FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/01
Reading

General comments

Most candidates responded very positively to the theme of the unhappiness with one's life and the urge to move and seek a position/life style elsewhere. Although the candidates were younger than the protagonists in the texts, they were still able to understand and express the protagonists' feelings. The second text confused some candidates because of the reference to two trips. Furthermore, the asterisks separating the two parts of the second text led some candidates to believe that the comparison in **Question 2** dealt with the first and second part of that text, particularly when or where the candidates might not have had much contact with past papers.

It was particularly pleasing to see that the overwhelming majority candidates completed the paper. Many candidates took care to write a plan or a rough draft, and it was a positive indication that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination, as well as coached on how to manage their examination time allowance. The word limit recommendation in **Question 2** was better respected this year than in previous years but still some candidates ignored the guidelines and wrote up to three times over the word limit.

Even more than in previous years, a marked improvement in the quality and accuracy of the language used in the answers overall was seen. In **Question 2**, many candidates made excellent use of the language of the source texts and most candidates managed to rephrase and avoid any direct lifting. However, as outlined in the detailed feedback on individual questions, some candidates continued failing to score points because they rephrased the question or lifted some sections of the text without providing a clear answer.

It is stressed that candidates must read the questions in **Question 1** very carefully and make sure that they answer in the format required by the question. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of the number of ideas or points that need to be included in order to gain full marks.

The general neatness of the answers and the quality of the handwriting improved further on previous years, and it was pleasing to see that many candidates had taken pride in their work during the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The questions in **Question 1** ranged from easily accessible (a,c,d,h) to challenging. The rest of the questions fitted in the middle band, where, as long as the text was understood well, the answers presented no difficulty. Therefore there were opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability.

Content:

(a) This question was very successful and most candidates were able to explain that Juliette was envious because Colleen had succeeded where she had failed.

(b) This answer required two different feelings. Most candidates managed to express the idea of sadness, ensuring one mark. The feelings of anxiety, apprehension (*elle avait mal au ventre*) or resignation were more challenging for some candidates to spot/understand. This was one example of a question where quoting the text directly did not help the candidates at all, a technique used generally by weaker candidates.

(c)   Most candidates were able to express that Juliette was still single and without secure ...
whereas his sister was married and had a job. Again, some candidates managed only ...
as they referred to the one sister where stronger candidates included a fuller descriptio...
sisters with a comparative phrase.

(d)   Most candidates spotted the speech marks and understood why the author used them there.

(e)   This question presented a real opportunity for differentiation. A reference to the text was not
essential and some candidates managed to explain well the slim chance of success, or the high
risk of the decision. Weaker candidates kept closer to the text and simply quoted the first part of
the sentence, failing to convey understanding of the words *pari* and *insensé* either in this context or
in general.

(f)   Very few candidates scored the two marks available. Many candidates rephrased the same idea,
believing that would cover the two points, i.e. *ils ne veulent pas prendre de risques et ils sont
obsédés par le "risque zéro".* Another source of error was to express one's own opinion such as
l'auteur n'est pas d'accord avec Juliette.

(g)   This question was well-answered among some candidates who even made reference to the
guiding star in the Bible and Juliette believing it would lead her somewhere.

(h)   This question was the most successfully answered of this paper with all but a few candidates
locating both ideas in the text.

(i)   Due to the strong possibility that candidates would re-quote the text without really understanding its
meaning, the question included "in your own words" in bold. Pleasingly, most candidates spotted
this and were able to explain that Juliette was only really alive when on stage and that she found it
worrying that she needed to be someone else to become herself. Only a few weaker candidates
lifted the passage straight from the text, giving little or no evidence of comprehension.

(j)   This question prompted a wide range of extremely varied answers, from simple responses to some
very detailed answers where the candidate had quoted parts of the text and drawn his/her ideas in
the next sentence. There were more than six aspects contained within the three paragraphs, so
the better candidates secured their six points and continued to write sometimes as much as the
three paragraphs. No marks were awarded for reference to the beginning of the text, such as
Juliette n'aimait pas New York"

Language

There was much evidence of the candidates' good use of French in this question, as able candidates were
often successful in re-wording the ideas given in the texts and in general very little evidence of long lifting
was found. In **Question 1**, because candidates have the direct support of the text and often make good use
of the vocabulary provided there, this section contained fewer language errors than **Question 2**. Many
candidates expressed themselves with ease overall, even when individual words were wrongly spelled or
misused. Consequently, the vast majority of candidates scored 4 or 5 in the language section. The main
mistake included the spelling of *réussi* in (a) which often appeared with extra t or extra e since *réussite* as a
noun was in the text. The Examiner also found a wide variety of mixture of tenses. Some candidates
attempted the use of the *passé simple* which was not prompted by any of the questions. Because of the
resulting lack of success, the Examiner recommends that candidates manipulate the *imparfait* and *passé
composé* correctly rather than attempt the past historic unless they are extremely confident.

As always, there was quite a list of spellings for the usual homonyms/homophones: *et/est, son/sont,
étais/était/étaient/été etc.* but on the other hand, it was pleasing to see the mistake-free papers of the most
able candidates, who had clearly been well-prepared by their Centres.

Finally, the Examiner would also like to remind candidates that a short answer inclusive of all the points
which need to be made, formulated in simple and accurate words will score more points that a long,
repetitive answer with over ambitious use of French.

Question 2

<u>Content</u>

With regard to the content, this question proved to be challenging for many candidates.

The Examiner was delighted to see that many candidates organised their thoughts clearly along the lines of the wording of the question with one paragraph for common points and one for differences, including one line of introduction and a small conclusion.

