

GERMAN

Paper 9717/01

Speaking

General comments

There was a wide range of entry, mostly from Centres with a small number of candidates, typically two or three. Some of the candidates had learned German at school, some had a German-speaking parent and others were themselves native German speakers. The overall standard was encouragingly high and there were some interesting Topic and General Conversations from candidates across the range of entry.

The majority of Centres appeared to be well aware of the requirements of the syllabus and conducted the tests well and marked them accurately.

The following points need to be addressed by some Centres at future sessions.

- It is important to adhere to the recommended 20-minute time limit for the examination. There is no advantage to be gained for the candidate by exceeding this as some Centres did, sometimes greatly.
- The Presentation making up the first part of the Speaking test needs to relate to a German-speaking country as the content mark can be halved if this is not the case. A native German speaker should, therefore, not talk exclusively about the country where he or she happens to be living, but is obviously free to make some sort of comparison if desired.
- The candidate must ask at least two questions of the examiner to seek information about his or her opinions in both the Topic Conversation and General Conversation. If this does not happen, even after a reminder, no marks can be awarded and a maximum of ten marks are therefore lost. If only one question is asked per section, the maximum mark each time is 3 out of 5.
- The transition between the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation should be announced clearly to the candidate so that the two sections can be clearly distinguished.
- Individual Reports to Centres will have highlighted any further problems.

GERMAN

Paper 9717/02
Reading and Writing

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General comments

The level of difficulty of the Paper was similar to last year's. The entry included fewer weak candidates this year. It was pleasing to note an improvement in the standard of German on the scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 [*Erster Teil*]

Exercise 1

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) The answer to **Question (c)** was sometimes written for this question.
- (c) The correct answer *erscheint* was not often given.
- (d) This was usually answered correctly.
- (e) The correct answer was *schrittweise*, although a number of other words were offered instead.

Exercise 2

Most candidates performed as well on this exercise as on Exercise 1. On the whole, knowledge of German grammar was fairly sound.

- (a) The separable prefix *ein* was occasionally omitted at the end of the sentence.
- (b) This was usually answered correctly.
- (c) Some candidates omitted the phrase *auf den Markt*, making the resulting sentence meaningless.
- (d) As in **Question (c)**, some candidates omitted the phrase *auf den Markt*, which made the sentence meaningless.
- (e) Although this was a complex sentence, starting with a subordinate clause and ending with a main clause, many candidates wrote it correctly.

Exercise 3

There were two major reasons why candidates lost marks in this exercise: not mentioning enough points and being unable to express the answers with original wording instead of lifting them from the text. The rubric for **Questions 3** and **4** states: *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*. Where the candidate merely copies the relevant part of the text, no mark is awarded. Candidates of average to less than average ability in the language need more practice in the art of finding synonyms to express concepts.

- (a) Candidates usually gained two or three marks out of the four allocated to this question. There were five points that could have been made, although the following were not often given:
Sie ist leicht in der Hand zu haben;
Die kurzen Texte sind für Menschen geeignet, die nicht viel Zeit haben, (für Menschen,), die sich nicht lange konzentrieren können.

- (b) Candidates often scored at least two marks out of three. There were four points available, but the following were less often given correctly:
über (TV-Live-) Sendungen/Sportveranstaltungen, die in der Nacht enden (die in der Nacht being omitted);
Man kommentiert die Schlusskurse der Wall Street (der Wall Street being omitted).
- (c) There were two points available:
Man kann die Zeitung (nicht im Abonnement, sondern) nur am Kiosk erhalten;
Sie wird zu spät gedruckt, um per Post zu Abonnenten geschickt zu werden.
 Many candidates made only one of these two points appropriately.
- (d) This question proved to be quite difficult, with few candidates achieving full marks and many gaining at the most only two out of four. There were five possible points, but the following were rarely given correctly:
Es kostet viel Geld, die Zeitung herauszubringen;
Das Angebot der Zeitung ist komplett.
- (e) This was also difficult. Few scored both marks, and a fair number had no marks at all.

