

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/01

Reading

Key message

To do well in this paper, candidates should:

- take care to read the question carefully in Part 1, taking into account the number of marks available
- use their own words as far as possible in order to gain higher marks for Language
- produce a structured response in Part 2, making each point briefly, rather than expanding on each point.

General comments

This year's candidates seemed well prepared and the texts and questions appeared to be well understood by most. All candidates completed both questions.

The language used by most candidates was of a high quality. There were a number of candidates who lifted the wording of their answers from the text without any attempt at rephrasing. In most cases where candidates rely heavily on lifting, it is not clear that they have understood the text and/or the question. The questions are phrased in a way that demands of candidates that they rephrase the language used in the text in their own words. Where an answer is not tailored to the question, candidates cannot be awarded marks. Lifting also negatively affects the marks available for Language (5 marks in the first exercise and 10 marks in the second). It is therefore essential that candidates rephrase the wording used in the text(s) as much as possible. Candidates should therefore focus better on acquiring a vocabulary and stylistic range varied enough to enable them to answer questions in their own words.

Many candidates devised an essay plan for their response to **Question 2**, which often proved to be helpful to them. The language used in response to this question was generally accurate.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This part of the exam was generally done well. All candidates managed to answer the questions, although not everyone recognised the humoristic and self-deprecating tone of the text.

- (a) This question was answered well by most candidates, but some struggled to answer the question in their own words. In some cases only one out of the two marks on offer could be awarded.
- (b) In questions where an explanation is required (e.g. '*Wat bedoelt de schrijver als hij zegt ...*'), it is very important that candidates show an understanding of the whole sentence ('*Het is niet erg dat ik generaliseer*'), rather than just part of the sentence; '*Hij zegt dat hij een stereotype beeld mag geven*' gives a better indication that the candidate has understood the text and the question than, for instance, '*Hij mag generaliseren*'.
- (c) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (d) Many candidates gave answers that showed their understanding of the phrase '*barre oversteek*'. Only a few candidates picked up on the irony of the expression.
- (e) Most candidates gave a straightforward answer along the lines of 'there were five people in the car so they needed a lot of food', without mentioning the writer's humorous intent.

- (f) Most candidates answered that they needed to show their tan to the neighbours when they returned from the holidays. Not all candidates understood (or showed they had understood) the phrase '*om de buren te laten zien wat we wel niet konden*'.
- (g) This question was done well by most candidates.
- (h) A variety of answers was given to this question. The answer looked for was that Flemish and Dutch children were not that different from each other after all and that they played together happily, regardless of any cultural gap. Many candidates answered along the lines of: 'Dutch children were more courageous than Flemish children'. Marks were given for this answer as well.
- (i) This question was answered well by most candidates.
- (j) Most candidates grasped the writer's opinion quite well, but some unfortunately forgot to refer back to the text, preventing them from receiving full marks.
- (k) The answer to this question had to come from the last paragraph of the text. Some candidates based their answer on another part of the text and therefore missed out on the marks on offer.

Question 2

In general, the quality of the summaries this year was good. A number of interesting and illuminating comparisons between the two texts were made.

Most candidates were able to contrast the writers' views on tourists, as well as the different writing styles used in the texts. A good number were awarded full or near-full marks for content.

As was the case last year, the technique of devising a plan and going through the two texts systematically before starting to write the summary appeared to work very well. Discussing the differences or similarities in perspective, text type and the audience for whom the texts were written helped the candidates to structure their response. Some candidates discussed the style and language used in both texts, which proved distracting in those instances where these observations did not directly tie in with the terms of the question.

Most candidates were able to sustain the quality of their summaries by using appropriate conjunctions and other linking devices, and by devising a logical structure for their answer. This, combined with the effective use of paragraphs and a clear conclusion, helped them achieve good marks for style and organisation.

As always, it is strongly recommended that candidates read the questions carefully to ensure their answers are fully relevant.

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/02

Writing

Key message

To do well on this paper, candidates should:

- write accurately
- use a wide range of vocabulary and structures
- provide a range of well-developed ideas
- ensure their essays are relevant to the chosen topic, well organised and coherent.

General comments

The level of writing of the majority of the candidates was good this year. Most knew how to write an effective and relevant essay on two different topics.

Generally, candidates wrote legibly. There were many interesting essays, although some candidates might have benefited from planning their response first to ensure they wouldn't run out of time or go off topic. Both compositions should be at least 350 words and, again, planning and practise can help produce essays to the required length.

