

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 candidates were clearly native German-speakers, others had a German-speaking parent, whilst others had acquired the language either in Germany itself or at school. There was a good range of mainly appropriate, German based Topics and some interesting General Conversations.

The majority of Centres appeared to be well aware of the general format of the examination and of the mark scheme. The tests were generally well conducted and the mark scheme appropriately applied.

Many of the following points have appeared in previous reports. They are, however, very much worth noting, in order to maximise candidate marks.

- The candidate must ask at least two questions in the **Topic Conversation** and in the **General Conversation**. It is stated in the syllabus that candidates are required "to seek information from and the opinions of the teacher". Some Centres did not appear to be aware of this. Marks may not be awarded for "Seeking information and opinions" if no questions have been asked. If the candidate fails to ask any questions, he or she should be prompted by the Examiner, and if still no question is forthcoming then no marks can be awarded and a total of ten marks may be lost. If only one question is asked, the maximum mark is 3 out of 5 in both **Section 2** and **Section 3**.
- Please make a clear distinction between **Section 2** and **Section 3** by announcing to the candidate that the switch to General Conversation is now being made.
- Similarly, make a clear distinction between the Presentation and the Topic Conversation. This year a few Examiners started asking questions during the Presentation. This is not a good idea, as the candidate is being judged on his or her ability to speak uninterrupted for about three minutes.
- There were one or two less well-prepared Presentations this year.
- Please do not allow the examination to last too long. The stipulated time is twenty minutes but some Centres, particularly when there was perhaps only one candidate, far exceeded the limit. This does not benefit the candidate in any way.
- Please ensure that the Presentation relates specifically to a German-speaking country, as the content mark can be halved if this is not the case. A candidate, especially perhaps a German native speaker, must, therefore, not talk exclusively with regard to the country where he or she is currently living. Some form of comparison is, of course permissible.
- Individual Centre Reports will have highlighted any other problems.

Comments on specific questions

There are no further comments on the specific sections of the Speaking test.

GERMAN

Paper 9717/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The level of difficulty of the Paper was similar overall to last year's. The subject matter, relating to various aspects of the decision whether to have children or not, was clearly considered accessible by most candidates, although this led some into occasional superficial answers based on assumptions not in the texts. There were again relatively few very weak candidates. In a pleasing number of cases the standard of German was very good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 [*Erster Teil*]

Question 1

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This was usually answered correctly, although *persönliche* was added by a significant number. The addition was tolerated in this instance, as the two words were also used together in the text. However, it should be noted that *Selbstverwirklichung* on its own already includes this element.
- (c) This was usually answered correctly.
- (d) This was usually answered correctly.
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 2

This exercise was also done well generally.

- (a) Occasionally there was some confusion, leading to the retention of *man* in the passive.
- (b) Occasionally candidates tried to retain *gut verdienende* in their answer.
- (c) This was usually answered correctly. However, it should be noted that the omission of *von morgen* changes the focus, and is therefore incorrect.
- (d) This was usually answered correctly.
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 3

The language of the text was fairly approachable, and this may have led candidates to overlook the instruction *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*.

Where a candidate simply reproduces a section of the text by way of an answer, without manipulating it in any way, no marks can be awarded. Very few achieved 14 or 15 marks for this exercise, suggesting that most candidates would benefit from further practice in re-writing ideas in their own words, and in finding synonyms. Some answers were vague, or of a summary nature that did not attempt to interpret the text in depth, and there was occasional reliance on familiar cliché concepts that were not in the text.

- (a) Most candidates gained 3 of the 4 marks available here. Although the question centred on women, there were attempts to relate the issue to men, taking the line that men left their wives to support the household/family, and that this was unfair, etc. However, this was not an appropriate point in the context. There were five possible points to be made, the notion of *vereinbaren* being sometimes missed, and the implication of *es fehlt an Kinderbetreuung* not always fully understood.
- (b) Candidates had plenty of choice here, as there were a total of 8 possible valid points, and most candidates managed at least 3 of the 5 required. The notion behind *abstrakte Gemälde* was often missed, and the idea *weniger glücklich* often omitted. There was also comparatively little attempt to put the key elements of the sentence *Mit Kindern riskieren Paare einen finanziellen Abstieg* into the candidate's own words, such that marks for this point could not be credited.