Section 2 [Zweiter Teil]

The main reason for the loss of marks was copying phrases from the text instead of using original wording. The rubric to Questions 3 and 4 makes it clear that candidates need to use their own words in their answers here: *Beantworten Sie diese Fragen auf Deutsch, ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben.*

- (a) Most candidates gained two marks but omitted the key point for the third mark:
Am nächsten Tag sind die Informationen in der Zeitung schon zu alt.
- (b) In both parts of this question a number of candidates merely lifted expressions from the text for at least one of the points.
- (c) Many candidates scored at least two points out of the four available. Some common failings were: not distinguishing between *Debatten* (irrelevant to this question) and *Talkshows*; thinking that *Talkshow* participants talked about illness; believing that these participants made fun of other people.
- (d) This question proved to be quite difficult, with few candidates achieving both marks and many gaining no mark at all owing to a tendency to copy the text.
- (e) The same comment applies as for **Question (d)**.

Exercise 5

The essential task is to summarise the two texts with original wording, according to the question set. Ten marks out of twenty are awarded for this aspect, as is stated on the question paper. Many candidates were able to make at least seven valid points, but some gave generalised answers lacking in precise detail and so forfeited summary marks.

After the summary, the candidate is asked to give his or her own opinions on the issue for five marks. Indeed, some very able candidates express their own views whilst summarising the texts, in order to avoid repeating details. This year, quite a few summarised the passages very well but gave little personal response to the texts, thereby gaining only one or two marks out of five.

It is important to organise the response like a mini-essay in order to fit everything in to the stipulated 140 words. The answer is cut off at around 150 words or at the end of the sentence after 140 words is reached, and no further marks can be awarded for the remainder. This year, a few candidates wrote at great length and failed to mention enough points in their first 140 words.

Finally, five marks are awarded for language. For candidates who had properly planned their response to this Paper overall, language marks awarded here were broadly comparable to those awarded in **Questions 3 and 4**, as these candidates maintained their consistency. Others made more errors than they had in previous exercises, perhaps because they wrote their answer to this final question a little hurriedly.

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Paper 9717/03

Essay

General comments

All questions were attempted. By far the most popular topic was *Technologische Innovation*, **Question 6**, attempted by nearly half the candidates. The questions on *Die Jugend* and *Das Leben in der Stadt und auf dem Lande* drew an equal number of the remainder of the candidates, with a small number attempting the remaining questions.

There were a number of candidates who appeared to be native speakers of the language. While these candidates were generally accurate in the use of grammar and displayed a good range of vocabulary, there was, nevertheless, more than a little incidence of poor spelling and punctuation (a general disregard for the proper use of the comma, in particular), little regard for the proper use of upper and lower case letters, and the usual problems with *das/dass*. It was also noticeable that these candidates, whilst generally attempting to see that there were arguments to be made both for and against in addressing the question, often adopted a rather conversational tone which was inappropriate to a discursive essay.

Of the non-native candidates there were a good number who showed excellent command of the grammar and syntax of the language, as well as good topic specific vocabulary and an ability to produce a reasoned argument, looking at various aspects of the question before coming to a conclusion. Inevitably, there were also a number of candidates whose limitations in expressing themselves in German made it hard for them to produce a coherent essay.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Welche Wege gibt es zu einer besseren Nutzung der Energieressourcen in einem deutschsprachigen Land, das Sie kennen?

This question was attempted by a limited number of candidates. A fair range of suggestions were made. In order to answer the question satisfactorily, candidates needed also to focus on a particular German-speaking country.

Question 2

„In der Jugendzeit gilt es, den Rahmen für das spätere Leben festzulegen.“ Ist das auch Ihre Meinung?

A good number of the candidates answering this question focused, perhaps understandably, on teenage years as a preparation for further education and the world of work. On the whole, the essays tended to be rather superficial, lacking in detail on the variety of influences on young people that shape their lives and determine their choices.

Question 3

Die Frauenkriminalitätsrate liegt weit unter der der Männer. Wie erklären Sie dieses Phänomen?

The very small number of candidates who answered this question were generally clear on the biological and social factors which might help to explain the statistic. The essays tended to be rather generalised, failing to provide real evidence from different areas of criminal activity and remaining at the level of expressing an opinion.

Question 4

„Zeige mir wo Du wohnst, und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist.“ Welche Bedeutung hat dieses Sprichwort? Wohnen in der Stadt oder auf dem Lande?

