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# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/02  
Reading and Directed Writing

## General comments

The majority of candidates responded very positively to the themes of the first two texts, namely the environment, animal protection and saving the species. Most could relate to these topics and showed some degree of enthusiasm in their replies to **Question 2**. The third text, dealing with the benefits of trying to bridge the generation gap, also seemed to touch a chord. It was encouraging to see that almost all the candidates had an overall understanding of the three texts.

Although many candidates had time to write plans or rough drafts of their answers, indicating that they had been well prepared for this paper, a handful did not complete the paper, seemingly because they were unaware of the third text and final exercise on the last page.

The quality and accuracy of the language used by candidates varied greatly, from scripts containing no errors to those containing an abundance of basic errors, e.g. repeated confusion between *se* and *ce*, *ces/ses/c'est*, *on/ont*, and an inability to distinguish between *leur vie/mort* and *leurs vies/morts*. Generally speaking, however, candidates' language was better than last year.

Far too many candidates continue to write very lengthy replies to all the questions and do not respect the recommended word-lengths. There is no specific penalty for this. However, candidates should be reminded that a feature of successful summary writing is the ability to select the important ideas from the stimulus material and express them concisely. All but the most able candidates accumulate language errors the more they write.

Future candidates should be advised to read questions carefully to ensure that they present their answers in the required format. This year, candidates were required to write a comparative summary, the script of an interview and a school newspaper article. As will be seen later, many candidates 're-defined' the tasks before answering them and as a result lost content marks. Such misunderstandings can be avoided by careful reading of the questions, followed by a few minutes' thought before jotting some ideas down and finally starting to answer.

The general neatness of the scripts and the quality of the handwriting were reasonably high, and it was pleasing to see that many candidates had taken pride in their work during the examination.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Part 1**

#### **Question 1**

*Content:* some candidates found it a challenge to structure their summary around the similarities and differences between the two organisations. Although the majority had a clear understanding of the texts individually, weaker candidates struggled to see the relationship between them. Better candidates organised the information from the text into two paragraphs, one dealing with similarities and one with differences. Ten different points had to be identified in order to gain full content marks. Candidates should be reminded of the need to include a variety of points and to avoid commenting at length on just one or two points. Some candidates did not understand that they were required to produce a comparison and summarised the activities of the two organisations one after the other: in such cases content marks were awarded as long as both halves of the similarity/difference were present. The weakest candidates only made reference to one text for which they could not gain credit.

*Focus, own words and expression:* most candidates were able to write a short introductory phrase, develop the main body of the summary appropriately and conclude with another short phrase. Examiners noted the use of expressions appropriate to a comparison, e.g. *par contre, en revanche, les associations se ressemblent/diffèrent par le fait que, bien que, alors que...* etc. Candidates also needed to realise that they should use their own words in the summary and not copy chunks from the text, though Examiners accepted that some specialist vocabulary could not be rephrased. Where no clear comparison was present in the summary, a maximum of 2 marks was available for Focus, own words and expression.

*Language:* there was much good use of French in candidates' summaries and many successful attempts at re-wording the ideas from the texts. There were plenty of opportunities to include relative clauses (*ce sont les planteurs qui menacent les orangs-outans...*), subjunctives (*bien que les deux associations luttent contre la déforestation...*) and to use the passive voice (*les animaux sont tués par les braconniers...*). It was disappointing that so many errors arose out of the inability of some candidates to copy accurately words quoted from the text, e.g. the plural form of *orang-outan*.

## Question 2

*Content:* it was most encouraging to see that the vast majority of candidates started and ended their interview in a suitable manner, explaining the reason for the interview and giving the name of the newspaper or radio station. The question required candidates to comment on **three** points: aims, results and hopes of sponsorship for one of the two associations in the texts. The most successful candidates had read the question carefully and addressed all the required points in their answers. Their answers displayed great enthusiasm and they managed to combine convincing arguments from the source texts with ideas of their own that were clearly rooted in the texts, e.g. *quand j'étais jeune, j'ai visité des marchés exotiques et j'ai vu des peaux d'animaux et plus tard j'ai créé cette association* or *pour nous sponsoriser, vous pouvez téléphoner au 03402563789 ou vous brancher sur notre site www.AEM.org*.

Candidates who received poor content marks tended to base the entire interview on a single point, which they re-phrased in several ways.

Once again, candidates should be advised to read questions carefully, to enter into the required role (in this case both that of the interviewer and that of the leader of the association) and to organise their arguments in the required format (in this case a dialogue).

*Language:* this question provided an excellent opportunity for candidates to show they could use a variety of tenses (particularly the past tense for the achievements of the organisation) and questioning techniques (for the interviewer). Most candidates managed very well. Weak candidates repeated the mistakes they had made in the summary.

## Part 2

### Question 3

*Content:* a wide range of performance was seen. Many candidates misread or misunderstood the question and wrote a descriptive summary of their visit to a *maison de retraite*. However, those who answered the question correctly, using examples from the text to produce strong arguments in favour of increased contact between the generations received a good content mark.

The best candidates invented a title for their article and started with a short introduction (*j'ai passé une journée ... dans la maison de retraite de ma mamie*) explaining the background. They followed this up with a question (e.g. *Que peut-on gagner à mélanger les générations?*) and presented their case, drawing examples from the text and from their personal experience. For the maximum content mark, a good balance of arguments with a selection of examples/illustrations was required. Many candidates ended their essay with a short conclusion encouraging other pupils to visit the *maison de retraite* for themselves. Some candidates entered into their role of journalist so well they ended their article with *à la semaine prochaine chers lecteurs* signing off with their name followed by *éditeur*.

Weak candidates tended to describe the retirement home and what they saw during their visit, but never referred to the benefits of attempting to bridge the generation gap. This seemed to indicate that though they had read the article they had not read the question. Some candidates failed to present their answer in the form of a newspaper article.

*Language:* most candidates found it easy to describe the retirement home using words from the text but only the better candidates used suitable vocabulary and appropriate sentences to establish links about what each generation can bring to the other. Generally, vocabulary relating to family problems, *expérience, patience, conflits*, etc. was well used by candidates. Many candidates produced their final language on this final question even though they might have felt under pressure of time.

**Paper 0501/03**  
**Continuous Writing**

**General comments**

All candidates seemed to find a title which appealed to them from the wide range available and most were able to write relevant, often interesting, essays. However, as in previous years, the quality of language was very varied.

The better scripts were written in generally accurate French with only occasional minor errors, and were well structured. The vocabulary used was wide enough to convey intended shades of meaning.

Average scripts showed more frequent grammatical and spelling errors. Mainly simple vocabulary was used. The essay was usually structured in paragraphs, although links were sometimes absent or inappropriate.

Weaker scripts showed many serious mistakes of various kinds – in some cases it was difficult to find an example of a completely accurate sentence. Essays were often not structured in paragraphs. Vocabulary was sometimes imprecise or inappropriate.