Some candidates unfortunately misread the question and missed the force of the conditional tense.

- (c) This was mostly done well.
- (d) Most candidates earned 2 of the 3 marks available here. Occasionally the idea of *sofort nach der Ausbildung* was given instead of *in den Zwanzigern*, but the former is not the point, nor necessarily the same thing. More frequently missed was the idea of *genug Zeit für Karriere* after bearing children.

Section 2 [Zweiter Teil]

Question 4

This exercise proved more difficult, and again candidates lost marks as a result of simply reproducing material from the text. The instruction *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben* is given for both **Questions 3 and 4**. It is essential that candidates recognise the need to put keywords and concepts into their own words. A number of answers also ignored the specific *Absatz* guidance after each question, and included generalised points from elsewhere in the passage. At times the impression was given that candidates considered this second text easier than in fact it was.

- (a)(i) Most candidates gained 1 mark here. However, the second mark for *um sich um die (beiden) Kinder zu kümmern* was often lost, possibly because candidates did not read to the end of paragraph 2, and despite *Kinder* being part of the question.
- (ii) Most candidates earned the 2 marks for this question, although there was some tendency to focus on the idea of *nur Maria hatte einen Beruf*. The deduction that *her* life changed comparatively little was not often made.
- (b) Candidates found it difficult to interpret Maria's words, and many answers were superficial and imprecise. One mark, relating to the Kellers' financial hardship, was more often secured, but *Sozialhilfe* was frequently ignored, as was the reasoned desire for a second child. A number of answers focused generally and idealistically on money being less important than having children.
- (c) Most candidates gained the 2 marks here, but others lifted heavily from the vocabulary and syntax of the text.
- (d) *Wofür* was usually correctly answered, but the answers to *Warum* relied frequently on reproducing the keyword *fördern* without conveying understanding, and a synonym for *begabt* was rarely offered.
- (e) Candidates again lost marks here by reproducing the language of the text and not interpreting it. The *um Geld zu sparen* of the question has a different application from that of *sparen an* in the passage, and a number of candidates simply re-used the latter along with the keywords *Altersvorsorge* and *Eigenheim*, thus forfeiting 2 of the 3 marks available. One mark was more readily earned, however, with the appropriate interpretation *sie kaufen keinen Sportwagen*.

Question 5

The essence of this task is to summarise the two texts in candidates' own words, according to the question set. Both texts should be referred to, and consequently candidates should look to give an overview, ideally by means of points of contrast and comparison, in order to facilitate their task. The word limit of 140 encompasses both parts of the question. A number of candidates either made most of their points on text 1, leaving little room for significant comment on text 2, or their comments on both texts took up most of the words permitted, leaving no room for any effective attempt at a personal response/*Meinung*. A significant number of candidates wrote at great length without apparent regard for any word limit, and in such cases risked forfeiting the marks available for the 'personal response' part of their answer, because they left this too late. It should be noted that the marking of this exercise ceases at the end of the sentence after 140 words, with a final cut-off at 150 words. In general, candidates would undoubtedly benefit from focused practice in the skills of summary, which amount to more than just picking out elements in the passage(s). There were plenty of points to be made this year, and many candidates were able to earn around seven of the ten marks available for this summary part of the question. Some answers here were again generalised and rather vague, however.

Most candidates addressed the question in two distinct parts, but the second - 'personal response' - part sometimes lacked substance and reasoning. Some responses did not go beyond a first emotional level. Marks of two and three out of the potential five were common. The most able candidates sought to express their own views within the summary, as this has the evident merit of avoiding repetition (and of conserving words). However, where personal views are offered within the summary, it must be made clear these are personal views, and not assumptions that the text(s) may not support.

