

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/01
Reading

Key Messages

- **Question 1:** This is a comprehension task. Candidates should therefore answer in their own words and avoid using quotations from the text unless this is specifically required by the question. Brief answers may be appropriate but the mark allocation gives a clear indication of the degree of development one would expect.
- **Question 2:** When comparing the texts, candidates need to ensure the points they are making are common to both passages but are presented in a different way. Organisation and style are also assessed here and this should be kept in mind.
- **Language:** Time management should provide an opportunity to check that basic grammatical rules have been applied (e.g. verb endings, agreements).

General Comments

Candidates generally responded very well to this paper as they were all familiar with the subject matter of the texts. Very few questions were left unanswered. There was clear evidence (plans or rough drafts) that some had been trained in planning their response to **Question 2**. This paid dividends when “Organisation and Style” was assessed. Crossings out and numbers in the margin showed a good awareness of the need to keep to the word limit. The few who wrote a great deal more than the specified 250 words, penalised themselves: fewer points were made within the word count and “organisation” also suffered.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates had understood the text and its general implications well. Performance varied; to do well, candidates had to show understanding and develop answers in a way that was commensurate with the number of marks allocated to each individual question. It is in this area that most improvement could be made in future sessions. A question worth 3 marks will require 3 distinct points. Rephrasing the same point in three different ways will not achieve this aim. It is also very important to read each question carefully to understand all its implications.

- (a) This was a gentle initial question, leading candidates to the opening sentence of the text. Nearly all candidates correctly explained that the fans’ happiness was due to the opening of a new Harry Potter leisure park but many omitted to say where this park was opening. This was a key element, given the focus of the text in its second half. Those who had read the text in full before answering realised the situation of the park was important and scored the mark; the others did not. Candidates are advised to read the text in full before they start answering questions. This question produced good differentiation.
- (b)(i) Nearly all candidates scored this mark. JK Rowling’s feelings for the park were easily identified. Some candidates elaborated to avoid using “*enthousiasme*” as in the text. This was good practice.
- (ii) Many took the question literally and quoted the relevant section of the text; this was allowed, so the outcome of this question was very good. Unfortunately, if they had given “*enthousiasme*” in **b(i)**, the very same information could not score again. Sentences may be taken from the text as long as

they are also explained in the candidate's own words, to show understanding of the original passage.

- (c) This was one of the more challenging questions which differentiated well as it required an understanding of not a single phrase or a sentence but of a whole paragraph. It was worth 3 marks, so candidates needed to give three different objectives from four possibilities. The most common correct answer was to ensure visitors had a good time. Many managed to score a second mark by rendering "...*les éléments fondamentaux des livres*" but few were able to explain the notion of "*intégralité*" and hardly anyone saw that appealing to visitors whatever their prior experience of the Harry Potter stories was also an aim of the park's designers. Candidates who gave a one line answer were not doing themselves justice.
- (d) This question, though not easy, was successfully answered by most. Candidates were able to explain how the sentence matched the facts: a British invention was being exploited elsewhere. The concept of "*patrimoine culturel*" was clearly something they understood and were able to explain. They also understood that "*ailleurs*" referred to the USA and the park in Florida.
- (e) One of the more difficult questions of this section. Many explained - very well indeed - what a "*lieu de pèlerinage*" is, with the idea of setting on a journey and its religious connotations. They could convey that it was something the Harry Potter fans had to do, somewhere they had to visit - and this was half of the expected answer. The other mark proved more elusive because it referred to a section of the text that preceded the phrase they had to explain. Only the better candidates took this into account and realised that "*un autre pays*" was the USA and the one and only official destination of their pilgrimage was none other than the park in Orlando.
- (f) This was also a challenging question, hinting at literary devices used by the Mayor of London in his speech. Most candidates took a more literal approach and were able to score two marks by stressing the British origin of Harry Potter – with numerous references to London – and that he was not, and never could be, American. Few candidates successfully explained the stylistic devices, including rhetorical questions, and the effect they produced on the reader. Some candidates hinted at the effect repetitions would have on the reader but they did not do so very convincingly and frequently left it to quoting examples (*l'Allée de Diagon, le collège de Poudlard, les cabines téléphoniques de Londres, la gare de King's Cross*) from the text without really explaining them.
- (g) Showing that bad weather was no obstacle to success was the key to answering this question well. Many did, but not all. The weather factor was generally given – with many candidates comparing weather in London and in Paris; the success of EuroDisney in spite of the weather was frequently missed out.
- (h) Nearly all candidates successfully explained "*n'est pas un engouement passager*" but very few found a satisfactory way of defining "*la Pottermania*". Candidates should remember that when they are asked to explain a sentence, they should explain all elements and not overlook some of them. Again the allocation of marks should have told them more was needed.
- (i) (i) Many candidates took the wording of this question literally and quoted the relevant section of the passage. Some quoted extensively, hoping the answer would be somewhere in the passage they quoted. Candidates need to show understanding of the text not just an ability to identify the passage(s) which might provide the answer to any set question. The better candidates tried to rephrase the text.
- (ii) This was one of the most successfully answered questions in the whole paper.

