement in the passive in (c) made this item complicated *L'utilisation d'un outil statistique plus clair a été proposée...* Some candidates however, successfully found ways of avoiding the passive by rendering the phrase as follows *L'utilisation d'un outil statistique plus clair est ce que propose le rapport* or *L'utilisation d'un outil statistique plus clair est la proposition du rapport*. These were accepted.

(e) was well answered but also produced some gross errors, for example, *nous avons fallu* and *nous avons allé*.

Question 3

Candidates are reminded that they must manipulate the language in some small way or explain the sense of the phrase by using different vocabulary or structures. Copying the text will not gain marks for content. Candidates should pay attention to the line reference included after each question. The answer will be largely drawn from those lines.

- (a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates who took their answer from lines 6-8 included the fact that the integration of handicapped people into society was to be a main feature of Chirac's political strategy. In order to do this, he was going to take them seriously by introducing a new law. Candidates who went beyond lines 6-8 tended to concentrate on the proposals of the new law and would therefore only score one mark.
- (b) Again this question was generally well answered. Most candidates worked out that those responsible for transport had an obligation to ensure access to transport for the handicapped. Some candidates thought that *assurer* referred to insurance for the handicapped or to ensure safety/comfort or cheap fares.
- (c) This required candidates to explain the significance of the term *classes d'intégration*. It was clear that *classes* meant education or access to education for handicapped children. *Intégration* referred either to the integration of handicapped children with non-handicapped or going into education in which there was specially adapted teaching with specialist teachers. Both interpretations were accepted. Most candidates scored two of the three marks available.
- (d) This was quite well done. Most candidates stated that there was a need for precise figures so that the government could target help towards handicapped people more effectively. However, the fact that present figures were not precise enough or because there was no single definition of handicapped, thus leading to estimates of 2.5 to 5.5 million was frequently omitted.
- (e) This was very well answered. Candidates realised that Canada was a model for other countries, showing a positive attitude towards the handicapped. They did not pity them but saw them as a potential bonus to the country. A few candidates misunderstood the last point thinking that the handicapped were being exploited by the Canadians.

Question 4

This passage was well within the scope of the candidates being concerned with the practicality handicapped rather than the politics of it. Consequently candidates scored well overall.

- (a) This was well answered. It was clear that the French system was failing handicapped people through lack of funding, help and facilities (such as transport) to enable them to pursue hobbies.

Others made the point that Sweden is a more welcoming country better adapted to the needs of the handicapped and that she already knew the country because she had studied there. Potential problems of staying in France without friends or even of being put in an old people's home were relevant points which were rewarded. *La Suède* was sometimes referred to as *La Suisse* though this was generally tolerated.

- (b) This was well answered and most candidates scored three marks. *Fou* and *courageux* were often interchangeable for candidates who interpreted them in different ways. Some candidates thought it mad that 'elle a abandonné ses amis', others thought it brave. Similarly some considered it *fou* that *elle a commence une nouvelle vie à 60 ans*. Others found it 'courageux'. Both were accepted.

Intelligent referred either to the fact that she would have a better life in Sweden or that she was escaping misery in France.

- (c) This was well done though some candidates failed to include some definition of *se présenter* to *ses besoins et ses passions*.

- (d) This was not well answered on the whole. The information as indicated in the question was contained in lines 18-23. The report was mentioned by most but the interview with two people was rarely included. It was important to answer precisely in that the 116 hours referred to the help she received when she was awake. The point that she was able to have a full social life was well made.

- (e) Again it was important to refer to lines indicated in the question – lines 24-31.

Clearly the differences concerned the ability to go out/travel, pursue her pastimes, no problems with toilets and to spend a whole day away from home. Many candidates made vague points and some claimed that there were no toilets in the whole of France!

Question 5

There are two separate questions that candidates should tackle:

- a summary of points from the two texts in this examination: *les problèmes dans la vie d'une handicapée* and *les solutions proposées dans la nouvelle loi française*
- a personal response to the topic (*Quelles sont les priorités pour rendre la vie des handicapés plus facile?*).

The main thrust of the exercise is to get candidates to concentrate on the main issues of the text in 140 words. Candidates should write a summary of 90-100 words which can gain ten content marks and a personal response which attracts a maximum of five marks.

