

FIRST LANGUAGE JAPANESE

Paper 0507/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

There was an overall improvement in candidates' performance this year, with most candidates attempting to answer all questions.

There are two possible reasons for this improvement. Firstly, the candidates were well prepared for the examination – i.e. they were more familiar with the format and were able to distribute time to each of the questions efficiently and strategically. Secondly, many of the candidates dealt skilfully with the question topics, perhaps because they found the topics familiar or relevant to themselves.

The majority of candidates performed well across all three sections of the examination, which indicates that they have a good range of language skills.

A number of candidates performed better in **Part 3** (Expressions, Kanji, and Grammar tests) than in **Part 1** and **2**. This suggests that these candidates have acquired Japanese language as knowledge, but not as a means of communication.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

This tested candidates' writing skills in a composition based on reading two short passages with a common theme.

The majority of candidates managed to produce a coherent piece of writing in this section. Their typical format (or structure) is as follows:

- Refer to the contents of both reading passages in their compositions. For example, give a brief summary of the contents of passages and then give a brief account on the theme in common.
- State one's own impression of the two passages, describing how the facts and experiences described in the passages are similar/dissimilar to his/her own.
- Give a short concluding remark stating one's hopes and aspirations, giving suggestions, analysing the reasons for current situations and/or predicting future situations.

Whatever format the candidate chooses to use, the structure of their composition must be clear. Candidates are encouraged to plan carefully before starting to write.

Part 2

This tested candidates' ability to write a letter of request using formal Japanese and an appropriate formal format. For example;

- Introduction of oneself;
- Greetings;
- A brief statement about the request;
- Reasons for and background to the request;
- Practical matters such as time of visit, contact address, etc. and
- Closing words and greetings.

The letter should also be communicative, coherent and succinct.

A number of candidates had a confused letter-writing style and a standard format for compositions. This resulted in them simply listing reasons, which is not communicative writing. Many candidates also struggled with the appropriate KEIGO forms.

Part 3

This consisted of four subsections. They are questions on;

- homonyms,
- Kanji (forming Kanjis from radicals),
- a combination of fixed expressions and grammar, and
- paraphrasing idiomatic expressions.

Part 3 tests the candidates' Japanese language as "knowledge", while **Part 1** and **2** test them as a "communication tool". Accurate knowledge of the language is the basis of good writing, so candidates are encouraged to continue consolidating their knowledge in grammar and in expressions.

<p>Paper 0507/03 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

Candidates performed well especially in the areas of grammatical accuracy, *Kanji*, appropriateness in use of words and expressions, and relevance of contents to the chosen topic.

Comments on specific questions

Candidates are expected to write not only with linguistic accuracy, but also with clarity of argument and originality of content. It is also important for candidates to choose an appropriate style and discourse structure according to the genre to which s/he is writing. For example, a fantasy requires originality and appealing story-telling methods, while a socio-cultural or a socio-scientific essay requires analytical and logical argument and convincing reasoning. Candidates are advised to study a variety of genres and their characteristic styles.

The list of topics is as follows:

- One day, during a casual talk, your friend suddenly begins confiding with you saying "I'm actually an alien". (Continue a story from this).
- The twenty-first century will see a major change in our society due to further developments in Biotechnology, which governs the life and living of humans. Consider this theme logically.
- If you can speak with animals what would you do?
- In a "Hotel Family" each of family members watches TV and dines alone in his/her own room individually when it suits him/her. Write your opinion about this.
- "Is whipping a corporal punishment or a means of education?" Write about your opinion on this theme.
- "KÔUKISHIN (Curiosity)" – Write about your thoughts on this word.
- "GYOFU NO RI (fish in troubled waters)" – Write about your thoughts on this ancient Chinese proverb.
- Write your opinions about merits and demerits of (having) a mobile phone.
- Write a composition based on your impression of the picture below.

Topic 1 is fantasy writing, and thus, creativity and originality as well as coherent and appealing story-telling skills are necessary. **Topic 9** is similar to **Topic 1**, but it uses a visual stimulus (a photo), therefore candidates need to describe vividly what they see using appropriate expressions. In **Topics 2, 3, 5 and 8** candidates are expected to first indicate their standpoint, based on which they are then expected to develop analytical and logical arguments. This of course includes a format of Introduction, Contents and Conclusion. **Topics 6 and 7** require candidates to give a clear and succinct explanation of the idiom and/or proverb – i.e. paraphrase the fixed expressions in ordinary language. Candidates are then expected to present an original coherent discussion.

Across these topics, the contents of writing should be relevant to the chosen topic, and needless to say, a clear structure – such as *KI*, *SHÔ*, *TEN*, *KETSU* - in the composition is indispensable. Candidates are encouraged to plan the content carefully prior to the actual writing.