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# A-level

# **FRENCH**

Paper 2 Writing  
Report on the Examination

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7652  
June 2018

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Version: 1.0

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## General Comments

The vast majority of centres opted to study a literary text and film combination in preparing for this examination, though a small number chose to study two literary texts. The three most popular choices of text were *No et moi* (25% of the entry); *L'étranger* (23.2%) and *Un sac de billes* (19.4%).

The remaining texts were selected as follows:

*Kiffe kiffe demain* (8.4%); *Bonjour Tristesse* (8.2%); *Boule de suif* (4.7%); *Candide* (4.3%); *Un secret* (3.7%); *Le Tartuffe* (3.4%); *Elise ou la vraie vie* (0.1%).

For the films, the out and out most popular choice was *La Haine* (53.6%) followed by *Au revoir les enfants* (16.8%); *Entre les murs* (9.4%); *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (7%); *Les 400 coups* (6.9%); *L'auberge espagnole* (6.3%).

The choice of questions across each option was such that students were able to respond on each of their chosen works.

From the length of essays written it would appear that students managed to organise their time effectively to achieve an even allocation of time to each question, and the results were generally impressive. A lack of planning often led to essays that became repetitive or poorly presented with asterisks in the body of the essay signalling where extra points at the end needed to be considered. Examiners read and mark essays on screen. While every effort is made to reward students fairly, having to scroll through to the end of an essay to read and acknowledge an additional point or piece of evidence can significantly disrupt the reading and following of an argument

Students are reminded of the need to read questions carefully to ensure they have understood the thrust of the question. They are also reminded that how they structure and organise their response is entirely up to them: if a question invites them to consider positive and negative aspects and they believe the negative aspects by far outweigh the positive ones (or vice versa), this is a perfectly acceptable response provided they offer justification for their opinions. There is no expectation with a question of this sort that answers will necessarily be balanced across the positive and negative aspects. Questions invariably invite the student to make a judgement about the validity of an opinion, the importance of a theme or character, or similar. There is no expectation that students should always agree with the judgement or that they cannot mention themes or characters they deem to be more important than the one highlighted in the question. While it is important that they do not ignore the question set in favour of one they would have preferred, they can construct a response to the question that addresses the correct focus but then brings in other relevant dimensions or perspectives.

All questions enabled students to access the full range of marks, with more than half of the responses to every question achieving Level 4 (Excellent) or Level 3 (Good) for AO4.

## Section A: Books

### Question 1 Molière : Le Tartuffe

1.1: this was the more popular option of the two and responses showed a good understanding of the character of Orgon and how he attempts to exert power and control over the household in imposing his wishes on others.

1.2: where this was chosen, and where the focus was on the satirical elements in the play, responses were impressive. However, some dealt only with the comic elements of the play in general and overlooked the satirical content.

### **Question 2 Voltaire : Candide**

2.1: the philosophical content was analysed in its historical context and its relevance to today was questioned. There was acknowledgment, however, of the relevance of some of the themes to today's world.

2.2: performance with this question was very variable. The majority were not successful in dealing with aspects of humour in the work, though some gave good examples of satire and irony.

### **Question 3 Guy de Maupassant : Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre**

3.1: as mentioned in the general comments, questions of this sort do not need to be answered in a balanced way to achieve a high mark provided the student presents a well-argued and well-supported response. There were some quite exaggerated examples of *aspects positifs* in response to this question.

3.2: answers in the good to excellent range showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the story, and there was good use of evidence to support the judgements and opinions given about Maupassant's microcosmic representation of hypocrisy.

### **Question 4 Albert Camus : L'étranger**

4.1 was the less favoured question, perhaps because it was seen to be quite narrow in scope, focusing just on the relationship between Meursault and Raymond. The second part of the question did allow the better students to broaden the perspective of the essay to discuss other factors contributing to Meursault's condemnation.

4.2 produced some very good answers that were relevant and focused and provided a lot of evidence from the text in support of points made. However, in a small number of cases responses dealt very generally with Meursault as the mouthpiece for Camus' philosophy.

### **Question 5 Françoise Sagan : Bonjour Tristesse**

5.1: the most successful answers here examined the respective qualities and weaknesses of characters with clear evidence, and on the basis of this a judgement was made in response to the question. Less successful answers merely provided a character study of the characters with little evaluation linked to the question.

5.2: the best responses dealt with the development of Cecile's character and tracked this through the significant points within the narrative. Some responses, however, limited themselves to summarising what Cecile does in the course of the narrative with little or no analysis of what this shows of the development of her character.

### **Question 6 Claire Etcherelli : Elise ou la vraie vie**

6.1: this question prompted responses that summarised the narrative of the novel with few links to the thrust of the question, ie Elise's search for *la vraie vie*.

6.2: the importance of Henri was well-analysed with good evidence drawn from the text and well used to support points made.

### **Question 7 Joseph Joffo : Un sac de billes**

7.1: this was well-handled even by those who scored in Level 2 (Reasonable) in that, though the range of points was narrow, the points were relevant with appropriate evidence. The most impressive responses gave a full account of the effects of war on the brothers, with some students even extending their answer to considering Henri and Albert as well as Maurice and Jo.

7.2: the problem some faced in dealing with this question was to keep the focus of the question in mind in terms of the importance of the father's message for the boys' survival. Often answers became summaries of the narrative and lost the focus of the link between the brothers' Jewish identity and their survival.