In the summary, no introduction is required. Candidates should not waste words on generalities but concentrate on finding at least ten different points from the two texts that answer the question.

In terms of problems, candidates could have mentioned lack of money, loneliness, difficulty of travel, difficulty of going to the theatre, lack of toilets for the handicapped, fear of a future in an old people's home, lack of help, exclusion, lack of education and work.

Solutions proposed in the new law included individual payments, decent income, access to transport, access to buildings and toilets, access to education and work, more exact figures of handicapped people, independence and inclusion.

In the personal response, candidates should express their feelings on this subject – this is not a test of general reflections.

It would be unfair to candidates who summarise succinctly, if lengthy essays are allowed to score content marks without limit. Candidates who write more than 160 words are unlikely to score content marks beyond the 160 words. Similarly candidates who write fewer than 120 words cannot expect to score the full language mark. Language for **Question 5** is marked according to the language grid given earlier in the report.

Papers 8682/03 and 9716/03

Essay

General comments

40 marks were available for the essay, of which 24 were awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. The best work submitted bore witness to an excellent grammatical control, impressive fluency and an extensive range of vocabulary and structures. At the other end of the spectrum, however, candidates struggled to construct simple, grammatically accurate sentences, and errors of the most basic kind were to be found in abundance. Common language errors that figured even in better scripts included:

- the failure to make adjectives agree
- confusion between homonyms, e.g. *ce/ceux; ces/ses; davantage/d'avantage; parti/partie*
- very widespread confusion between *leur* and *leurs*
- the use of *aussi* instead of *non plus* with a negative verb
- the misuse of participial clauses which do not have the same subject as the clause to which they are syntactically related, e.g. *en attaquant les tours jumelles, plusieurs milliers de personnes sont mortes*
- the misuse of such common conjunctions as *cependant, donc, mais, ainsi*, with the result that the meaning was the opposite of what the candidate intended
- confusion between common words of the sort *connaître* and *savoir, emplois* and *travaux* and *donc* and *dont*
- invented words, e.g. *expérencé, irrespectif, l'inconnaissance, néfacité, méchantesse*
- errors of register in the form of a certain amount of inappropriate and sometimes highly inappropriate slang
- the erratic use of double letters in the spelling of such words as *agressif, développement, bagarre, ressources, traditionnelle* (given in the title) and *ennemi*
- the misspelling of other common words, e.g. *exemple, grands-parents, respect, conflit, régner, ancêtre, vengeance, parce que, quelque chose*
- mistakes incurred in the use of the circumflex and cedilla accents in such words as *plutôt, dur, dû, blâmer* and *commencent*.

There were quite a significant proportion of cases where there was not a close correlation between a good language mark and the mark that was appropriate for content. This was frequently due to the fact that candidates failed to target the particular title set, contenting themselves with writing a general piece on the prescribed topic area or offering an answer that was clearly a response to another title that had been covered in the course of preparation for this paper. Indeed, a certain proportion of essays were almost totally irrelevant. Conclusions, in particular, tended to be rather poor, many candidates relying on aphorisms and proverbs of the sort *on creuse sa tombe avec ses dents, si nous ne détruisons pas la violence, c'est la violence qui nous détruira* and *si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait*. Unfortunately, however, many of these did not relate at all to the main body of their essays and were, not pertinent to the title.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

This was the least popular question. Of those who did attempt it, a small minority made a very good job of it, suggesting various ways in which the French-speaking world could resist the influence of English and hold its own. However, many had either not understood the title or chose to ignore it, often simply writing about the importance of learning French as a first or a foreign language. A number of scripts considered whether French, already an international language, should be stopped from expanding further in the world and whether French commerce should be prevented from attaining a high ranking in international trade. Another interpretation that was occasionally found resulted in essays that examined the desirability of French-speaking countries, i.e. former French colonies, severing all links with France, stopping speaking French and refusing to buy French goods.

Question 2

This question proved to be by far the most popular and, generally speaking, corroborated the view that teenagers genuinely find it quite difficult to understand the world of adults. For many candidates, the title seemed to be like a red rag to a bull: they were unable to resist the urge to make adults responsible for all problems arising from the generation gap. A large number of suitably focused introductions, which promised a balanced essay, were soon forgotten, so keen were the candidates to absolve themselves from any blame in the matter of strained relationships with adults. The ensuing essays boiled down to the contention that it is not the children's faults if parents do not understand them.