However, for some, the introduction and conclusion used a number of words to express very little, taking up valuable space. The best introduction should be one which already includes some content ideas, such as *les textes présentent deux Françaises qui quittent la France pour faire le métier qu'elles rêvent de faire.* This phrase uses up 17 words, scores 3 content marks and works well as a general introduction.

The main challenge that candidates still find difficult is to make their sentences more effective, simple, to the point and inclusive of many different content points. The Examiner suggests that candidates take time to write a list of bullet points and then use the list to regroup several ideas in their sentences. This should also help the candidates state different points and avoid repetitions. For example, the phrase *Juliette, en situation d'échec, exprime des doutes sur sa carrière, mais Cécile est plus positive et ne sait pas si son séjour sera un succès* contains 4 content points in 25 words. Using such sentence constructions, candidates can easily express 10 content points within the word limit of 250 words.

Many candidates scored low content marks because they rephrased the same idea in sometimes up to four different ways.

<u>Language</u>

Most candidates were able to write the comparative essay within the word limit, using the vocabulary from the source texts as well as their own and more candidates than ever before in this paper used suitable words and appropriate sentences to indicate a clear comparison (*alors que, cependant, premier/deuxième texte, etc.)* Some candidates referred to Cécile as a man and used the masculine form, probably thinking of the boy's name Cecil, but the text itself makes it very clear that we are dealing with a woman: *une étudiante française (ligne 1).* The spelling and grammatical mistakes were similar to those listed for **Question 1**.

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/02
Writing
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General comments

The examination consisted of two essays: one requiring candidates to demonstrate their ability to discuss and argue a point, and one that required a descriptive or narrative essay. Most candidates observed the given word count (350-500 words for each response); only a few failed to write enough, which resulted in essays that lacked development and structure.

The very best essays were characterised by a variety of well-developed sentences with a high level of accuracy and which managed successfully to achieve a particular atmosphere; the essays were well-structured and contained well-defined and well-developed ideas. However, towards the bottom of the mark range candidates' essays contained a large number of errors, demonstrating that they did not have a grasp of the kind of grammatical structures required at this level. There was also a tendency to use simplistic phrases and omit relevant linking devices. It was felt that some candidates wrote words phonetically and if more time was spent by the candidates in re-reading their work, these errors could well be reduced.

Areas of particular weakness were:

- Anglicisms, of which some quite common examples were *eventuellement, consister de, facilités, le plus…le plus…., advantage, addicté, balancer*

- Confusion between *ce* and *se, ce qui* and *ceux qui, c'est/ces, leur/leurs, quand/quant, tout/tous*

- Omission of accents: a and *à, ou* and *où,* past participles such as *passe (passé)*

- Conjugation of past historic: *j'alla, il montit, ils disparèrent, il parti, il aperçu etc.*

- Adjectival agreements

- Misspellings of words: *fauteuil, un peu, à part, inapproprié, leçon, le temps, visionner, rencontrer, ailleurs, ressource, exercice*

- Inaccurate use of accents

- Agreements of past participles

- Past participle used as infinitive: on peut allé, il pourra parlé

- Past participle forms: *acquéri, prit, vit, apperçut*

- Confusion between imperfect tense, perfect tense, past historic

- Switching between the 3rd person singular *il* and the 3rd person plural *ils*

- Switching between the 3rd person *on* and the first person plural *nous*

- Overuse of words such as *cela, ça, chose, puis*

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Argumentative/Discursive tasks

(a)   This appeared to be a popular question. Most candidates developed the idea of globalisation and the positive aspects of focusing only on a few languages (no translators required, easy to communicate in business) rather than preserving all languages but ended up by agreeing to preserve even the least known language for cultural purposes. There were a limited range of examples and some essays lacked structure.

(b)   This was quite a popular question but was not particularly well answered; the question asked for a personal view but most candidates responded too generally throughout the essay and did not include their own ideas.

(c)   This question attracted the smallest number of candidates and the vast majority who tackled this question concurred that there was some truth in the statement but concluded that selfishness was not what made human beings happy. Examples ranged from boyfriends/girlfriends giving presents to each other to being able to help and give to charities and feeling happier by helping others.

(d)   This was the most popular question and candidates had plenty of ideas and opinions to contribute. The best candidates provided a whole range of reasons why parents needed to limit children's time in front of a computer or a television. Weaker candidates produced unbalanced and unconvincing essays, for instance focusing only on the Internet and offering only sketchy ideas about the disadvantages of the two technologies (dangers relating to the Internet, sore eyes).

Section 2

Descriptive and narrative tasks

(a)   This was quite a popular question. Many candidates chose to describe a pop concert, others a ballet or classical dance event. Once again some candidates were successful in expressing emotions, describing the setting with passion, while weaker responses demonstrated a lack of clarity in the description and confusion about who was attending and how it ended.

(b)   This question was less popular than the others in Section 2; nevertheless, the question was on the whole well answered. Some candidates described their own learning experience in a particular field such as surfing or dancing and were successful at conveying their emotions and feelings at the time; others simply described their learning experience at school or when they were much younger and did not develop an appropriate atmosphere or a satisfactory conclusion.

(c)   This was the most popular question and the best essays demonstrated a substantial amount of imagination and included balanced sections in order to surprise the Examiner with the requisite "sudden return of events". Unfortunately many candidates demonstrate a limited ability to narrate a simple story.

(d)   This title was also a popular choice and well answered. Only a small number of candidates did not seem to have a clear grasp that they were supposed to be meeting an old person, not simply one older than themselves. The point that they needed to write only the beginning or part of the story was also sometimes missed. Some candidates wrote an engaging and well-balanced essay leaving the reader hungry for more.