

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/01

Reading

General comments

Candidates appeared to be well prepared for this year's paper, and many produced an excellent performance.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The first text, which was an excerpt from the novel *Robinson* by Doeschka Meijsing, did not cause many difficulties.

- (a) A nice starter question. Some candidates lifted the answer from the text. As stated in the rubric for this exercise, however, candidates are required to answer the questions in their own words.
- (b) Some candidates found it quite challenging to explain in their own words the reaction of Robinson's classmates to hearing her name for the first time. Candidates who did not understand '*uniseks in de naamgeving*' often used the whole expression in their answer, without explaining its meaning. Such candidates were unable to gain full marks for their answer as it was not clear whether or not they had understood the text.
- (c) This question asked candidates to assess whether Daniël was interested in Robinson's opinion of the school. Full credit could only be given for answers that explained on the basis of the text why candidates thought Daniël was or was not interested in what Robinson had to say on the matter.
- (d) A number of candidates struggled with using their own words to explain what Daniel meant.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (f) This question required close reading of the text. As a result, some of the weaker candidates found it difficult to provide a full answer, but many attained at least one out of the two marks on offer.
- (g) Nearly all of the candidates answered this question correctly.
- (h) Quite a large number of candidates found it difficult to describe the four words in this question. Nevertheless, although some did not know the exact, dictionary meaning of, for instance, the word *gril* in **Question (h)(iv)**, they managed to score the mark by successfully attempting to explain how the word is used in line 40 in the text. It is strongly recommended, therefore, that candidates practise at school how to deduce the meaning of words they are not necessarily familiar with from the context in which they are used.
- (i) Some candidates misread the question, thinking it was about the relationship between Robinson and her parents.
- (j) Most candidates scored high marks for this question.

Question 2

The comparison of the two texts did not cause many problems. The candidates seemed well prepared for this type of exercise and knew they had to mention 15 points to get their 15 marks for content. Overall, this part of the exam was done better than last year.

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/02

Writing

General comments

The level of ability of the majority of the candidates was impressive.

The vast majority of candidates followed the instructions carefully and heeded the prescribed word limits. In quite a few cases, however, candidates wrote essays that were too long and lacked focus. Such candidates would have benefited from an essay plan, including word limits per paragraph or section, before starting to write.

In terms of their language, a large number of candidates wrote stylistically effective and grammatically correct compositions. However some candidates had problems with even simple Dutch spelling rules. Although such easily avoidable errors hardly ever impeded communication, they had a negative effect on the assessment of the candidate's mark for style and accuracy. Examples of common errors included: *word* in the third person, i.e. without *-dt*; errors with irregular verbs; confusion in the usage of *ei* or *ij* even with simple words such as *weigeren* and *lijst*. Another common mistake was the writing separately of words which in Dutch are combined into one word (in contrast to most other European languages), especially with nouns, such as *vrijwilligerswerk* and *vakantieplannen*.

Comments on specific questions

Discussie en betoog

A small number of candidates wrote an essay on the ageing population of the Netherlands. Some candidates misinterpreted the topic, thinking that *vergrijzing* meant that the Netherlands was a colourless country. As a result, their essays were largely irrelevant, which had a negative effect on their marks for content.

The second topic was on regionally produced food. Most candidates thought it was a bad idea to eat only food that was produced in their region as they liked the variety provided by food from further afield, especially from abroad. Better candidates took a view beyond their own tastes and preferences and recommended that staple foods and other basic food items should be produced regionally as much as possible to support the local agricultural economy. A few candidates argued pointedly that having a variety of food from different parts of the world to choose from is a luxury not afforded to countries where food is hard to come by and people go hungry.

The third topic was on voluntary work in the third world. Roughly, half of the candidates who chose this topic thought that it would be a good idea if 18-year-olds were required to take a year out to carry out voluntary work, while the other half did not. Some of those who were sceptical or against the idea reasoned that today's youth was too lazy and too used to its creature comforts, hence forcing them to go abroad would be counterproductive. Some candidates thought the idea was good in principle but that having to leave home for a year might come too soon for the average 18-year-old.

A majority of the candidates chose to write their argumentative essay on the merits and demerits of texting and instant messaging versus 'normal' conversation. Most candidates came to the conclusion that texting and instant messaging were here to stay, and that people who do not like these forms of communication should try to get used to it. Many candidates who were otherwise very positive about these new forms of communication acknowledged that they came with problems. Examples of such problems included bullying and the threat of coming in contact with the wrong people through texting. Most candidates felt confident, however, that such issues could be overcome. Many candidates were also convinced that formal written communication remains largely unaffected by the use of language in mobile phone and computer text messaging.

Beschrijving of verhaal

Candidates have to choose between a descriptive and a narrative task in this section. The two types demand a different approach.

In a descriptive task the candidate has to attempt to express impressions, atmospheres and images using varied and appropriate words and phrases. The focus in these compositions should be on depiction and expressly not on story telling. Consequently, and by way of illustration, "*Thuis*" is voor mij de geur van koffie en vers gebakken brood' is a more promising start to a descriptive essay on 'wat "*thuis*" voor jou betekent' than 'Thuis zet ik altijd eerst de tv aan als ik thuis kom want ik wil mijn favoriete tv programma niet missen'. The last of these two sentences will, more often than not, lead to a narrative of an event that happened at home rather than a description of what 'home' means to the writer.

Quite a few candidates chose the topic on *thuis*. Many of the candidates who chose this topic wrote that they had moved house many times in their lives. Perhaps partially as a result of this fact, they often gave very colourful and at times moving descriptions of what they felt was their home.

A smaller number of candidates chose to describe the feeling of joining a new group of people. Most descriptions were well thought through and evocative. However, some candidates resorted to writing a story. Again, it must be stressed that the task is to write descriptively, in this particular case about the feelings one has when one is confronted with a situation often beyond one's immediate control. Such emotions may include feelings of anxiety, shyness, nervousness and uncertainty, but maybe also a sense of anticipation, adventure and excitement. Narrative elements will help to lend structure to the essay, yet the focus must remain on its descriptive purpose.

In the narrative task, the different sections and elements of the story should be carefully managed. The repetitive use of stock linking words and phrases such as (*en*) *toen* and (*en*) *daarna* in some essays had a negative influence on the assessment of their structural qualities. An essay plan will help candidates to place events, including the climax, at appropriate points in their story.

Most candidates who chose a narrative over a descriptive task opted to write about a visit to a monument. The monuments were sometimes recognisable ones; the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty featured often, but the Dam and other Dutch monuments were also visited. A small number of candidates appeared not to have a clear idea what a monument was, but, in most cases, their stories were still interesting and engaging.

A fairly large number chose the topic on the three astronauts landing on an unknown planet. Most essays on this topic were very imaginative. A few candidates met friendly aliens but most were not so lucky. Quite a few planets even had oxygen and gravity, which meant the astronauts were able to divest themselves instantly of their heavy oxygen tanks and boots. It was obvious that many candidates enjoyed writing this story.