There was widespread misunderstanding of the phrase *l'ennui avec les jeunes*, which resulted in the title being interpreted to mean that young people cause a lot of trouble to adults who do not understand their actions: essays highlighted all the ways in which adolescents play up their parents and explained why parents are unlikely to understand their teenage offspring. Of those who understood correctly the phrase *ils ne comprennent pas les adultes*, most ignored *l'ennui avec les jeunes*. A small minority, however, expressed indignation at the use of the latter phrase, affirming that it is not a problem and that such behaviour is only to be expected at their age. A few cynics went even further, candidly explaining that young people want and need to rebel and that they will do so irrespective of whether their parents understand them or not: those teenagers who say they do not understand their parents are simply using this as the perfect excuse to ignore them. Whilst most candidates overlooked *l'ennui c'est que*, a few candidates focused specifically on it and discussed whether it matters or not that the two generations do not understand each other. Most candidates substituted *parents* for the word *adultes* contained in the title. Only occasionally were teachers, religious leaders or grand parents, for example, included in the discussions.

The following points were among those most often cited as evidence of lack of understanding between parents and children:

- Children insist on buying all the latest gadgets, especially mobile phones, without any regard for their parents' financial situation.
- Adults tell children to look after the environment because they have known it in its pristine condition, but children who only have experience of it as it is now cannot visualise it in any other state and see no need to be careful.
- Because children have not experienced poverty, they cannot see that education is a way to escape hardship. They cannot, therefore, understand why parents are so keen that they should succeed at school.
- Parents spend many overtime hours at work to improve the family's standard of living, but children feel neglected and think that their parents do not care about them.
- Parents are trying to protect their children because they are more aware than their offspring of the pitfalls of freedom without maturity.
- The difference in levels of education means that children become arrogant and dismiss anything that their less well-informed parents say, without even trying to understand them.
- The influence of the media means that parents are no longer the role-models for children. The discrepancy between the world of television and the cinema and the world presented by their parents causes confusion. Children stop respecting their parents because they are less glamorous than personalities they see on screen. As a result, the very will to understand parents disappears.

Virtually all essays highlighted the importance of communication to help resolve the problem, to improve understanding, whilst stressing that parents should play the major part in this, as they have already done during the teenage years. It was also argued that lack of understanding on the part of teenagers is natural and necessary as it enables the children to become separate individuals distinct from their parents. In defence of the teenagers it was also pointed out that young people do not understand themselves let alone adults. In any case, there are many adults who still do not understand their own, now elderly parents. It was also asked if it is so surprising that young people do not understand adults when the latter believe that all young people are good-for-nothing delinquents and drug addicts. Moreover, it has to be admitted that adults often break the rules that they insist young people must follow!

The weaker essays were repetitive, often taking several paragraphs to explain what could have been said in a few sentences, and their authors tended quickly to lose sight of the constraints imposed by the title. The better pieces analysed why children do not and cannot understand adults, giving examples of precisely what puzzles them. They also pointed out that some children, nonetheless, do realise that adults have reasons for choosing what to accept and what to reject in youth culture, and that what is commonly done by teenagers is not necessarily the right thing to do. Moreover, many teenagers also help their parents financially. However, some adults, through lack of experience, cannot comprehend the way in which technological advances have affected young people's way of life and outlook on life, which leaves many teenagers bewildered.

Weak conclusions seemed the norm in many answers, e.g. *c'est parce qu'on a changé de millénaire que les enfants ne comprennent pas leurs parents*. At the other end of the spectrum, perhaps one of the most perceptive conclusions was: *Les jeunes comprennent les adultes mais tardivement. Il faut leur donner le temps*.

Question 3

This question was the third most popular. Generally the title was correctly understood by the candidates. The main problem proved to be the very narrow focus on the effects of traditional cooking on health, with recurrent echoes of past years' questions on obesity and healthy eating. Occasionally candidates did not seem to have a clear idea of health issues, e.g. *la restauration rapide peut transmettre des maladies non-transmissibles comme le diabète*, to say nothing of problems of a linguistic nature which resulted in such statements as *les fast food sont pleins de préservatifs* and *les jeunes n'ont pas une bonne grippe de leur culture*.