### **Question 8 Faïza Guène : Kiffe kiffe demain**

8.1: the better responses addressed the *image totalement négative* element of the question both critically and successfully, but this was often either overlooked or students simply agreed with the judgement.

8.2: it was the range of aspects covered in the answers that determined the degree of success achieved in response to this question. The most impressive answers were those where students linked types of love to relationships between characters and, where the full canvas of relationships was examined, answers were very comprehensive.

### **Question 9 Philippe Grimbert : Un secret**

9.1: there were some very thoughtful responses to this question, with most students identifying that, while it was the case that most characters were hiding the secrets about the past, Louise was on the side of the narrator and was instrumental in his discovery of the truth.

9.2: some responses here merely became descriptions of the various members of the narrator's family, with little attempt to analyse how one generation influenced or affected another (for example Maxime's father's past making him aware of the threat to the Jewish community versus Maxime's optimism about the safety of France).

### **Question 10 Delphine de Vigan : No et moi**

10.1: it was the range of relationships covered in the answers that determined the degree of success achieved in response to this question. The most impressive answers were those where students analysed family relationships and their impact on the full range of characters, not just No and Lou.

10.2: there were some very confident and mature responses to this question that showed a very good grasp of the benefits and drawbacks of the first person narrative technique. However, some answers merely summarised what Lou recounted as the first person narrator and thus summarised the story.

**Section B: Films****Question 11 François Truffaut : Les 400 coups**

11.1: answers ranged from a detailed analysis of the autobiographical aspects of the film with links to the innovation Truffaut was attempting to bring into French cinema, to cataloguing the parallels between Antoine Doinel's life experiences and those of Truffaut.

11.2: students responded well to the challenge of analysing the technical aspects of Truffaut's film with much evidence of detailed knowledge of how these techniques related to Nouvelle Vague innovation and cinematography as an art form.

**Question 12 Louis Malle : Au revoir les enfants**

12.1: those students who addressed the question thoughtfully by illustrating the theme of childhood and assessing its importance in the light of other thematic content gave impressive answers. However, some students took this question as an invitation to write the essay they would have preferred, writing about the themes of war and friendship and making little or no mention of childhood.

12.2: it was the range of female characters covered in the answers that determined the degree of success achieved in response to this question. The most impressive answers were those where students analysed in some depth the characters of Madame Quentin and Mademoiselle Davenne, demonstrating what light these characters shed on other characters in the film, and in less detail Madame Perrin and the nurse and their role in the *dénouement*.

**Question 13 Mathieu Kassovitz : La Haine**

13.1: the Kassovitz film continues to appeal. Responses here were detailed and covered a wide range of aspects, both thematic and technical, with a very good range of evidence and examples at the top end of the range. Students clearly come into the examination with a lot of material. The better essays were often those where the starting-point was to plan which aspects of that material best fit the question rather than deliver all of the material as being of equal importance or relevance.

13.2: the good to excellent answers kept to the point and dealt successfully with the theme of conflict, how it is treated and a judgement about its treatment. In some cases, however, the students lost sight of the question and the answers drifted into territory that was of questionable relevance or import.

**Question 14 Cédric Klapisch : L'auberge espagnole**

14.1: those students opting for this question who dealt with technical aspects of the director's originality produced some good answers. However, some students opted for a more thematic approach and had difficulty finding enough material for a full answer. The best responses dealt with both the perceived thematic and technical originality of Klapisch.

14.2: it was the range of experiences covered in the answers that determined the degree of success achieved in response to this question. The most impressive answers were those where students analysed the full range of experiences and relationships that helped Xavier come to a better understanding of himself.

**Question 15 Jean-Pierre Jeunet : Un long dimanche de fiançailles**

15.1: in-depth analysis and evaluation characterised the best answers to this question, with an understanding of the motives behind Mathilde's actions and behaviour and, equally, an understanding of both the reactions of other characters to these and the reasons for those reactions.

15.2: students responded well to the challenge of analysing the technical aspects of Jeunet's film, with much evidence of detailed knowledge of these and a good evaluation of their contribution throughout the film.

**Question 16 Laurent Cantet : Entre les murs**

16.1: the challenge with answering this question successfully was almost one of stepping back from a recall of the viewing of the film to considering the theme in the context of the film as a whole. Some students were very successful in doing this; others were not so, and their answers tended to become summaries of classroom sequences with little if any evaluation.

16.2: the better responses addressed critically the *réussite totale* element of the question successfully, but this was often either overlooked or students simply agreed with the judgement.

**Advice to students**

- Read the question carefully. Highlight the key words and ensure you deal with all aspects required by the title.
- Make sure you leave sufficient time to plan and, equally importantly, to check your essay through at the end.
- Don't waste time summarising the text or film: get straight to the point.
- Don't tell the story of what happens. The best essays are those which demonstrate an excellent critical evaluation and analysis of the text.
- Back up your points with concise yet detailed references to the book or film.
- Write the number of the essay you are answering in the space provided.
- Don't quote unless you are sure you can quote accurately.
- Bear in mind that it is not essential to write an introduction, especially one that tells the examiner who wrote the text or directed the film and when/where it was set. It is perfectly acceptable to go straight into your first point.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.