Candidates are awarded two sets of marks for each of their essays; the first mark is for style and accuracy and the second, depending on the type of essay, for the argumentative, descriptive or narrative content.

Most candidates wrote effective and grammatically correct compositions. However there were some who encountered problems implementing simple Dutch spelling rules. Although this did not often impede communication, such problems could easily have been avoided had the essays been checked for errors by the candidates before handing them in. Examples included: *wordt* in third person written without the 't' at the end, and, conversely, past tenses incorrectly written with a 't' after a 'd'; errors in the conjugation of simple irregular verbs; mixing up 'ei' and 'ij' in the spelling of words, such as *bijvoorbeeld* and *zei*; and words with *oe* being written with *ui* and vice versa. Another stumbling block was that Dutch compound words were often written as two separate words, instead of one word.

Candidates should be reminded of the need to write their essays in an appropriate style. The argumentative and discursive essays in **Deel 1** require an introduction and a conclusion. After writing a short and purposeful introduction candidates should elaborate on the points raised therein and come to an appropriate conclusion at the end. Colloquial language should not be used and candidates should aim for a more formal tone in both style and word choice. The essay should develop logically and each stage in the argument should be properly linked to the next. Sentences within paragraphs should also be appropriately sequenced.

Different linguistic skills are tested in **Deel 2**. Candidates are here given the choice between writing a descriptive or a narrative essay. Each task type demands a different approach.

For the descriptive task the candidate is required to present well-developed ideas and images and evoke a detailed sense of atmosphere. A good attempt at setting the tone for the first descriptive task (*Beschrijf een winterdag*), as exemplified in one of the scripts, was '*De ijsbloemen bloeien op de ramen, mijn adem komt als rookwolkjes uit mijn mond en ik lig lekker in een warm coconnetje*'. Conversely, '*Mijn vrienden en ik houden erg van de kou en deze keer stonden we dan ook al vroeg op de schaatsbaan*' starts from a narrative angle and therefore represents a rather weak start to a descriptive task.

A proper response to the narrative task should strive to be a complex and sophisticated composition in which sub-texts, flashbacks and time lapses are effectively handled. The different sections of the story should be carefully balanced and the climax appropriately managed. Sentences should be effectively arranged in order to produce narrative effects, such as the building up of tension or a sudden turn of events. Relying too much on linking words and phrases, such as *toen*, *en toen* and *en daarna*, inevitably detracts from the quality of

the story. An essay plan will help candidates to introduce the narrative climax at an appropriately late point in their story.

Discussie en betoog

Most candidates knew where most of the clothes they bought were produced and whether it was a good or bad idea to purchase clothes from countries where people earn much less than in other countries. While some candidates came up with solutions, e.g. paying workers a similar wage to what they would earn in rich industrialised nations, others thought that the problem was far too complicated and did not believe there was a workable solution.

The statement put up for discussion that people should be able to keep any type of animal as a pet provoked a lot of interesting discussions. Issues mentioned included the safety of neighbours, how (not) to look after exotic pets and concerns about the amount of money needed to look after big wild animals or endangered species properly.

Not many candidates wrote about the contentious issue of research and drilling for oil in the polar regions, but those who did clearly knew enough about it to make interesting points for and against.

Although most candidates had a clear idea of what a *liefdadigheidsinstelling* was and what *de staat* referred to, quite a few candidates conflated the two terms and got confused. However, most candidates presented some very interesting suggestions for improving the care of those in difficult financial circumstances and views on how to combat poverty.

Beschrijving en verhaal

This year there were more candidates who chose a descriptive topic. Some essays in this category were exceptionally good while others showed little awareness of what was expected.

A winter's day can be experienced in various ways, of course. When handled well descriptions on this topic were beautiful to read. One could almost feel the cold coming through the paper and the landscapes were defined in such minute detail that it was like looking at a photograph of the scene described.

Not many candidates chose to describe their favourite piece of music. But those who did almost invariably produced very convincing sonic, as well as visual, descriptions of the mood the music evoked in them.

Both narrative topics proved to be equally popular. There were some intriguing stories about the stolen item, with flashbacks and narrative twists that were a joy to read.

Although some candidates didn't know what geraniums were the things the old lady saw were often breathtakingly and cleverly written.

In sum, it was impressive to see how well most candidates displayed their knowledge and usage of the Dutch language. It was a joy to read the interesting and inventive essays the candidates had produced. The teachers are to be thanked for helping the candidates produce work of such high calibre.