Those who advocated keeping traditional cooking argued that it is a way to resist globalisation, to provide an antidote to boredom with one's everyday diet, to attract tourists and to represent and/or encourage cultural and religious diversity. In this context, it was felt that it was a tradition easier to share with other cultures than more controversial customs and beliefs as it is a non-threatening cultural marker. Keeping traditional cooking at home was seen by many as an important means of preserving a person's links with his or her cultural roots, and many clearly felt strongly about the need to defend the culinary traditions passed down to them. A number of candidates talked about traditional recipes requiring rare plants and herbs and created a picture of an almost medieval community roaming fields and woodlands searching for food to add to the evening meal. Furthermore, adopting traditional dishes from other cultures was seen as promoting the global extension of different culinary traditions. This was seen as an opportunity to cement supra-cultural links whilst conserving one's identity within the modern global village.

Those against preserving traditional cuisine pointed out that it usually takes longer to prepare, a luxury that hard-pressed adults cannot afford, and that from the nutritional point of view, it can be as bad as fast food. Some candidates even detailed various afflictions affecting the different racial communities because of their diet. Moreover, as fast food is not associated with any clear ethnic or religious group, young people from all backgrounds can be brought together and unite whilst munching their way through burgers at the local *Macdo*. In this way, fast food's neutral status can be used to disperse cultural tensions within a multi-cultural society.

Question 4

In terms of popularity, this question ranked fourth. Most essays provided a general and factual account of mainly gender and race issues, but they rarely went beyond this to consider other groups who may be disadvantaged. A lot of candidates found the phrase *on n'en est pas conscient* difficult to interpret and so ignored it. Whilst the facts which they outlined were certainly relevant, the presentation of these facts was not adapted to answer the question posed in the title, thereby losing marks for content. Those who did take on board the importance of *on n'en est pas conscient* tended to adopt one of two approaches, both of which were equally legitimate: either they took the line that we are not conscious of equality of opportunity because it simply does not exist or they argued that we are not aware that the law ensures us equality of opportunity and that, as a result, we fail to claim our rights.

Candidates were generally well-informed, providing relevant and telling examples. Better candidates argued that levels of equality vary because some countries are far more aware of gender and race issues than others. There can also be vast discrepancies between theory and practice, with governments, institutions and families paying only lip-service to the ideas of sexual and racial equality. Virtually all candidates agreed that equality of opportunity is a very worthwhile goal to pursue, whilst many expressed serious doubts as to whether its full implementation could be anything other than utopian.

Question 5

Few candidates chose to answer this question and, even among those who did attempt it, a substantial proportion did not have a very clear idea of what was involved. Of those who agreed with the statement, the better candidates argued that modern societies, with their global and technological dimensions, have no need for the customs and traditions which evolved to serve another age. The candidates who rejected the statement tended to wax lyrical about maintaining ties with one's culture and traditions but often failed to address the question of why holding on to these is important. Moreover, they rarely brought into their discussions any clarification as to the import of the phrase *on existe au présent*. Unfortunately, there were many essays that were short of examples and poorly focused.

Question 6

This was the second most popular question. Unfortunately, many candidates did not study the title closely enough to discover the particular approach needed to answer in an appropriate manner. The word *gagnant* was routinely overlooked. Candidates were not short of examples to prove that war is a calamity but Hiroshima and Nagasaki were regularly used to illustrate that point, even though Japan was not on the winning side in World War II. Candidates were occasionally rather careless, when referring to historical facts or even contemporary conflicts, witness such statements as:

L'Angleterre et le Japon étaient alliés...

Les Etats-Unis ont commencé la deuxième guerre mondiale pour étendre leur pouvoir. Ils ont bombardé Pearl Harbour.

Depuis le 11/9 Monsieur Bush et ses soldats américains ont pris possession d'Israël.

La guerre actuelle entre l'Amérique et l'Iran...