Question 2

For nearly all candidates, this proved to be more demanding than **Question 1**. This section therefore offers scope for developing techniques that will lead to improvement.

Most candidates managed to find between 5 and 10 similarities/differences although many more could have been found. The most commonly given points of comparison related to factual information about the parks (*nom des parcs, dates d'ouverture, lieux où ils sont situés, superficie, attractions et leur but*) or details specific to the Harry Potter saga (*l'univers magique, la popularité de la saga, l'auteur, les endroits spécifiques cités dans les textes*). Common incorrect similarities included making points about the first text which were in fact taken the second one (e.g. *la popularité des parcs / le nombre de visiteurs*) or candidates

incorrectly latching on to an idea mentioned in one text but not in the other (e.g. *la participation de JK Rowling au développement du parc*).

Although the texts had many similarities and differences, candidates did not always concentrate on points actually made in both of them and used to the same (or different) effect. They need to compare like with like and this is where planning is very useful. Planning also helps organise the response (“Style and Organisation” grid). It is therefore worth spending time identifying points common to both texts and then to organise and group them to produce a pointed response to the question. Otherwise it is easy to drift into narration which does not score any marks.

Some candidates quoted extensively from the texts; this proved counter-productive, possibly because it distracted them from the purpose of the exercise, encouraging them to narrate rather than compare. They also frequently forgot to complete the comparison. Quoting from texts should also be avoided because it takes up valuable words merely to illustrate, a skill not required in the exercise.

Writing a lengthy introduction is not necessary. However, it would be good practice to include the most obvious elements of comparison (similarities or differences) in a short introduction to this question. This could ensure scoring 4 or 5 points easily without using too many words. For example: *Les deux textes parlent de parcs d'attraction dédiés exclusivement à Harry Potter (1) et à la popularité durable de sa saga (1). Bien qu'ils soient situés dans des pays différents (1) et qu'ils n'aient pas la même taille (1), ces deux parcs permettent aux visiteurs d'entrer dans l'univers magique d'Harry Potter (1)*. Valid points briefly made in the introduction do not have to be repeated, thus saving valuable words to cover the other 10 or so points needed to score full marks.

Most candidates covered similarities across the two texts first then moved on to differences in a different paragraph. A few candidates treated both elements concurrently. This was acceptable too but frequently made it somewhat confusing for the reader to follow which had an impact on the “Style and Organisation” mark. A few candidates managed to pull this off, comparing and contrasting the two texts seamlessly and most effectively. This approach is not generally recommended as it requires very advanced linguistic and organisational skills from the writer and thus only suits the very strongest candidates.

Putting across many differences or similarities between two texts can encourage candidates to present them in a very similar way. To avoid using the same sentence structure again and again (which would have an impact on the “Style and Organisation” mark), candidates are advised to use a range of link words suited to comparing and contrasting. Use of words and phrases such as *de même, de la même façon, pareillement, aussi... cependant, par contre, alors que, en revanche, contrairement...* would bring in more variety. An awareness of style will also help make the points more clearly.

Writing a conclusion at the end of the comparison is not necessary, nor are candidates required to express personal opinions, so both should be avoided.

Language (questions 1 and 2)

Overall, quality of language was satisfactory.

Clearly, when candidates use quotations to answer questions in the first part of the paper, they do not enhance their quality of language mark because the language they use is not their own. In this part of the paper, candidates are constrained by the nature of the questions. After all, they have more to gain from getting the right answers than from using “carefully chosen language with complex syntax”. This is where the stronger candidates shine. The others mostly produce “appropriate but unsophisticated and generally simple syntax”. All the same, they should strive for accuracy and avoid careless errors (e.g. incorrect verb endings, use of the infinitive instead of the past participle, omission of adjectival agreements). Careful checking and concentration on such “details” would allow them to progress from “Satisfactory” to “Good”.

