

FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

Paper 0516/01

Reading

Key message

To do well in this paper:

Candidates should pay careful attention to the wording of each question and limit their answers accordingly. Candidates should first look through *all* the questions in *both Part 1* and *Part 2* in order to avoid repetition while answering.

In **Part 1** candidates should give short, straightforward answers to the questions, generally without lengthy comments.

In **Part 2**, candidates should produce expanded responses structured to answer the questions WHY? and HOW?, as required by the tasks.

Comments on specific questions

Content

Question 1

- (a) The overwhelming majority of candidates produced the correct answer – ‘Бритва’.
- (b) Some answers demonstrated a lack of understanding of the text by presenting just a short description of the main character. It is possible that these candidates missed the word ‘surprising’ in the question.
- (c) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly. Weaker candidates gave the incorrect answer ‘in Berlin’.
- (d) (e) These questions were generally successfully answered.
- (f) The best answers reflected the main character’s reaction towards the customer’s arrival.
- (g) The majority of answers contained just one point, i.e. that Ivanov had power over the customer. Stronger candidates got 2 points by expanding their answer to the extent that Ivanov realised that he could either injure the man or get revenge, as required by the question.
- (h) The best answers reflected Ivanov’s *strong negative* memory about the customer rather than just acknowledgment of their meeting in the past.
- (i) For this question, candidates should produce at least three quotes directly from the text. They do not need to make any comments or give their interpretations of those quotes.
- (j) In order to gain 3 points, the candidates must give a comprehensive, though not lengthy, explanation in their own words of the *effect* produced by the author’s description of the customer’s eyes, with the focus on *fear*. The two quotes extracted from the text should act as their evidence.

- (k) The correct answer should consist of 2 parts: either 'yes' or 'no' followed by the explanation, which again, should not be lengthy. Candidates should avoid common and detailed explanations of the text in general, the opportunity for which would arise in Part 1. A number of candidates gave overly detailed answers to this question which mean they then repeat themselves in answering **Question 2A**.
- (l) (i) and (ii) Many candidates tried to explain the phrases morphologically, through similar wording, like 'мёртвый' – 'умер', 'паралич' – 'парализован', using a kind of dictionary entry format. Candidates should be aware that their explanation of those phrases should be in context, which is the reflection of 'fear'.

Language

The quality of language produced in **Part 1** was generally adequate. Candidates who produced complex structures scored the highest marks. A number of issues of punctuation were noted across the candidature.

Question 2

Content

The overwhelming majority of the candidates' answers demonstrated a good level of comprehension of both texts, particularly Text 2.

The best responses were those where the candidates read the wording of the questions carefully and selected the format of their answers accordingly.

Question 2A:

The format of the answer should be one of *explanation* and the focus should be on *why* the characters of both stories wanted to take revenge. The latter requires revoking some chronological facts from the characters' past but only as evidence of their behaviour in present. The explanation could include some brief theoretical speculation about the nature of revenge or human nature in general, which quite a lot of candidates did produce indeed, but that should not dominate the answer. A good answer would be more factual, relevant to the texts and within the word limit (100 words).

Question 2B:

The format of the answer should be one of a *comparison* and the focus should be on *how* the characters performed their revenge. The answer to *how* requires describing a number of events, the characters' actions in the present. The *comparison* implies finding similarities and differences in the characters' behaviour and then giving a summary of the candidate's findings. Candidates who adopted this approach scored the highest marks.

Weaker candidates simply retold the content of the text, or overused general statements with little or no evidence from the texts at all. Candidates are advised to avoid copying sentences and phrases from the original texts.

Style, Organisation and Language

A number of candidates produced a high or very good standard of language with quite a high level of accuracy and complexity. Fewer candidates demonstrated successful style and organisation in their writing. Writing marks can be maximised through using carefully selected vocabulary and complex syntax along with a robust, well-presented structure, appropriate to the format of the question.

FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

Paper 0516/02

Writing

Key message

To do well on this paper, essays should be written accurately, use a wide range of vocabulary and structures, be well organised and coherent, with well-developed ideas.

In **Section 1** discussion should be logical, consistent and may require complex arguments.

To score full marks in **Section 2** the Descriptive tasks need well-developed ideas and images, using vivid details. The Narrative tasks require a gripping opening, careful development and a well-thought-out ending.

General comments

Paper 2, the Writing paper, consists of two sections: **Section 1: Discussion and Argument** and **Section 2: Description and Narrative**. Candidates are required to write two compositions, one from each section. In the first section four argumentative/discursive titles will be set, from which candidates choose one. In the second section four titles will be set (two descriptive and two narrative) from which candidates choose one.

In order to write successful responses, candidates should read all the titles carefully before choosing the ones on which they wish to write on. Underlining key words will help candidates focus on the question being asked and avoid writing irrelevant material. Before writing the essay candidates should spend time planning their essay to avoid repetition.

Most candidates wrote between 350-500 words for each composition; the compositions were divided up into paragraphs. Very short answers due to lack of time or skill affected the overall result for the paper; careful, logical argument focusing on the main points, achieved an excellent answer without excessive length.

The best candidates used their time well and made a good attempt to write appropriately and to the best of their ability. In Discussion many excellent responses contained well-developed paragraphs without repetition, supported by the use of appropriate connectives, with detailed, clearly structured, sequenced arguments on either side of the debate. Others needed to develop more detailed and balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks.

Many successful responses in Description created some wonderful, imaginative, often heart-rending scenes, focusing attention on details, which reflected the emotions of the narrator. Some candidates needed to emphasize description rather than narrative. Many excellent stories in Narrative were well structured, with a gripping beginning, a middle with key events of a plot, including characters and climax, and, what is very important, an interesting ending. Others needed to plan their stories carefully, using straightforward narratives, character development and an effective ending.

Many candidates carefully constructed their writing to ensure clarity of expression and fluency of style. The best answers in Discussion and Argument were able to call on a wide range of vocabulary that was clear and which conveyed exact meaning; in Description appropriate vocabulary was especially important, in order to create images in the reader's mind; in Narrative a wide vocabulary helped to achieve particular effects, and added to the enjoyment and entertainment of the writing.

Some candidates should spend more time re-reading their work to reduce the errors from writing words phonetically or simply in a hurry. Candidates should pay careful attention to spelling common words and to punctuation: capital letters on proper nouns, commas, speech marks.

The quality of the handwriting was high, and many candidates had prepared well for the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Discussion and Argument

Question 1

- (a) Глобальное потепление – это факт или миф? Порассуждайте на эту тему.

This question 'Global warming – is it a fact or a myth?' asked candidates to give reasons for their opinion.

Many excellent essays were well developed, logical, gave strong complex arguments, demonstrated clear sequence and good linkage, used fluent and accurate language with a wide, consistently effective, range of vocabulary. The best answers noted the scientific facts: increasing of global average air temperature, especially since the mid-20th century, the continuing retreat of glaciers, the rise in the level of the world's oceans, the frequent occurrence of extreme-weather events, etc. The contrary argument claims, that these are myths created by the popular media; in the history of the earth average temperatures changed very often before the industrial revolution; governments pay a lot of money for the programs to reduce concentration of greenhouse gases produced by human activities such as deforestation and burning of fossil fuels. Then followed the conclusion: it may be fact, it may be myth, but humans must do everything to preserve the ecosystem.

Candidates should carefully plan their essays to avoid repetition and long, irrelevant explanations.

- (b) Властителями дум сейчас стали не писатели, ученые или политики, а звезды шоу-бизнеса. Согласны ли вы с этим утверждением?

The question asked candidates: do they agree with the assertion, that the dominant influence upon society is now not writers, scientists or politicians, but celebrities?