Rather than considering the issue of whether wars produce a winner, a large number of candidates merely discussed in general terms the pros and cons of going to war in order to resolve disputes, or marshalled in generalised terms the arguments for and against the thesis that war can never be justified. Other candidates developed their essay with a discussion of what there is to be gained from war, again tending to ignore *il n'y a pas de gagnants*. It was pointed out, for example, that after a war, dislocated infrastructures are replaced with up-to-date and more efficient systems and that modernisation happens faster than if no war had been fought. Valid points indeed, but relatively few candidates perceived the need to develop the point, and thereby ensure full relevance, by enquiring whether being on the victorious side makes any difference to post-war opportunities. More thoughtful candidates linked Japanese and German post-war prosperity to the fact that losing the war relieved them of the vast expense of keeping an army, and enabled them to benefit from American investments, both of which, it was argued, made *them* the real winners of the Second World War. Better candidates also showed that they understood the idea of a Pyrrhic victory and selected suitable examples to prove the points they were making, whether they agreed with the title or not. Some candidates adopted a much broader perspective on history, looking, for example, at the great improvements the Roman conquest brought about for the people of their empire. The Romans eventually lost their empire but the prosperity they promoted often remained. Thus the apparent winners did not win in the end. Many pointed out the scientific spin-offs from which the whole of humanity benefited after the two World Wars, irrespective of which side the inventors and developers of the new technology were on. Some of the best candidates also highlighted the transience of many victories as history teaches us that there will always be another war to try to reverse the ephemeral status of *gagnant*.

The occasional essay suffered from irrelevance when candidates extended war to encompass all forms of violence, e.g. in the home and in society, or else limited themselves to a eulogy of pacifism, possibly written as a practice essay in response to the title (*Les guerres ne sont jamais justifiées*) set in 2001. Overall, though, most essays could be said to be broadly relevant even if some candidates were not selective enough to produce properly focused answers.

Papers 8670/04 and 9716/04

Texts

General comments

The questions generated a wide range of performance, although there were few which scored either very low or very high marks. Some otherwise very good essays were penalised for excessive length. In other cases, strong candidates wrote very well on two texts but could not sustain the quality of their performance on the third. Among the more obvious reasons for this inconsistency was an inability to divide the time judiciously between the three questions, with the result that the third answer was sketchy and incomplete.

There was strong evidence in the vast majority of scripts that candidates knew their texts. That is not to say that they answered the questions effectively. Candidates who write in general terms without addressing the question, or blindly follow their own agenda, cannot score a high mark. On the other hand, those who convey an ability to focus on the issues raised by the question and particularly to provide a personal response, where appropriate, are suitably rewarded. Well-structured essays are sadly rare.

Examiners were concerned about the quantity of material in candidates' answers which appeared either to be teacher-generated and pre-learned or even perhaps copied from the introduction and notes to the edition used. In some Centres the repetition of such material in script after script conveyed the impression not of conscientious and intelligent work but of reliance on rote learning or ill-digested secondary sources. The result was that answers were formulaic as well as indiscriminate in their selection of material. With regard to the use of texts for quotation, candidates could be reminded that no credit is awarded for copying out lengthy extracts from the text (or from the examination paper), whereas credit is given for the appropriate use of brief, relevant quotations in order to illustrate a point. In short, the use of texts in the examination room should be an *aide-mémoire* to be used sparingly rather than indulgently.

Comments on specific questions**Section A****Question 1**

A substantial number of candidates answered on this new text. They mostly showed a good knowledge of the narrative, and the best essays managed to convey an understanding of the characters. Weaker candidates, however, found the moral dilemma and psychological issues difficult to analyse.

- (a) Most candidates had no difficulty in explaining the situation surrounding Jérôme's conversation with Juliette and his physical contact with her. Answers more often focused on Alissa's readiness to respond to these demonstrations of affection by effacing herself than on the more important issue of her confusion about her own emotions leading her to seize on any excuse to back away. Few candidates offered a convincing response to the question '*qu'en pensez-vous?*', which was intended to provide an opportunity for any combination of sympathetic and critical comment on Alissa's behaviour. Answers on the character of Jérôme as revealed in the extract were generally sketchy. Candidates wrote about his state of mind rather than his character. Whilst the better answers explored the idea of his immaturity, not many saw the importance of the phrases '*triste aveugle*' or '*n'imaginant pas*' or noticed the irony implicit in his repetition of '*je me résous*', whereby Gide underlines the indecisiveness which is as crucial an aspect of his character as his lack of imagination. Answers on Alissa's refusal of his proposal were better, but the 'black and white' approach referred to in the mark scheme was often evident where the candidate ascribed Alissa's refusal to her generosity towards Juliette rather than to her fear of what she perceives to be the temptation of earthly happiness. Many mentioned the two-year age difference between Alissa and Jérôme as though this were an acceptable explanation rather than a ludicrous excuse.
- (b) Answers to the essay question were generally rather disappointing. Whilst understanding that the journal provides a different point of view from that given by Jérôme, many took only a narrative line, whereas what was needed was a robust assessment of the utter failure of Alissa's spiritual aspirations to bring her happiness and fulfilment. If candidates broadly understood that the journal reveals her true feelings for Jérôme, they did not explore the idea that she recounts the process of her own self-destruction with an increasing sense of disillusionment and without any help from God or man