In the second part of the paper, which is more open-ended and where candidates have more scope to produce their own language, the quality (range and accuracy) tended to be better. Of course “style” is also taken into account in this question and it was clear that some candidates were making efforts to bring in variety (vocabulary and structures) to enhance their writing. Such practice should be encouraged because it brings benefits on two counts: “Style and Organisation” grid as well as “Accuracy grid”. However, on average, because of the nature of the task, many were more concerned with making valid points than to concentrating on the quality of their language, which therefore tended to be quite repetitive. This is another area where improvements can be made.

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/02

Writing

Key message

To do well on this paper, candidates need to select two titles and write a response that is clearly relevant and well structured. Essays should be both generally accurate with a use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary, and coherent with well-developed ideas.

General comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 4 titles for the discussion and argumentative essay and 4 titles for the narrative/descriptive essay. Each essay was marked out of 25, comprising a maximum mark of 12 for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 for task achievement. Most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words used (350-500 words per essay). The best essays were well-structured, fluently argued and coherent. For **section 1** they featured a clear and relevant introduction to the title set, presenting a balanced view including a range of ideas and examples in support of both sides of the argument. For **section 2** some candidates wrote an exceptional description or narration which was a real pleasure to read. Some less successful essays lacked structure, direction and ideas, and explanations were limited. The arguments offered tended to be repetitive for **section 1** and the description or narration for **section 2** did not include sufficient detail to engage the reader. The authors of these essays often struggled to reach a satisfactory conclusion that synthesised the various ideas included in the essay. Some work had no proper introduction or concluding remarks while in others the conclusion simply repeated the title set often using exactly the same words that had already been used in the development. Candidates need to give more thought to the construction of an interesting and striking conclusion. In descending order of popularity, this cohort chose: **Section 1: Question d, Question b, Question a, Question c; Section 2: Question b, Question c, Question d, Question a.**

As far as the quality of the language was concerned, better candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of grammar and showed the ability to use a wide variety of vocabulary and expressions; mistakes were few and far between. Weaker essays tended to be simple and laboured. They were characterised by persistent errors and as a result, it was not always obvious what was being communicated. Nevertheless, the majority of candidates were able to achieve a fair level of accuracy although there was some inconsistency when using different tenses or subject-verb-agreements. There was a tendency to use the same noun repeatedly in close proximity, when it would have been better to use pronouns or synonyms. Among a number of recurrent weaknesses and errors, the following were seen:

- Gender of *argent*
- Confusion between *électronique* et *électrique*
- Use of *sa* instead of *ça*
- Overuse of *gens, ça, cela, il y a*
- The use of *cela* in place of a gender-specific pronoun
- Disregard for appropriate register: *truc, des choses*
- Use of *certain* *gens* instead of *certaines personnes*
- Inappropriate conjunctions at the beginning of paragraphs: *alors, puis, ensuite, aussi*
- Omission of accents, e.g. *a* and *à, ou* and *où*
- The use of *grâce à* in negative contexts e.g. *grâce à la pollution...*
- Imperfect tense of *faire*: *il fesait*
- Inconsistencies in adjectival and subject-verb agreement
- Confusion between homonyms such as the infinitive and past participle of –er verbs
- Conjugation first person singular past historic: *je marcha, je regarda*
- Lexical items such as *régner* (*reigner*), *fatigant* (*fatigant*) *environnement* (*environment*)
- Conjugation of irregular verbs in past historic
- Use of the *tu* form instead of the *vous* form

- Confusion between imperfect tense, perfect tense, past historic and present tense
- Failure to agree past participle of a verb when a direct pronoun is placed before a verb
- Failure to agree past participle with the subject when the auxiliary is *être*

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question a

This was about the equality of the sexes

This question required candidates to discuss whether sexual equality was a dream or a reality. It required candidates to give an overview of what has been done and what could be done to reduce the gap between men and women in order to make gender equality a reality. The starting point for many candidates who wrote well was that the various laws some countries had already implemented to make women equal to men such as the right to vote, the right to maternity leave for both genders, the right for women to be educated and to seek employment in all sectors of our community including government. A popular example given was Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany. Everyone agreed there was still more to do in order to achieve equality, mainly in countries where women still cannot vote, receive the same education as men and are not allowed paid work but instead are required to look after the children and prepare food. Even in Western countries such as France, there are still inequalities in salary between men and women although women were doing the same jobs as men. Some good candidates developed further that laws to protect women's rights were indeed a starting point, however, what needed changing was the attitude of people who still believed in the superiority of men over women. The conclusion was rather pessimistic in so much that a lot of candidates believed that gender equality may never happen in a world where there are so many different cultures and religions. There were no off topic essays but some candidates' essays lacked examples and were rather limited in ideas.