Language

The remaining five marks in **Question 5** are for the quality of the language, and for most candidates these were broadly comparable with those awarded for **Questions 3 and 4**. Many candidates wrote fluently, if not always equally accurately, and the confusion of *dass* and *das* was disappointingly frequent. Punctuation was also rather unreliable, making syntax sometimes clumsy and difficult to follow. In particular, the requirement in German for commas between clauses was sometimes overlooked.

GERMAN LANGUAGE AND GERMAN

Paper 9717/03

Essay

General comments

All questions were attempted. By far the most popular question with candidates was **Question 2** *Gesundheit und Fitness*, attempted by nearly half the candidates. **Questions 1, 4 and 5** each drew roughly an equal number of the remainder of the candidates, with a small number only attempting **Question 3**.

As observed in last year's report, there were a number of candidates who appeared to be native speakers of the language. The nature of the errors these candidates make remains much the same. There was incidence of some poor spelling (*Vortschritt*, various versions of *Jugendliche* and *nähmlich* amongst the most frequent). 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 (*Rauchen* as noun and *rauchen* as verb seemed interchangeable to the vast majority of candidates), and the usual problems with *das/dass* were the most prevalent errors amongst this group of candidates. A number of essays also suffered from a rather superficial treatment of the question from a number of the candidates.

Of the non-native speaker 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 once again a number of candidates whose limitations in expressing themselves in German made it hard for them to produce a coherent essay.

Observations on the quality of language under the first two question headings are intended as a guide to the typical errors candidates make and are not exclusive to these questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Inwiefern ist der Zusammenbruch der traditionellen Familie für soziale Probleme in unserer heutigen Gesellschaft verantwortlich?

The candidates who attempted this question were generally clear on concepts such as family structure and various problems in society but less successful in explaining to what extent family breakdown was the cause of social ills.

Some candidates continue to be uncertain about key genders and plurals, adjectival endings, use of cases, use of the correct preposition (+wrong gender/case) and word order. Some typical examples: *die Probleme* used as singular, *das Grund*, *der Leben*, *ein wichtiger sozialen Problem*, *hilft die Leute*, *im Arbeit*, *am Haus*, *Einfluss zu/vor*, *für viele Gründe*.

Question 2

Was kann man machen, damit junge Leute mit dem Rauchen gar nicht erst anfangen?

As noted above, this was the most popular question this year. The majority of candidates were quite clear on the dangers of smoking and there was evidence of good topic specific vocabulary. A number of candidates gave statistical information, though the figures cited varied widely from candidate to candidate. Though all candidates sought to offer some solutions in response to the question a good number tended to lack breadth and detail.

The adjectival noun *Jugendliche* did not cause the majority of candidates the problems that were caused in **Question 5**, other than with the spelling mentioned above. Some candidates seemed to use *die Jungen* as a synonym for *junge Leute* or *Jugendliche*. Other spelling problems arose with *Zigaretten* and *Nikotin*. A number of candidates were using *mehr* + adjective instead of the comparative adjective. There was further evidence of confusion between different parts of speech in *die meisten/meist*, *man/Mann*, *das/dass*, *bevor/vorher*, *wegen/weil*. There was also evidence of some problems with distinguishing transitive and intransitive verbs, particularly in 'raise/rise' (e.g. *die Preise steigen* for *die Preise erhöhen*).

Question 3

„Man muss sich in Deutschland einfach an hohe Arbeitslosenquoten gewöhnen.“ Denken Sie das auch?

The small number of candidates who answered this question appeared, in general, to be aware of recent developments in Germany, but the essays lacked sufficient concrete detail to support the arguments put forward.

Question 4

Wie ist Terrorismus auf der Welt überhaupt zu bekämpfen?

This question produced a number of engaged and well argued essays, though a small number of candidates did seem to be struggling for something to say.

Question 5

„Der Einzelne allein kann nur sehr wenig zum Schutz der Umwelt beitragen.“ Wie stellen Sie sich zu dieser Meinung?

The candidates who answered this question were generally able to put forward strong arguments for what an individual can do and to see the global picture. A number of candidates lacked breadth and depth of argument, producing generalised essays on particular problems of pollution.