Question 2Molière: *Tartuffe*

This text was studied by a very large percentage of candidates. Reports on previous sessions have repeatedly emphasised the importance attached by Examiners to an understanding of Molière's comic techniques. Some answers did not seem to take account of this advice.

- (a) Almost all candidates were fully conversant with the circumstances leading to Orgon's anger with Damis, but some failed to mention the precise details of Damis's accusations against Tartuffe, and others confused the two scenes between Tartuffe and Elmire, believing that Damis had witnessed Tartuffe's more advanced overtures. In answers to the second part of the question, it was generally understood that Tartuffe was relying on his knowledge of Tartuffe's devotion to him. The more able candidates referred to Tartuffe's histrionics and to the exaggerated portrayal of sinfulness. Only those who could explain the irony of the situation and the absurd predictability of Orgon's response addressed convincingly the issue of comic effect. The third part saw many candidates rush to defend the indefensible idea that the scene is tragic.

Weaker candidates simply paraphrased the passage, without even mentioning the plight of Marianne. The ablest candidates saw fit to substitute *drame* for *tragédie*, and a few even managed to mention that in the context of comedy, the element of farce is never far away and the rational characters can outmanoeuvre the lunatics because they can predict their reactions.

- (b) Most who attempted the question on Elmire showed a good understanding of her role. Answers gave a clear account of her relationships with other members of the family, and her crucial contribution to the hatching and execution of the plan to expose Tartuffe's hypocrisy. The better answers also provided commentary on the qualities of *douceur* and *sagesse* by examining what she has to say about her own personality and the way she intends to deal with Tartuffe.

Question 3Sartre: *Les Mouches*

- (a) Candidates broadly understood that Égisthe was weary of his role as dictator. Very few spotted the irony of his use of the adjective *divine* in this context. However, the main thrust of the answers was narrative rather than analytical, lacking an insight into the philosophical implications of Égisthe's being trapped in a fixed *persona*, having surrendered to Jupiter his right to evolve freely. A high-scoring answer would have linked this passage to Égisthe's description of himself as *une coque vide* and alluded to the rhetorical question which implies that he is now nothing more than the fear he instils in others. There was little reference to the phrase *sans espoir*, which evokes an important theme in the play. Candidates mostly had a more secure grasp of Jupiter's attitude in the light of the threat to his authority posed by Oreste. They broadly understood the relationship between god and king in this context, which enabled most of them to provide sound answers to the third part of the question.
- (b) Essays on the theme of remorse were generally rather sketchy. Most dwelt at some length on the plight of the citizens of Argos, often at the expense of the main characters. The best answers made appropriate reference to Électre's change of attitude after the murders of Égisthe and Clytemnestre, and the very best pointed to the contrast between her capitulation and the stand taken by Oreste. Answers which did not examine the latter aspect could not score well.

Question 4Balzac: *Le Père Goriot*

- (a) Not many candidates attempted this question, and of those who did, few were able to produce satisfactory answers to all three parts. Some answers to the first part correctly identified the role of the Duchesse de Langeais in recounting Goriot's past and appreciated that Eugène's admiration was inspired by his newly acquired understanding of Goriot's circumstances. Others, however, seemed entirely lost and wrote in the most general or vague terms which betrayed a limited understanding of the context. There were similarly sharp discrepancies between the well-informed and ill-informed answers to the second part. Those who understood the situation in relation to the marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto were aware of the reasons for the pain and cynicism in Madame de Beauséant's words. Those who did not were simply at a loss, and in one or two cases embarked on an explanation which presupposed that she felt sorry for Goriot. Answers to the third part were relatively sketchy. Those who knew the text were able to indicate ways in which Eugène makes good use of the advice. What was missing from the answers was a response to the question '*Dans quelle mesure...*', which offered the chance to point out that Eugène's vanity and ambition often speak more loudly than advice from others.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this question successfully identified the main thrust of Balzac's depiction of marriage. They varied considerably in their ability to provide relevant detail, and to structure their essays convincingly. Once again, there was a tendency to rely on vague generalisations and to confine the answer to a very small number of precise examples. Candidates who knew the text well found this straightforward and wrote in appropriate detail.