Question b

This was about the electric car.

The best candidates identified the electric car as one solution that would reduce pollution in towns but not necessarily the only one on the basis that cars using fossil fuels are not the only cause of air pollution. Indeed, industries built near towns, air conditioning in offices also contribute to air pollution. Furthermore other solutions could also help, for example improved public transport would encourage more people to use it, imposing fines on industries which pollute. Some candidates gave a list of positive outcomes for the environment of using electric cars in town such as fewer emissions and how they were ideal for short journeys. However, some candidates wrote only about the advantages and the disadvantages of electric cars which failed to address the question which was to discuss whether or not these cars were the solution to air pollution in towns. It was also unnecessary to explain in great details the wider issue that our planet was enduring such as the greenhouse effect or the rate of loss of the ice from the caps as the focus should have been about air pollution in towns.

Question c

This was about music.

Not many candidates opted for this title. Generally the question seemed to pose problems for the candidates and a lot of them could only supply details of the different styles of music which exist or have existed and how essential music is for various groups of people, mainly youngsters. Talking about one's experience was acceptable ("it allows me to relax when I listen to some music", "I can forget all my worries..") but it was important to widen the topic and discuss how beneficial music has been in our society not only for a cultural and social purposes but also for the economy too. If music belongs to our society this is because it is a powerful tool: it enables communication and promotes the development and maintenance of individual, group, cultural and national identities. Music is therapeutic when you listen or when you play: in many Schools young children are encouraged to play an instrument or to listen to music. Furthermore many people have become famous and made money through music and the whole industry is so ingrained in our culture that it would be unimaginable to visualise a society without music.

Question d

This was about money and happiness.

This well-worn phrase “money does not make you happy” was by far the most popular choice. Most candidates chose to explain the link, if there is one, between money and happiness and debated why money does not necessarily makes you happy. Most candidates agreed that having money to be able to pay for the basic necessities such as food and a roof over their head would make people feel lucky and happy. There were too many of sentences beginning with “acheter des choses avec l’argent”. Generally examples of wealthy people who committed suicide or being diagnosed with an incurable illness was given as a proof that happiness could not be bought and once we escape the poverty trap, levels of wealth have an extremely modest impact on levels of happiness, especially in developed countries. Some candidates argued that even in poorer countries people could feel happy as they have nothing to lose. Overall the idea of being happy or searching for happiness was mainly within friends and family, having a good health and being self-content with life; all without the need of money.

Section 2

Question a

This question gave the opportunity for candidates to describe a sporting event. The question was misinterpreted by a few candidates who embarked on a long description of the rules of a competition such as the World Cup or Wimbledon which missed the point. This essay title required candidates to give a description of a sporting event using senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste and feel. Only a few candidates were able to give a description using well-developed images illuminated with appropriate details. Some good essays described a 100 metre race, a tennis match, a football match, a surf competition and a school sports day.

Question b

This title proved the most popular probably because of its nature: describe a surprise-party. However, some candidates converted the descriptive task into a narrative task. As per question a, it was essential to provide a description using senses and not telling a story about a special birthday party. Those who were more successful gave details of the room, its decorations, the smell of the food, described people’s behaviour and the atmosphere. There was a clear movement of events as the candidates looked in different directions.

Question c

This question required the candidates to incorporate the sentence “nous étions sur le point d’accomplir notre mission quand soudain...”. This time, candidates needed to narrate a story in the first person plural which most successfully achieved. However, quite a few essays started with the given sentence which may not be advisable as this sentence gave the opportunity to create suspense in the middle or towards the end of the story. Most stories were centred on espionage, terrorism and war. Some of the stories written were most engaging and effects were successfully achieved, other essays were too predictable and therefore the climax was not managed effectively. For this title candidates were required to use the past tense which was not always done consistently.

Question d

This question allowed candidates to describe either the process of them being selected to travel to the moon or their journey to the moon and this resulted in some very interesting essays. The most engaging essays were about the different stages of the mission and some described disasters occurring after the launch. They imaginably used flashbacks to explain the reason why they were sitting in a shuttle on the way to the moon: for example, they had won a prize, they had always been fascinated by space. Those who decided to focus on their selection only soon seemed to run out of steam and imagination making the story somewhat pedestrian. The use of the past tense was more effective and some candidates were able to juggle between the past historic and the pluperfect tenses. Overall this question produced some excellent stories.