

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/01

Reading

General comments

It was clear from responses to **Question 2** that candidates were enthusiastic about the theme of this year's paper. Their performance on the paper was excellent, with the majority responding correctly to the questions with a good level of language, spelling and grammar.

Some candidates seemed to have less experience with Czech language and reading literary works written in Czech. Those candidates could have benefitted from looking at past papers (available on the CIE website) to prepare themselves, especially in Centres where Czech language is not officially taught as a School subject. Of course reading books, newspapers or magazines in Czech is of benefit to all students preparing for this examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidates had no problems in general and did not find this part of the test difficult.

Most of the questions were answered correctly, especially **1(a)**, **1(b)**, **1(c)**, **1(d)**.

Candidates occasionally missed a mark in **Question 1(e)**, because they did not notice that during the day there were two types of weather (fog and snow in the morning and sun in the afternoon).

In **Question 1(k)** there were two parts to the question and some candidates forgot to answer the second part.

Candidates found **Question 1(f)** and **1(h)** the most challenging. These questions focused on deeper understanding which assumed some prior experience of studying the language of literary works. Some candidates answered well and tried to support their answer with an explanation.

In **Question 1(i)** candidates were asked to find two examples of short sentences and explain the literary effect on a reader. The majority of the candidates found very good examples and explained this effect well.

In **Question 1(j)** candidates were asked to find two quotations showing personification. Many of them found one of them, showing their knowledge of literary terminology and experience with a literary text.

With regards to language, although there were some mistakes, these were rarely serious. There were hardly any technical errors and the language of answers was concise, with appropriate vocabulary.

Question 2

In the **Question 2** candidates were asked to compare the two texts, looking for similarities.

Candidates found a good number of similarities. The best responses contained all the relevant information, expressed in a concise way with good grammar, spelling and vocabulary. Candidates are advised to be clear and concise in their responses as there are no marks available for additional explanatory details.

Some candidates misunderstood the task and also included differences in their answer, which could not be credited as it was outside the scope of the question. Other candidates compared the authors' styles of writing, and the literary effect on the readers. This comparison was not required in the question and this part of the response could therefore not be credited.

The general level of language use was good, with candidates showing that they had taken care to use appropriate and accurate language. Common areas to watch out for in future included problems with the use of “y” after an ambiguous consonant, subject-predicate agreement, cases, conjugation, punctuation (the influence of English punctuation was evident in some responses), the inflection of numerals and non-standard noun endings.

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/02

Writing

General comments

Candidates are required to write two compositions in two styles, each of 350-500 words within two hours.

In **Section 1**, question **1(a)** was especially popular (social networking sites). In **Section 2**, the choice of questions was more spread but question **2(d)** was the most popular and question **2(c)** the least popular. It is always a good idea for candidates to choose topics with which they feel some personal engagement.

There were some really good submissions this year, full of interesting content expressed in clear, accurate language. The weaker responses were often characterised by having sufficient ideas and arguments but lacking the necessary level of linguistic skill to express these ideas properly.

In order to create a successful composition, candidates are advised to manage their time well and to set aside part of the examination time to plan their answer (to think about their selection of words, sentence structure, about the overall compositional rendering of the text) and also time at the end for re-reading their work to give themselves chance to correct any spelling and grammatical mistakes.

In some submissions there was evidence of language influenced by other Slavic languages, especially Slovak and Russian. Candidates living in a non-Czech language environment need to make sure that they read magazines and newspapers in Czech, and seek out opportunities to practice their Czech language in conversation or in writing, to make sure that their level of language does not slip. All candidates benefit from teaching and practice in how to write in an argumentative, a descriptive and a narrative way.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

This part of the examination asks the candidates to argue and reason for and against a statement or idea, to formulate their own ideas clearly and briefly, express opinions, view different aspects of the topic, and defend their standpoint. All of this is to be done within a well-structured essay format.

This year many candidates seemed to have read advice from previous reports and they structured their texts in the following way:

- (a) an introduction, which outlined the issue
- (b) the body of the essay, including arguments for and against
- (c) a conclusion, which summarised the ideas expressed.

Most essays were clearly understandable for the reader. Weaker responses were let down by poor grammar.

The vast majority of candidates answered **1(a)** and so it is not possible to provide detailed information about responses to the other questions in **Section 1**.

Question 1(a)

Social networking sites

Over 80% of candidates chose this topic. It was clear that many candidates have a lot of personal experience of using the Internet and they were able to see the positive and negative aspects of social networking sites. The task required arguments for and against, and the candidates were able to present

both. They found many interesting arguments for the topic and made attempts to think about the topic from all angles. These essays were interesting and engaged the reader.

For some, having personal experience with the Internet was a hindrance, because they started to describe their own personal stories and experiences and forgot to generalise and look at this theme from a broader perspective.

Section 2

Candidates are expected to write one essay from the four questions provided. The first two questions test candidates' ability to manage the stylistic formation of a description. The second two topics focus on creative narrative.

Description and narration are writing styles that candidates tend to like, and this section allows them to demonstrate their creativity, inventiveness and fantasy as well as their ability to work with the language in a literary way.

Many of the compositions were imaginative, witty and a delight to read.

Question 2(a)

In a museum - write a colourful description

About 14% of candidates chose this topic. Many candidates tried hard to describe a museum, and the best managed to give a full, vivid description. Some candidates focussed on a story happening in a museum which was not quite appropriate, or described only one or two artefacts, skipping from one object or museum floor to another without a logical progression. A description should be interesting and engaging, but also logical and systematic so that the reader can create a clear picture in their mind.

Question 2(b)

A preparation of a feast - write a colourful description

In this question candidates were encouraged to use their imagination to describe a place, people, activity and atmosphere. About 30% of candidates chose this topic.

The candidates strived to create interesting and attractive works. It was clear that candidates wrote from personal experience. Some slipped into narrative style and told a story instead of giving a description but others managed to describe the atmosphere of a kitchen and cooking authentically.

Question 2(c)

A valuable stamp - continue and finish the story

Only a very few candidates chose this question, and those who did tended to produce weaker responses. It may be that they lacked personal experience of the topic, which meant that their stories were not always convincing.

Question 2(d)

I wish I had never gone to the bet - write a story

About half of the candidates chose this subject. There were a number of interesting submissions which were a delight to read. The best candidates were really imaginative in their story. Weaker candidates wrote a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end, consisting of simple, everyday happenings. Only a few stories had a real climax, a surprising punch line or were funny or exciting. A few candidates veered away from the subject; mentioning the bet at the beginning of their story but then going on to describe a tournament or a match. This approach could not be rewarded highly.