There were responses that showed consistent analysis, a clear and sometimes sophisticated style, logical, relevant, complex arguments, linkage between the paragraphs and sequenced sentences within paragraphs. The best responses said that writers, scientists, politicians should have more influence than celebrities, but in fact they do not. Then candidates gave their reasons. Some very good responses showed excellent knowledge of Russian realities and famous persons: Kseniya Sobchak, Nikolay Baskov, Mikhail Prokhorov. Then followed the conclusion: unfortunately, celebrities are the dominant influence upon society.

Candidates should avoid very long descriptions of these occupations and general conversation about occupations and private life of celebrities.

- (c) Недавно запустили линию электромобилей, заряжающихся прямо от дороги. Есть ли будущее у этого вида транспорта и какие альтернативы вы можете предложить?

Recently a type of electric cars has been developed, that can be charged directly from cables along the road. The question asked candidates, what they think will be the future for this type of transport and what alternatives they can suggest.

The best answers demonstrated good summary style with orderly grouping of ideas, good linkage, well-focused, excellent expression and clear, appropriate, accurate language using varied, precise vocabulary. These answers start from the statement that electric cars will become more popular in future because they are eco-friendly, competitive, and do not need petrol. The contrary view states, they are expensive, depend on electricity, and the most important, are 'not as alive as a real, noisy, smelly car'. Candidates had plenty of ideas about alternatives, from flying cars to teleportation.

Candidates need to understand, that in this type of question they should focus more on the future of this or alternative transport. The future tense was required in this task. Candidates should avoid description of their personal issues and cars, as this is not relevant to the question.

- (d) Как вы думаете, заменит ли Интернет в будущем книги, газеты и журналы?

The question asked candidates, whether the Internet replace books, newspapers and magazines.

This was the most popular essay title and produced a wide range of performances from candidates. The very best essays were extremely well argued and logically organized, and produced unique and sophisticated analysis. These answers pointed out that already nowadays no one can live without the Internet, because the Internet is quick, universal, free of charge, compact, beautiful; sites like Facebook, Twitter, V-contact, Odnoklassniki give us new life. Many candidates asserted that in future the Internet, or more advanced technology, will replace books, despite the acknowledged disadvantages: e.g. damage to health; the dangers of children playing cruel games; withdrawal from reality, etc. On the other hand, candidates believe that books will survive, because only books have the rustle, smell of paper, and only they give the feeling of communication with an author.

Candidates should avoid long description of their personal issues.

Section 2: Description and Narrative

Question 2

- (a) Приходилось ли вам наблюдать, как осенью птицы тянутся к югу? Опишите перелет птиц. Какие чувства у вас при этом возникают? На какие размышления наводит вас эта картина?

Have you ever happened to watch the birds flying south in autumn? Describe the migration of the birds. What do you feel about it? What ideas does this picture suggest to you?

There were many excellent responses that showed well-developed ideas and images, described feelings and thoughts, included appropriate, sophisticated, complex sentences, used to achieve particular effect; written with accurate language and an effective range of vocabulary. Some of the best answers noticed how the birds started to collect in a flock: five, six, ten and suddenly hundreds took to the wing from a tree; they looked unbelievably unrealistic, impossibly black on the background of the golden-orange sky. Forward, towards the south, warmth, sun, to the leaves, fluttering in the tender breeze, even it will cost the lives of some of them.

Weaker responses were characterized by repetition, lack of clarity, too long or too short length of writing, grammar and spelling, punctuation.

- (b) Вы путешествуете в машине времени. Опишите место и время, в котором вы оказались, и ваши ощущения.

You are travelling in a time-machine. Describe the place and time, where you arrive and what your feelings were.