GERMAN

Paper 9717/04

Texts

General comments

In this part of the examination candidates are expected both to demonstrate knowledge of the texts and an understanding of how the texts work. Generally speaking candidates who do well are able to show good knowledge of the text, choose good examples to illustrate points made and structure their thoughts into coherent, relevant essays.

A number of the difficulties encountered by candidates were similar to those highlighted every year and are detailed below: relevance to the question and an ability to structure essays coherently are 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 some occasions the titles were partly ignored. 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 also helps to copy the chosen task at the top of their essays, as the headline. Candidates should be reminded to keep an eye on that headline and to 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. This year only a few candidates omitted the introduction but some still started their essay with what would effectively be their conclusion. Other candidates did not come to any clear conclusion, particularly in their third essay, indicating that they might have run out of time.

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. Many candidates still write whole essays without any paragraphing at all and often jumping from one point to the next, without giving relevant examples or evaluation and interpretation where needed.

Storytelling: It is clear from the published criteria for marking the essay that simple retelling of the story gains low marks. Obviously, candidates must demonstrate knowledge of the text, but 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 and the best candidates interpret and evaluate material throughout their essays.

Language: Most essays were easy to follow with just a small number proving difficult because of weaknesses in lexis, punctuation and grammar.

Examples of particular weaknesses:

- usage of capital letters on nouns - not on verbs and adjectives – this does seem to be getting worse rather than better
- cases e.g. „*Sein ganzes Leben lang wird er das Gespenst der Schuld nicht los.*“
- „ß“ vs „ss“ – the former after a diphthong and long vowels, the latter after short vowels
- „das“ vs „dass“
- „wissen“ vs „kennen“: „*Er konnte nicht was jetzt passiert.*“
- „wenn“ vs „als“: „*Wenn Hitler an die Macht kam...*“
- „keine“: „*Das ist nicht eine gut Idee.*“
- Passives: „*Er ist gestoppt von die Platzweiserinnen.*“

- Irregular Past Participles: „*Er hat das Fenster zerbrochen*“; „*Er lief weg*.“
- Mixing present and past tenses where it is inappropriate: „*Die Frau beschuldigte Friedrich die Polizei*.“
- Word order: „*Mit dem Bild der Firma können wir sehen dieses Problem*.“
- Reflexive verbs.
- Modal verbs e.g. mixing up use of „*müssen*“ and „*dürfen*“: „*Die Juden mussten nicht nach acht Uhr auf der Straße sein*.“
- Prepositions plus correct cases: „*Wegen der Juden Hass findet sich Friedrich in gefährlichen Situationen*.“
- Umlaute are often left out or added to the wrong vowels.
- Anglicisms: „*Was Bernhard Schlink uns schauen will ist...*“ or „*Wir sehen, dass der Autor ernst ist, wenn er drüber schreibt*.“
- Register/ style: some language used is too informal. There is a marked issue relating to candidates not being able to differentiate between spoken/ colloquial and written/ formal language. E.g. „*Sie müssen dieses Angebot ablehnen, das sie wahrscheinlich nie mehr kriegen werden*.“
- Punctuation: indiscriminate and random use of question marks and exclamation marks.

Length: Some candidates' answers were too short. In some cases what was written indicated that a better performance could have been achieved if the candidate had carried on with their essay. A few candidates attempted just two questions instead of the three required.

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. Not all candidates were aware of these requirements.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Von Droste-Hülshoff – *Die Judenbuche*