This proved, along with **Question 2**, to be the second most popular choice. One candidate, brought up in a bustling city and currently being educated in a quiet, rural environment, was able to offer an interesting personal view. The majority of candidates, however, offered essays which were too generalised and failed to make a convincing case with concrete examples. This was also the question which seemed to attract some of the candidates who were linguistically weaker. Amongst typical errors were the attempt to use *Leben* in the plural, an inability to be more specific than *Leute* or *Dinge* (though not confined to this question only), and a failure to pick up on the help offered in the question (*im Stadt* or *auf dem Stadt* were not uncommon).

Question 5

„Jede Mannschaft möchte gewinnen, und dies um jeden Preis. Fair Play und humane Verhaltensweisen stellen auf dem Weg zu diesem Ziel nur große Hindernisse dar.“ Nehmen Sie Stellung zu dieser Aussage.

This question was answered by a small number of candidates who argued their case with some conviction. What the candidates lacked, as observed in a number of other questions, was detail in evidence to support an opinion. Few individual sportsmen/women, let alone teams, were cited in the essays.

Question 6

„Das Leben heute ist ohne Mobiltelefon nicht mehr vorstellbar.“ Sind Sie auch dieser Meinung?

As noted above, this was the question that attracted by far the most answers, including the majority of the candidates with native speaker German background. The majority of candidates were generally accurate in their use of the grammar and varied in their vocabulary, although some candidates had problems with genders and plurals of key vocabulary such as *Telefon*, *Problem*, *Haus*, *Arbeit*. Problems with distinguishing between *das* and *dass* and *man* and *M(m)ann* were more apparent here and *Umfall* for *Unfall* was not uncommon.

The majority of candidates sought to see some problems with mobile 'phones as well as the wide range of useful functions, though detail and supporting evidence were often lacking. A small number of candidates started by concluding that life without a mobile was indeed unimaginable and merely extolled its virtues.

GERMAN

Paper 9717/04

Texts

General comments

In this section of the examination candidates are expected both to demonstrate knowledge of the texts and an understanding of how the texts work. Candidates who did well were able to show good knowledge of the text, choosing good examples to illustrate points made and structuring their argument well. Overall, most candidates had good knowledge of the texts and many were able to marshal their thoughts into coherent, relevant essays.

A number of the difficulties encountered by candidates were similar to those highlighted every year: relevance to the question and an ability to organise their essays coherently were crucial.

Focus on the terms of the question: Many candidates failed to engage with the terms of the question set and to focus on the issues raised. On a few occasions the titles were completely ignored and candidates wrote an essay on a theme of their choice. Some candidates tended to use passages and titles as a springboard for storytelling, but did not actually attempt to answer the question. The essay titles are very carefully worded and candidates' first task when tackling an essay must be to decide what is expected of them. It is also helpful for candidates to copy their chosen task at the top of their essay, as the title. They can then refer to this as they write and ask themselves whether each point they are making is relevant. Candidates also need to bear in mind that repetition of points made may increase the word count, but not the grade, even if these points are relevant to the question.

Structuring the essay: An essay should be seen as an argument. The writer is seeking to persuade the reader of the validity of the argument he/she is putting forward. An argument must be properly structured, introducing the theme, presenting evidence and leading to a conclusion. Some candidates omitted the introduction or started their essay with what would effectively be their conclusion. Other candidates did not come to any clear conclusion.

Clear paragraphing also helps to structure a coherent argument. Candidates should use one paragraph for each main point they wish to make. In some cases candidates did use paragraphs, but the points they were making were not coherent. This makes it more difficult for the reader to follow the argument. Some candidates wrote whole essays without any paragraphing at all, often jumping from one point to the next, without giving relevant examples or evaluating/ analysing the material where needed.

Storytelling: It is clear from the published criteria for marking the essay that simple retelling of the story gains low marks. While candidates clearly need to demonstrate knowledge of the text, this must be tied in with the title of the essay, and evidence cited from the book must be relevant. Relevant points made need to be backed up with detailed examples from the text.

Language: It was pleasing to see an increased number of candidates able this year to produce the level of language required to write essays that could easily be followed. Around a quarter of essays submitted proved difficult to follow at times on account of weaknesses in vocabulary, punctuation and grammar.