This was a popular title and gave rise to some imaginative responses. There were many well-structured essays with a good selection of interesting ideas and images, a range of details, lively writing, forming a clear picture, with wide, effective range of vocabulary and accurate grammar. These essays sent the character to 19th century London, to Chicago 1924, to the Titanic before its sinking, to ancient Rome, Egypt, Beatles' Liverpool, to the epoch of dinosaurs, to 2100, to Russia in the time of Revolution or WWII, to Paris to meet Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso, etc. Some essays sent the character to a planet, where immortal people live; or to the dead planet, where travellers have no emotions; or where there are two moons, and grass changes colour: orange, if you look at it, violet, if you lie on it, dark-blue, if you stand on it. Some essays were written as science-fiction stories, with emotions of the writer, creation of atmosphere and tension: in the house there were the photos of unknown people; suddenly the situation in the house started to change in their eyes; there appeared the old furniture; the look of my friend fell on the old picture, which said very quietly: 'Where do you want to find yourself, boys?'

Some candidates just described travelling home, abroad, to the place where they have been or simply told the history of their family. Candidates should refer to the title of the task.

Candidates should be aware that this essay can focus on description, not storytelling; candidates should avoid repetition.

- (c) С улицы раздались какие-то странные звуки. Дети кинулись к окну, выглянули и остолбенели. Продолжите рассказ.

'Some strange sounds were heard from the street. The children rushed to the window at once and looked out at the street and were rooted to the ground.' Continue the story.

Many candidates were able to bear in mind, that for narrative, it is important to think about content that has some originality, creates tension, produces effects to engage a reader's attention, and provides necessary and appropriate details. The best responses were balanced. They needed to use language appropriate to a narrative.

There were very interesting responses: fight, snowballs, meteorite, maniac-killer, even a wolf. Very popular themes were: car accident, war and destroying a children's playground. One essay describes a sledge harnessed with deer: Santa-Claus is coming. Another was a very-well structured story about a parrot: when children came back home, their eyes leaped from their sockets, because instead of one parrot there were two and in addition a letter... This example shows how the candidate was able to invent details and build-up character and event.

- d) Вы пишете историю встречи двух путников, заблудившихся в лесу, с загадочным человеком, много лет живущим в старом заброшенном доме.

Напишите **НАЧАЛО** истории. Начните с того момента, как путники осторожно приблизились к слабо освещенному бледным лунным светом дому.

You are writing the story of two travellers, who lost their way in a forest, and met a mysterious man, who has been living in an old, deserted house for a few years.

Write the **BEGINNING** of the story. Start from the moment, when the travellers carefully approached the house, slightly illuminated in the moonlight.

This topic proved to be the most popular. The responses varied from simple tales to balanced, tense stories, with a carefully managed climax, well developed characters and appropriate details.

The excellent responses started from the description of an atmosphere and a house: nothing broke the absolute silence; we went round the house; here was darkness, thick, unnatural, motionless, as dusty, heavy velvet; the house was old, high, half-brick, half-wood; then we returned and very carefully knocked at the door, and winced, when the finger touched the humid, surface covered with moss. Then followed the representation of the characters, for example: mysterious old man, enigmatic dwarf, two-meter tall snowman, soldier, even Kazimir Malevich. Candidates gave a lot of details to build up characters: strange pale hands, long black fringe, falling on the forehead, as pale as the hands; most impressive were his eyes, bright-blue, with sparkles, cold and imperious, and you could not tear yourself away from them. The sequencing of sentences provided clarity and engaged the reader in events and atmosphere. There were a lot of excellent, unexpected endings in these essays, for example: the forest did not let them out; the unlocked door in a wall which led to the past; the mysterious old man, who transmitted to them crazy rapture; the lullaby started, not tuneful as before, but terrible and threatening; after meeting two bears the skin of the man became green, his muscles grown so large, that his shirt was torn off and he himself turned into a two-meter high monster in a violet trousers. The climax of the one amazing story was: 'The enigmatic man sarcastically looked at the guests lying on the floor: during seven years working here he had done this job without being bored. He took a piece of paper and a pen, and wrote: 'The task was carried out'. Then he smirked, looked at their Sun: the dawn is so beautiful on their Earth.'

These examples show how candidates were able to invent details and happenings that could arrest a reader's attention.