

FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

Paper 0505/01
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To do well in this paper candidates should:

- take care to read the sub-questions in **Question 1** and **Question 2** carefully and consider the number of marks available for each
- produce a structured response to **Question 3** that covers the relevant points from the texts in an appropriate style.

General comments

Candidates were asked to read three texts. Text A was taken from a work of fiction. Text B and Text C had a common theme, namely the advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside for young people.

Questions 1 and **2** both related to the same literary text. **Question 1** consisted of comprehension questions and in **Question 2** candidates were asked to answer questions regarding the author's style and use of language.

In **Question 3**, candidates had to summarize Texts B and C with reference to the positive aspects and challenges of living in the countryside for young people and seek to convince their audience of the advantages of living in the countryside. The format specified for this year's task was a speech.

Many candidates coped well with the demands of this exam. They showed a solid understanding of Text A, as demonstrated by the many correct answers given to **Questions 1(a)–(h)**.

The quality of language varied from excellent to weak. Whilst some candidates wrote confidently using their own words, others restricted themselves to copying large chunks of the original text without attempting to rephrase ideas and opinions for which they consequently struggled to gain credit.

Questions 2(a)–(e) presented a new challenge for most candidates, and many struggled as they tended not to rely on the text to find the evidence needed to substantiate their answers.

In **Question 3**, candidates should be reminded to always keep the focus of the task in mind, and not to rephrase both texts in general terms. Simply copying sentences from the texts does not gain marks, neither does writing a speech on the general topic without appropriate reference to the two texts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) A straightforward warm-up question with many candidates achieving full marks. However, some candidates concentrated on the current family situation (one daughter/one son), ignoring the backgrounds of the two women.
- (b) The majority of candidates coped well with this question and scored full marks.
- (c) Candidates coped well with this question and were mostly able to gain at least one out of two possible marks.

- (d) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly and were able to identify what had happened to Karl. However, just mentioning hollow cheeks and a stiff leg were insufficient to gain marks as this did not address the causal focus of the question of what happened to Karl (not enough food/injury).
- (e) Most candidates scored at least one out of two possible points and mentioned that Vera worked until she fainted. Many however failed to mention the fact that she got back up again almost instantly to continue her work.
- (f) This question was answered successfully by the majority of candidates.
- (g) Most candidates scored at least one mark and mentioned that Hildegard's job was milking the cows. However, many did not understand the meaning of '*die Forke schwingen*' and copied this expression from the text without showing understanding of the concept of mucking out.
- (h) Very few candidates scored full marks here as they did not consider the text as a whole for their answer and did not show understanding of the development of the two main characters' behaviour.

Question 2

The majority of candidates struggled with this task and were unable to answer most of the questions correctly.

- (a) Many candidates recognised the literary technique of personification here but were unable to explain its intended effect on the reader.
- (b) This question proved very challenging and only a few candidates scored two points. Many candidates only described the women's personalities without sufficient reference to the text.
- (c) This question was answered successfully by many candidates.
- (d) Another challenging question. Many candidates guessed at the answer without reference to the text.
- (e) Many candidates answered this question correctly and scored one mark. However, many candidates predicted the continuation of the story without any reference to Hildegard.

Questions 3

The majority of candidates coped very well with this question and were able to identify many pros and cons to living in the countryside for young people. Furthermore, they were able to write a very good speech to convince young people of the advantages of a rural lifestyle.

The quality of language was mostly good. However, sometimes poor quality of language and/or inappropriate register made it difficult to understand some candidates' answers.

Candidates should be reminded to adhere to the word limit. Answers that are too short or too long are usually self-penalising, and this will be reflected in marks awarded for content and quality of language.

The aim of this question is to produce a concise summary of the relevant points in an appropriate register and style. Candidates should therefore be discouraged from copying sentences from the text. Instead, they should summarise points succinctly in their own words.

FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

Paper 0505/02
Writing

Key messages

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 best work came from candidates who planned their essay properly. This led to well-structured discursive or persuasive arguments, effective story-telling and engaging descriptive texts with precise and convincing detail. It also made for fine legibility due to unhurried handwriting and a minimum of crossed-out words or sentences.

Successful essays clearly adhered to the requirements of the respective essay-types. In **Section 1** candidates often showed impressive, in-depth knowledge of their chosen topics, often linking points using varied phrases and specific vocabulary to point out finer details and establish intricate connections between their arguments. In **Section 2** many captivating ideas were presented, not only in innovative stories but also in convincing descriptions of atmospheres and thoughts.

Style and accuracy

There was a noticeable discrepancy in some essays between fluent, well-controlled syntax – combined with impressive, sophisticated and varied vocabulary – and a lack of knowledge of, or attention to, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Otherwise impressive language that might have achieved a high number of marks often failed to do so on account of a high number of mistakes.