Examples of particular weaknesses:

- usage of capital letters on nouns and not on verbs and adjectives
- cases e.g. *Du lässt ihm die Kühe hüten?*
- *ß* vs *ss* – the former required after a diphthong and long vowels, the latter after short vowels
- *das* used where *dass* was required and vice versa
- Use of *kein*: *Sie haben nicht ein Hause.*

- *wissen vs kennen: Michael weißt Hanna nur als eine Frau die eine Straßenbahnschafferin*
- Separable verbs: *Hitler ausrottet die Juden.*
- Passives: *Die Juden war immer mehr verfolgt.*
- Past Participles: *Sie haben all Rechte verlieren...*
- Mixing present and past tenses where it is inappropriate
- Word order: *Der Erzähler trotzdem denkt viel an die Familie Schneider und macht Sorgen für sie.*
- Reflexive verbs
- Prepositions plus correct cases: *Im Realität...*
- Umlaute: *Die jüngere Generation konnte die altere nicht verstehen.* This included confusion between the past and conditional forms of *werden: wurde and würde.*
- Anglicisms: *Herr Schneider's... or Der Extrakt, den wir hier bearbeiten, nimmt im Jahre 1941 Platz.*
- Mixing languages: *...wir sind die witnesses die Anderung die Figuren.*
- Register/style: the language used is often too informal. There is a definite issue to be addressed here, relating to candidates not being able to differentiate between spoken/colloquial and written/formal language.
- Punctuation: indiscriminate and random use of questions marks and exclamation marks: *Sie sehen was ich meine!?!; Als sie aber lesen und schreiben lernt merkt sie was sie gemacht hat! und deswegen lässt sie sich leiden und anschließend nimmt sie sich das Leben!!* This example also illustrates how some candidates started new sentences with lower case characters.

Length: Some candidates' answers were too short. In a number of cases what was written indicated that a better performance could have been achieved, if the candidate had carried on with their essay. One candidate answered just two questions instead of the three required; another wrote two essays on the same book.

Instructions to candidates: Candidates should know before they enter the examination room what the demands of the question paper are. To remind themselves, candidates are advised to read the instructions on the front of the question paper carefully. Three questions should be answered, one question from **Section 1**, one from **Section 2** and one other. A small number of candidates appeared not to be aware of these requirements. Copying out the wording of the question at the top of their answer can help candidates to focus on the requirements of the chosen task and is recommended. More candidates followed this advice this year. Only very few candidates indicated that they intended to tackle **Question (a)** on a particular text, before going on to write an answer that was better suited to **Question (b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Von Droste-Hülshoff – *Die Judenbuche*

- (a) Fifteen candidates chose this question, which concentrated on Simon and on the role he plays in Margaret's and especially in Friedrich's lives.
- (i) This part of the question focused on the relationship between Simon and his sister Margaret and why he had not visited her for such a long time. Most candidates correctly drew the conclusion that he had stayed away because he had disapproved of her marriage and that he returns at this moment because the husband is dead and he, Simon, now has need of his nephew.

- (ii) Most candidates answered this part well, offering a host of appropriate adjectives for Simon, with examples both from the passage and from elsewhere in the text to back up their assertions. A sample of some of the well-chosen adjectives used by candidates: *unsympathisch; selbstherrlich; selbstsüchtig; kritisch; eitel; sarkastisch; schadenfroh; schlau...*
- (iii) The third part of this question was also tackled well by most candidates. The important point to note here was that Simon takes on a fatherly role in relation to Friedrich, who lost his real father as a child. Simon though has an increasingly negative influence on the young man, after helping him originally to become more self-confident and to gain a certain status within his community. Later on he leads him completely astray from what is morally and legally right.
- (b) Nobody chose this question, which asked candidates to take a closer look at the first Mrs Mergel, at Margaret and at the roles played by other women mentioned in the narrative. The fact that the book was written by a female author makes the question whether Droste-Hülshoff was sympathetic towards her female characters a particularly valid one. The case for a more traditional female role, for example, as a befitting one for women at the time could have been proven readily with quotes from the text.