Section B**Question 5**Camus: *La Peste*

- (a) Candidates had difficulty in sticking to the point of the question. There were frequent digressions about named characters, whereas what was wanted was an analysis of the life-style of the *concitoyens* and their reaction to the onset of the plague. This required candidates to follow the development of this theme right through to the point at which they experienced renewed hope, with the result that the reign of the plague was over. On the whole, essays lacked a sense of direction and offered little more than a description of the city and its inhabitants as seen at the beginning of the novel, followed by more references to the *formations sanitaires* and attendance at church services than to the relevant issues of mindless self-indulgence, selfishness and complacency.
- (b) The quality of essays on Paneloux varied considerably. The best analysed his two sermons, taking into account his change of heart after the death of the judge's son, and commenting on the ambiguous nature of his death. At the other extreme, candidates could describe the significance of his role for the citizens, but relied more on paraphrase of his sermons than on discussion of the contrast between them. Much was made of the change from *vous* to the more inclusive *nous*, and of his decision to help the medical teams, but only the better answers dealt with the fact that, after the death of the judge's son, he resorts to an 'all or nothing' approach to religious faith, and succumbs to death with no sign of a struggle to resist it.

Question 6Joffo: *Un Sac de billes*

- (a) This text has been on the syllabus for some time, and there is little to add to what past reports have said. In every session there has been a tendency for candidates to set their own agenda, bringing into their answers the themes they have prepared. Thus, the most thought-provoking aspects of the novel were deemed by some to be the loss of youth and the help afforded to the brothers rather than racial discrimination and the effects of dehumanising propaganda. The highest marks were awarded to those who engaged with the author's concern about the future of humanity in the light of the behaviour of the Nazis and their collaborators.

- (b) Many candidates chose this question and displayed a detailed knowledge of the text. Their answers were well structured and they were able to justify the statement in the title. Differentiation was achieved by assessing their ability to avoid needless narrative, to keep within the suggested word limit, and to structure the essay effectively. Many answers, however well furnished with narrative detail, fell short of high marks by alluding to events in apparently random order. Weaker answers included lengthy descriptions of the formative experience of both brothers, sometimes including all the acts of kindness which they encountered. Credit was given, as always, to the candidates who were selective in their treatment of the story line.

Question 7

de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

- (a) Answers were mainly rather sketchy and superficial. Candidates were able to comment on the physical environment of the characters and on the world of marketing. A minority could refer in some detail to the evolution of the character of Laurence, and to her dissatisfaction with the image she was forced to adopt by her mother and by society. Once again, the main weakness was a lack of coherence in the essays, with the effect that many candidates appeared to deal with examples in random order.
- (b) Most of those who attempted this question showed little or no evidence that they understood the meaning of the word 'feminist'. Consequently, answers were confined to descriptions of the female characters, leading to spurious conclusions which were largely unrelated to the author's intentions. Examiners were surprised by the lack of awareness conveyed by many candidates of this fundamental aspect of Simone de Beauvoir's writing.

Question 8

Duras: *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*

- (a) This essay question yielded more on the tragic aspects of the novel than on the comic. Candidates related in detail the misery inflicted on the family by nature and by the authorities, but offered little by way of comment on the dark humour which can be discerned throughout the novel. Attempts to focus on Monsieur Jo as the finest example of this were largely unconvincing. As was the case with the de Beauvoir topic of feminism, Examiners had the impression that some candidates embarked on this question without a real understanding of its terms of reference, and would have been better advised to tackle the alternative option.
- (b) Even though the word 'nature' was to be taken literally, some candidates used it as a springboard for all manner of unexpected interpretations, including human nature and hunting. The intention was to enable candidates to consider the (mainly harsh) manifestations of nature in the novel and to devote a fair proportion of the essay to the ways in which the characters try to cope with it. A satisfactory balance between the two parts of the question was only achieved by a small number of candidates.