Candidates used fewer colloquialisms such as *'kriegen'*, *'klauen'* or *'gucken'* than in previous examination sessions and demonstrated more ambitious use of language. Nevertheless there was a tendency to disregard the need for appropriate register in **Section 1**. Expressions such as *'gebrauchte Klamotten sind oft supergeil'* show that colloquialisms still creep into essays where formal language is expected. Other frequently used examples are: *'klar'* instead of *'natürlich'*, *'raus'* and *'rein'* instead of *'heraus'* and *'herein'*, *'mal'* instead of *'einmal'*, and *'Jungs'* instead of *'Jungen'*. The use of *wo* as a universal conjunction for relative clauses (e.g. *'Wir leben in einer Zeit, wo...'* instead of: *in der*) persists.

Acquiring a variety of vocabulary through wide reading and learning about synonyms and antonyms will benefit future candidates. A lack of knowledge of the German lexicon was apparent in some essays as evidenced in the malformation of a number of words, e.g. *'Einschneidungen'* instead of *Einschnitte*, *'Ausgleichung'* instead of *Ausgleich*, *'Gefangenheit'* instead of *Gefangenschaft*, *'Verstand'* when *Verständnis* was meant, and mix-ups between *Umsetzung* and *Umsatz*. This sometimes made parts of essays difficult to understand, e.g. *'Wir müssen die Vielfalt unseres Planeten schützen und nicht eindützen und nicht eindämmern'*. Wider reading might have prevented the occurrence of invented terms such as *'Kindersamt'* for *Jugendamt* (Social Services). Anglicisms included: *'ordinär'* (in the sense of 'ordinary, usual'), *'in der Präsenz'* (in the sense of 'in the presence') and *'inspektieren'* (from 'to inspect'). Anglicised indicators of time, such as: *'für 10 Jahre'* instead of *10 Jahre lang*, also featured in some essays. While words like *bio* are now accepted as an adjective (e.g. *'Die Tomaten sind bio'*), it is not declinable, has no comparative or superlative forms and its use is still classified as colloquial. It is therefore always strongly advisable to look up the usage

and spelling of any words encountered in social media, newspaper interviews, blogs and adverts in a reputable dictionary before employing them in an examination.

Spelling generally suffered from a lack of care: many umlauts had not been applied, often leading to grammatical mistakes and changes in meaning, e.g. *'musste'* instead of *müsste* and *'wurde'* instead of *würde*. Other problems occurred with capitalisation and compound words, e.g. *'Tier Futter'*, *'Zwischen Rufe'*, *'aus schalten'* and *'zurück Genommen'*.

There were problems with word order in more sophisticated syntactical constructions. These included cases where more than one subordinate clause needed to be slotted into place, especially when combining *wenn* and *dass*, e.g. *'Das bedeutet, dass, wenn Menschen wenig Geld haben, müssen sie alte Autos fahren'*. Incorrectly used relative pronouns often led to misunderstanding or vagueness, as evidenced especially in the mixing up of *deren* and *ihren*, e.g. *'manche Schüler haben Probleme mit deren Freunden'* when clearly the candidate's own friends, not someone else's, were intended, and it should have read: *ihren Freunden*.

Candidates are also advised to consolidate the grammar and usage of verbs in preparation for the exam. There was an increase in difficulties with using strong verbs in the past tense. Examples of incorrect verb forms include: *'hebte'*, *'laufte'*, *'stehte'*, *'bringte'*, *'geniesste'*, *'gesieht'* and *'gegeht'*. Using tenses appropriately was also problematic on occasion. Especially in **Question 2** tenses changed frequently in some essays (e.g. from the preterite to the present and back), sometimes in the same sentence, despite the narration staying in the same time frame. Tenses need to be appropriate and accurately formed for an essay to gain marks in the top band for grammar. In many narrative essays the pluperfect was underused or not used at all, which was to their detriment. The incorrect use or non-use of subjunctive forms to outline possible future scenarios (needs *Konjunktiv II*) or quote experts (needs *Konjunktiv I*) undermined the effectiveness of otherwise sound arguments in response to **Question 1**.

Comma rules in general could be revised more thoroughly, particularly to avoid 'English' punctuation (e.g. *'Zuerst, nahm ich meinen Rucksack'*). Candidates could benefit from appropriately using the variety punctuation marks at their disposal (including colons, semi-colons, dashes, question marks and exclamation marks) to enhance the quality of an essay. It also helps to draw clear attention to the end of sentences which increasingly had been left with no punctuation at all.

This year's essays showed a greater number of poor handwriting and crossed-out sections than before. Candidates may have become increasingly used to word processing instead of using pen and paper and changes mid-sentence were noticeably more frequent. To avoid issues with legibility (including illegibility), candidates may wish to consider leaving a space between lines. Candidates are also advised not to spend time counting words or recording the word count in between the lines but to use their time more effectively proofreading their work instead.

Content and structure

Marks scored for this second criterion were usually higher than for Style and accuracy. Examiners reported a majority of well-structured essays.

Many good points and arguments were used in **Section 1**, and most essays included an introduction as well as a conclusion. Some candidates did not appear to be aware of the distinction between an argumentative essay that focuses on one side of a given topic (*Erörterung – linear*) and a balanced, two-sided discursive essay (*Diskussion – dialektisch*). This often led to vagueness, contradiction and repetitiveness. Candidates are reminded to read the essay question carefully as this indicates the type of essay required.