Question 2

Richter – *Damals war es Friedrich*

- (a) This question was very popular. Many candidates chose to write about the extract from *Damals war es Friedrich*. There were some very mature and well considered answers to this question and just a few fairly basic ones.
- (i) The first part of the question asked candidates to recount what had led up to the situation in the extract. The simple answer was that Hans Peter's aunt had sent them potatoes and his mother had saved some for the Schneider family. Hans Peter then had problems delivering them, as nobody would open the door. There was some evidence of misunderstanding on the part of candidates here, with a number of responses giving a lengthy historical outline about Hitler's rise to power and the Holocaust without making any reference to the passage.
- (ii) Here candidates were expected to describe and explain the reactions of Herr Schneider, Friedrich and the Rabbi. All three reacted differently and there was an opportunity for candidates to refer to the general historical/political situation by way of explaining these reactions.
- (iii) The last part of the question triggered some thoughtful and mature responses. A description of Hans Peter's struggle with his conscience was what was expected and good answers referred also to the second part of the question, where candidates were invited to empathise with the boy and explain how they might have acted themselves.
- (b) Very few candidates chose this question which invited them to focus on a specific group of characters in the book, namely teachers. A good answer would have included several teacher figures, notably Herr Neudorf. These would have provided an ample source of material for discussing how teachers had to behave officially and how some of them broke their Nazi code of conduct behind closed classroom doors. The games teacher, Herr Schuster, could have been referred to as an example of a committed Nazi. The best essays would in addition have attempted to provide an explanation of the teachers' behaviour with reference to the historical/political context in which they found themselves.

Question 3

Langgässer – *Saisonbeginn*

This text did not prove popular at this session.

- (a) This question asked candidates to read the extract closely and to respond to questions on three aspects of the short story from which it was taken. These included an opportunity to comment on the linguistic devices used by the author.

- (b) This question offered candidates the opportunity to write a more general essay on the time of political and general inhumanity. Here candidates could have chosen examples of different stories to support their argument.

Section 2

Question 4

Storm – *Der Schimmelreiter*

- (a) This question was very popular, with a number of candidates choosing to write about Hauke as a husband and as a father. The overall standard was high. Most candidates argued that Hauke was a good husband and father and the best essays used several examples drawn from throughout the book to illustrate their points. A few candidates argued that he was not a good father and husband. However, as long as the assertions were illustrated with examples from the story and presented coherently, an argument either way was accepted.
- (b) This question invited candidates to express their own opinion about the book. It was reasonably popular, though several answers were relatively weak, owing to insufficient evidence being provided. There was no right or wrong answer to the question: what was expected of a good standard of essay was one making a coherent and interesting argument for or against the story being a good read.

Question 5

Ende – *Das Gauklermärchen*

- (a) Many candidates chose to answer this question. Successful essays drew attention to the fact that Ende himself leaves the ending of the story open, before going on to offer their own interpretation of the play's conclusion. Mention of the world of reality compared with the world of fairy tale, of the importance of morality, of cooperation with others and of valuing them above money could all have been included in a successful argument.
- (b) This task was slightly less popular than **Question (a)**, although some good essays were produced. Better candidates focused first of all on Wilma, drawing attention to her change of heart at the end of the play. They then went on to look at other characters, proving with well chosen examples that they were not all dreamers after all.

Question 6

Schlink – *Der Vorleser*

- (a) Few candidates chose to answer this question and those that did generally misunderstood the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. A couple of candidates showed they had understood the concept and its significance, however they missed the opportunity to gain marks because they made little or no reference to how it was dealt with in the context of the story. Other essays concentrated on Michael and how he sought to overcome his past with Hanna. This would have been a useful point to include, so long as the more general point relating to the German nation and the Holocaust was clearly made. Other details that could have been included: the courtroom scenes and how Hanna was made a scapegoat.
- (b) Many candidates opted for this question which could have been argued successfully in a number of different ways: by proving with a variety of examples from the text that Hanna was indeed the victim in the story – albeit maybe the victim of her own vanity as she does not want to admit that she cannot read or write; or, on the other hand, by proving that she was not a victim, because there were other people in the story who had a fate much worse than Hanna and were therefore her victims. Then again it could be argued that, yes, Hanna could be seen as the victim, but that other people, like Michael or the Jewish people she helped to kill were at least as much victims as Hanna was.