- (a) There was a small number of candidates for this question, which concentrated on Margaret's suspicions about who might be the father of Johannes and on the relationship between the two boys.
- (i) This part-question focused on Margaret's observations and fears, triggered by a visit from Johannes Niemand. Candidates generally pointed out correctly that Margaret was disconcerted and worried by the similarity of the two boys and referred to her suspicion that Simon was the father of the boy.
- (ii) This was well-answered on the whole with candidates putting the extract into the context of the whole story and pointing out that looking after Johannes made Friedrich, who was suffering from low self-esteem, feel better about himself. Selfishness versus real concern for Johannes both played a part and questions such as why they went away together and why Friedrich had pretended to be Johannes Niemand on his return could have been raised and discussed.
- (b) There were a similar number of candidates for this question, which offered the chance to explore why the story is still popular in the 21st century. It was left to the candidate to find reasons, which meant a well constructed essay with some coherently argued points would have scored highly. A few points that could have been raised successfully were how little life has changed since then, as far as aggression and thoughts of revenge in our society are concerned. The point could also have been made that then as now it matters to people what others think of them. Other themes that could have been discussed: religion, relationships, conscience, guilt and confession.

Question 2Richter – *Damals war es Friedrich*

- (a) This question was popular with candidates, many of whom chose to write about the extract in *Damals war es Friedrich*. There were some well considered answers as well as a number of instances of misunderstanding.
- (i) The first part-question simply asked the candidate to look at the passage provided in some detail. More perceptive candidates pointed out correctly that the two women who worked in the cinema first thought that Friedrich was trying to get into the film even though he was too young. They changed their behaviour when they realised he was a Jew and tried to protect him by pointing out how much danger he had put himself in.
- (ii) Here candidates were expected to describe and explain other situations in the book where Friedrich had been in danger, for example in the chapters “*Schulweg*”, “*Die Schlaufe*”, “*Der Ball*”, “*Im Schwimmbad*”, “*Bänke*”, “*Fledderer*”.
- (b) This question too was relatively popular. Candidates were asked to focus on the overall developments in the book from the relatively carefree early childhood years to the horrors of the Second World War and the height of the persecution of the Jews. There were a few outstanding answers, describing in some detail how Friedrich’s life changed from his childhood days until he died, still a very young person. A good answer was one that gave a well structured account of how life became increasingly difficult for Friedrich, not by simply retelling the story, but by explaining and analysing key situations throughout the book.

Question 3Langgässer – *Saisonbeginn*

- (a) This question invited candidates to look closely at the extract provided and answer the two part-questions with reference to one story from the book.
- (b) There were just a few candidates for this question, which offered candidates the opportunity to write a more general essay with reference to several stories. Here candidates were free to choose examples from different stories in order to support their argument.

Section 2**Question 4**Fontane – *Effi Briest*

- (a) Several candidates opted for this question which asked them to discuss whether Effi was solely to blame for her fate. Good essays referred to the code of honour in the society of the time and gave reasons why Effi should not have married Instetten. They looked in detail at Instetten’s behaviour towards Effi and looked at the role of the love letters in the story. There was of course also scope for questioning the motives of Effi’s parents, especially the part played by the mother in the making of the match.
- (b) This question invited candidates to comment on the extent to which the book was or was not a mirror of the society Fontane lived in at the time of writing.

Question 5Ende – *Das Gauklermärchen*

- (a) This was a popular question. Candidates were invited to choose one character and to concentrate in some detail on his/her role in the play, offering a justification for their choice with well chosen quotes from the text.
- (b) This task was slightly less popular than **Question (a)**, but likewise resulted in some good essays. Better candidates looked closely at a range of social issues from the long list of possibilities offered

by the play e.g.: the importance of solidarity; unemployment; technology; environmental issues; corruption; money and materialism; behaviour towards disadvantaged individuals.

Question 6

Schlink – *Der Vorleser*

- (a) This question was popular and candidates generally answered it well. The best candidates argued coherently either for or against the statement in the question. Points made and opinions offered were backed up with detail from the text. *Analphabetismus* was shown to have influenced both major and minor situations in Hanna's life. Where candidates disagreed with the statement other problematic areas were introduced and the case for considering their importance well argued.
- (b) This question was less popular. Good essays concentrated on the story as a love story and found evidence from which to argue that without the relationship between Hanna and Michael the story would have lacked a basis upon which the author could build the other central issues in the book. Candidates gave a lot of detail about the two main characters' sexual and intellectual relationship and explored effectively the extent to which Hanna had influenced Michael's life.