

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The overall performance was consistent with that of previous years. Most candidates demonstrated their ability to use the target language in sophisticated ways.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates were able to produce adequate essays that answered the question. The following are suggestions to help improve future performance:

- Candidates should try to use their own words rather than copying whole sentences, sometimes even whole paragraphs, from the two passages provided. In some cases, candidates who were obviously competent users of the target language still chose to copy large chunks of the original passages without much personal input.
- Candidates need to be reminded to read the question carefully before starting their answer. Some focused their arguments on the differences between Chinese and Western cooking rather than the relationship between cooking and culture as required by the question. Others wrote extensively about regional cuisines in China, also failing to make connections between cooking and culture.
- Some candidates made a number of good points, but failed to support their statements with concrete evidence. This, though it may display high levels of linguistic competence, cannot guarantee top marks. It is important that candidates are able to write essays that are not only linguistically fluent but also structured logically with points argued in depth.

Section 2

Question 2

Overall performance was better on this question than on the previous one. Although a number of candidates copied extensively from the passage provided, with little personal input, this was less of a problem than it was in **Question 1**. Most candidates were able to write fluently and convincingly about the topic. There were a few isolated cases where candidates wrote as reporters working for the local newspaper: this was not penalised though the question did not require such an approach.

Section 3

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- (b) The word *shizai* could be used in a number of different ways. The point was awarded as long as a grammatically correct answer was provided.

Question 4

Most candidates chose correctly.

Question 5

A number of candidates did not know the idioms and therefore gave the wrong answers.

Question 6

Again, a number of candidates did not know the meaning of this saying.

Question 7

Candidates were required to identify four verbs in order to get the two marks. Most candidates were only able to pick out two or three.

Question 8

Candidates were required to fill in the blanks to make complete sentences. Points could not be awarded where sentences were not complete.

Question 9

Well answered by most candidates.

Question 10

Almost all candidates scored at least one mark for this question. Some candidates missed quotation marks or divided the sentences in such a way that they ceased to make sense.

<p>Paper 0509/03 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

In most cases, candidates wrote essays that were appropriate, detailed and which included plenty of examples. Much of the work produced was interesting to read. It was a shame, however, that in some cases, although the essays displayed great potential, arguments were not well developed or there were too many examples of incorrect grammar, word usage and characters. There were also cases where candidates seemed to lose their way and much of the essay was irrelevant.

The overall structure of the candidates' compositions was generally good, with adequate paragraphing and many examples of good beginnings and endings. However, there were also cases where the ending seemed rushed or where the structure was so simplified that the beginning and ending were very short and the rest of the essay was contained in a middle section in the form of a single large paragraph. Occasionally, there was no paragraphing at all.

Accuracy is one area that could be greatly improved. Although the majority of candidates showed competence in word usage, grammar, character correctness and punctuation, there were too many who did not seem to be aware that these form the basis of any sound piece of writing. In the worst examples, faulty language and inappropriate use of punctuation meant that whole sections of the work produced were difficult to understand, if not incomprehensible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write about the relationship between 'work and leisure'. This was a popular title and a wide range of performance was seen.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to explain their understanding of this well-known Chinese saying and exemplify it. Quite a few candidates chose this title. The most successful answers were those based on candidates' personal experiences.

Question 3

Many candidates chose to write about 'an outing in the spring'. Titles such as this are attractive to candidates as they seem quite easy when in fact it is difficult to write an answer which goes beyond the simple and the superficial.

Question 4

This was the most popular title. The best candidates were able to draw on personal experience to write essays which were both convincing and very moving.

Question 5

Here, candidates were expected to express their views on the statement: 'Generally speaking, the environment in which they live affects people's characters greatly.' There was a tendency for weaker candidates to ignore the word 'character' in the title.

Question 6

This was another popular title. Some candidates took a factual approach, drawing on their knowledge of modern technology while others wrote highly imaginative accounts.

Question 7

This question in which candidates were required to write on the subject of 'An anonymous letter' attracted a high proportion of irrelevant answers.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write a letter to a local newspaper, expressing their opinion on the effects that family harmony has on the way in which children grow up. Weaker essays tended to suffer from poor organisation of ideas, probably stemming from a lack of planning.

Question 9

This question, in which candidates were expected to read these well-known lines of a poem and write an article or story, was not chosen by many. Those who did adopted a wide range of individual approaches which were generally successful.