

FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 7184/01
Reading

Key messages

Candidates should:

- read both texts thoroughly and respond to questions carefully
- use their own words in answering
- avoid copying sentences or paragraphs from the texts
- succinctly convey relevant ideas from both texts in answer to **Question 2**.

General comments

The following was observed:

- There was a noticeable improvement in the performance of candidates in this series.
- There was an attempt to use own words and avoid lifting from the text, but more training is needed to achieve a higher level of accuracy.
- There remains a need for candidates to show control of a more varied range of language and structures in their writing. Further support of candidates with grammar is essential in this regard.
- In this series, it was evident that summary skills are improving. However, further work and refinement are still needed as there is a tendency on the part of some candidates to want to capture all the ideas contained in both texts, regardless of the demand and focus of the particular summary question. Such candidates will therefore need more support to help them produce focused, wholly relevant summaries through appropriate and varied linkage, coherent paragraphs and correctly punctuated sentences.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give at least one reason but some were unable to avoid repeating the same idea as the second reason. Stronger candidates made the distinction and gave the correct two reasons.
- (b) Accurately answered by most candidates but some added irrelevant information to their answers, e.g. 'widening the gap between rich and poor countries' which is a result, not a reason.
- (c) Some candidates did not recognise that the question asked for the reason why some supported immigration and their answers therefore did not address its demand.
- (d) Most candidates were able to provide two of the three required reasons. It remains important to train candidates in the skill of identifying relevant information that targets the demand in the question in its entirety.
- (e) Many candidates did not answer this question fully. The reason perhaps lay in a lack of understanding the second requirement of the question, i.e. 'mention the reason for his pessimism'. Candidates are reminded to read all parts of the question and to ensure they address them in turn.
- (f) Many candidates gave the right answer. Some were able to express the two ideas in their own words.

- (g) The relevant paragraph deals entirely with the idea of the impact of immigration on society in general and the family in particular. The question targets both effects. While many candidates gave the right answer, some only mentioned the effect on the family.
- (h) This question needed careful consideration. Some candidates addressed the first aspect of the question by answering that the early immigrants were often unemployed but were unable to provide the two economic ramifications of this trend.
- (i) This question was answered very well by most candidates. However, it is necessary to impress upon candidates the importance of not lifting whole sentences and to train them in the technique of paraphrasing relevant parts of texts. It is essential that candidates can manipulate the language used in the source text to present ideas in their own words.
- (j) Many candidates gave accurate answers and explained the idea in their own words. A few candidates provided the whole paragraph as an answer which showed they very likely did not understand the question or the idea in the text.

The answers to **Question 1(a)-(j)** were also assessed together on the quality of the language used to answer them, specifically their linguistic accuracy and appropriateness of style. The focus here is on testing candidates' ability to use their own words when answering comprehension questions. Examiners observed a range of linguistic ability, from answers wholly answered in candidates' own words to excellent effect to answers consisting almost entirely of language lifted from the source text.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to summarise the negative effects of the brain drain phenomenon mentioned in both texts.

The total mark for this question covered three aspects:

1. Content, where candidates are expected to:

- discuss equally ideas from both texts to support their summary
- link ideas in an organised and logical way
- use their own words and avoid direct lifting of phrases from both texts
- disregard ideas that do not target the requirement of the question, e.g., the positive effects of migration.

Many candidates tried to satisfy these demands but there is still some evidence that summary skills and techniques need further improvement.

2. Style and Organisation, where candidates are expected to:

- express and focus relevant ideas with assured use of their own words
- present these ideas in a good summary style with orderly grouping of ideas using linking words.

There was some improvement in responses this series but there is still a need to train candidates in using paragraphs and sentences that are correctly punctuated.

3. Accuracy of Language, where candidates are expected to:

- use the right verb tense
- conjugate verbs in the correct form (e.g. plural, dual)
- use the hamza appropriately
- use possessives, prepositions, definite/indefinite articles, *idhafa* etc. correctly.

Based on feedback from Examiners, centres are strongly advised to address spelling more directly in class, as many candidates who otherwise expressed themselves quite clearly unfortunately struggled to write words as they ought to appear in writing, including basic words.

Teachers are urged to ensure their candidates understand the significance of dots on and under letters as these are crucial in conveying meaning.

FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 7184/02
Writing

Key messages

To do well on this paper, candidates are advised to:

- Read the questions carefully to develop a clear understanding of the task ahead in terms of the required content and the style, before starting to plan and write
- Avoid using narrative style when the task is to describe something, and vice versa, in **Section 2**
- Present a relevant and direct response to what is being asked and to avoid going into unnecessary detail
- Avoid using any generalised memorised material, including introductions and conclusions
- Provide a strong discursive structure for argumentative essays
- Avoid the use of literal translation of expressions such as 'to conclude, ...' and to use idiomatic Arabic expressions instead
- Pay attention to the difference between masculine and feminine singular, dual and plural structures especially when conjugating or using الأسماء الموصولة
- Pay close attention to the use of case endings. Subjects needs to be in the مرفوع case, the predicate in أحوالها and objects should always be in the منصوب case
- Prepositions, such as في, should not attach to the following word. We write: فالمدينة: not: في المدينة .
- Improve on the use of prepositions with verbs
- Improve on the writing of الهمزة within and at the end of words. Likewise distinguish between همزة القطع and همزة الوصل.
- Pay close attention to the difference between الألف المقصورة and الألف الطويلة and التاء المربوطة و التاء المفتوحة و التاء المربوطة and التاء المفتوحة و التاء المربوطة, especially with verbs
- Pay attention to the grammatical difference between human and non-human plurals
- Improve the use of punctuation
- Improve the use of connectors between sections and paragraphs.