The most successful essays in **Section 2** demonstrated an excellent understanding of apposite stylistic features, such as inversion, direct and indirect speech and, additionally for the narrative task, language that effectively conveyed tension and surprise. Such responses also made use of a wide range of imaginative vocabulary, and spelling was usually accurate. Most candidates made an essay plan before they started writing. It was good to see that story arcs had been incorporated in a number of narrative essay plans, and this generally had a very positive impact on the stories. The best descriptive essays not only supplied details of sense perception but also gave insight into the writer's thoughts and feelings. Many narrative essays had a tight plot structure, and often captivated the reader's interest from the start with imaginative storylines and interesting dialogues.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

This task invited candidates to debate whether an environmentally friendly lifestyle is easier to achieve for affluent people than for people of more limited means. The most successful essays thoughtfully considered the high costs of organic food and drink, electric cars, and ethically produced clothing, but also discussed environmentally conscious decisions that can be made irrespective of income level, e.g. switching off lights, walking or cycling instead of driving, etc. Some candidates broadened their arguments to include thoughts on economic fairness in society in general (*‘Manchen Reichen ist es nicht wichtig, dass sie der Umwelt schaden – wenn ein Land unbewohnbar wird, ziehen sie einfach um.’*) A number of essays also pointed out that even though wealthy people could afford to lead a more sustainable life they also increased their carbon footprint by flying more often or driving bigger cars. Many candidates offered pertinent examples and justifications and convincingly contrasted advantages and disadvantages. Less successful essays offered simple lists of advantages or disadvantages, or personal opinions without any justifications. It should also be mentioned that a small number of candidates mistook ‘sustainable’ for ‘comfortable’ and so missed out on higher marks for content due to this gap in their lexical knowledge. This might have been avoided by wide reading, as is expected of candidates studying a language at this level.

Question 2

Most candidates this year decided to pick this topic and wrote on single-sex schools. The most successful responses considered societal issues, any gender-based differences in cognitive and physical development, and specialised modes of teaching that could be offered in single-sex schools. A good number of essays also gave detailed insight into general grievances to do with school life, regardless of whether these were attributable to the co-educational or single-sex school status. These responses often also addressed and challenged commonly held stereotypes. Many essays considered challenges faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community and questioned whether it would be fair to ask individuals to choose a gender by choosing a school. Less successful responses tended to take opinion as fact and left fixed ideas unchallenged or relied almost exclusively on anecdotal evidence and personal experiences of schooling.

Section 2

Question 3

The descriptive writing task required candidates to record their impressions while seated on a bench in a zoo. It proved a more popular question than the narrative writing task. Essays described a range of species from the animal kingdom, including dogs, birds, deer and squirrels, but also many more exotic varieties such as giraffes, flamingos and tarantulas.

Some candidates chose to cast their visit to the zoo in the shape of a story, leading in some cases to fairly unengaging lists of the sights, sounds and smells encountered. The more successful candidates, however, highlighted unusual aspects of the zoo and a variety of focal points to add more interest. Colour symbolism, apt similes, changes in weather and light, or insightful descriptions of animal life were often used to good effect. In some essays reflecting on zoos evoked memories of visits with a lost relative when the narrator was little. Some candidates included interior monologues or direct speech to good effect. Other interesting essays included poignant echoes of animal life in the wilderness: *‘Die Bestien raufen sich um das Fleisch und verschlingen es in großen Stücken – das ist doch mal ein Erlebnis!’* A good number of texts contemplated life on both sides of the fence (*‘Was die Wölfe wohl von uns denken? Die Makaken balgen sich um ihr Spielzeug und sehen dabei den beiden Buben neben mir auf der Bank verblüffend ähnlich’*) or how cruel it might be to incarcerate these magnificent creatures and deprive them of their freedom (*‘Ich kann nach Hause gehen und der König der Tiere muss in seinem Käfig bleiben’*). While some essays conjured up an engaging setting with fascinating thoughts and observations in the past tense, many successful essays were related in the present tense, which added a sense of immediacy.

Question 4

The narrative task titled 'If only I had known this beforehand!' was chosen by fewer candidates but produced, on the whole, very imaginative, adventurous stories with depictions of mysterious meetings, midnight encounters with danger and/or ghosts, and humorous, unusual developments in familiar surroundings such as one's school, the family home or a local park. There were also a few adventure stories set in more unusual locations, some of which ended on a well-managed cliffhanger. Many responses made good use of dialogue, with the writer often assuming the role of protagonist and a second person the role of antagonist. Some chose to use a third person narrator, but many who embedded their stories in the past tense often fared well in captivating the reader's attention. A notable improvement is the decreasing number of stories with overlong beginnings that leave insufficient time for plot development, a suitable climax and a proper ending. Essays which had a tighter structure and a clear plot line were often preceded by an essay plan and/or a mind map with mini-chapters or a *Spannungskurve*.