General comments

As in previous sessions all questions were chosen. **Question 1(d)** was the most popular, while all other questions enjoyed their fair share of interest. **Question 1(c)** was slightly less frequently chosen than other questions in the first section. In the second section, **Questions 2(b)** and **2(d)** were the most popular, although there was a fair number of candidates who also opted for **Questions 2(a)** and **2(c)**.

In general, Examiners continue to see improvements in some areas addressed in previous Principal Examiner Reports for Teachers, particularly in observing the writing styles required for specific tasks and in refraining from the use of colloquial and foreign words and expressions. The style used in descriptive essays is also getting better, and we are seeing more candidates trying to use images and metaphors, along with effectively conveyed sense impressions. On the other hand, narrative essays are often still presented in the form of a series of events lacking cohesion and a real climax. Stories need to contain a carefully balanced introduction, climax and conclusion, and more work will be needed to prepare candidates effectively for this type of task.

In spite of generally encouraging developments in essay content, many improvements are still needed in grammar, however. This remains a very important aspect of first language exams, and insufficient command of Arabic grammar continues to have a negative effect on the performance of many candidates. Candidates are reminded that high marks cannot be awarded based on content alone –

even when such content is of a high standard – if an essay is lacking in grammatical accuracy.

Candidates are again advised to increase their reading of literary works by well-known Arabic authors to improve their vocabulary and to get accustomed to (as well as inspired by) great styles of writing. Candidates will also benefit from reading these works aloud (preferably supervised in class) to help them avoid grammatical errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a)

Candidates were asked to state their opinion on whether allowing teenagers to stay home alone is a good idea or not. As expected, this question drew a good number of candidates as it is linked directly to their daily life and experiences. Most candidates were able to understand the task well and, in most cases, stuck to it with clearly defined and developed arguments, employing a good argumentative style.

Question 1(b)

This question also drew a fair share of interest from candidates as graffiti is a phenomenon that most of them will be exposed to. The task here was to argue whether graffiti was an act of vandalism, or not. Many candidates successfully used an effective argumentative style which produced very good responses and suggestions. However, several candidates wrote their essays in the form of a dialogue between two parties, which negatively affected their marks as their essays lacked a clear and effective argumentative structure.

Question 1(c)

This was the least attempted question in this section, even though it linked directly to the candidates' age group. Candidates were asked to discuss to what extent they think youths are affected by their surroundings. Some candidates were able to highlight a series of relevant points and made a clear attempt to develop some of them. However, this question generally proved to be more challenging than the other questions as some candidates ran out of ideas.

Question 1(d)

Unsurprisingly, this question proved to be very popular as it related to technology and social media. Candidates were tasked to examine whether the use of social media has become a modern type of addiction. Most candidates were able to highlight a series of relevant points by linking them directly to their day-to-day lives. However, as mentioned above, while candidates were clearly able to produce relevant points and good content, grammatical errors continued to hinder access to higher marks.

Section 2

Question 2(a)

This was not a particularly popular question and only a few candidates opted to take on this task of describing an intra-school poetry contest. Some of the descriptions were nicely written, with clear attempts to use the senses and to employ different types of metaphor to convey ideas. However, in most essays appropriate images and descriptions that might have helped bring the event to life more for the reader were rather lacking.

Question 2(b)

This was one of the most popular questions in this section. Candidates were tasked with describing a family fishing trip. Overall, many candidates were able to deliver a good description, using powerful images illustrated with well-defined details. However, Examiners noticed that a great number of candidates leaned towards a narrative style in tackling this topic, and hence missed the opportunity to score higher marks.

Question 2(c)

As with **Question 2(a)**, this question did not attract as many attempts as **Question 2(b)** and **Question 2(d)**. Candidates were asked to write a narrative essay in which the moral of the story was that belittling others has bad consequences. Some candidates were able to produce some nicely thought-out stories and developed the narration in interesting detail, while other stories lacked a real climax and amounted to little more than an account of a loose series of events.

Question 2(d)

This very popular question gave candidates the freedom to progress their stories in any direction they chose, as long as they stuck to essence of the task. Overall, candidates were successful in using their imagination to inform narrative detail and in managing the sequence of essential elements of the storyline, except in cases where events were not developed logically and consistently throughout. Some stories also lacked a clear climax, which is an integral part in narrative writing. Candidates are reminded of the importance of carefully managing the essential elements of the story (the characters, the setting, the plot, the conflict, and the resolution) to keep the story running smoothly and to allow the action to develop in a logical way that the reader can easily follow.