

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/01

Reading

Key Messages

- **Question 1:** Candidates should use their own words to answer the questions. Lifting from the text does not show understanding and quotations should only be used as illustrations to reinforce a point that has already been made. Candidates should take note of the mark allocation for each question as this provides an indication of the degree of development that is expected.
- **Question 2:** When comparing the texts, only points that are common to both passages – albeit presented in a different way – can receive credit. Marks are also awarded for organisation and style, so planning is required to achieve best effect.
- **Language:** Candidates should allow time to ensure that basic grammatical rules (e.g. verb endings, agreements) have been applied in all their answers.

General Comments

Candidates managed their time well, with very few questions left unanswered. In **Question 2** candidates had to express a substantial number of differences and/or similarities in 250 words, so summary writing techniques were required. Candidates should remember that it is good practice to state the number of words at the end of the response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Candidates understood the text and its implications. They needed to develop their answers in line with the number of marks allocated to each individual question. They should also have noted key words at the start of each question (e.g. *Analysez, Résumez, Expliquez*) and focused the answer accordingly.

- (a) This was generally well-answered. Nearly all candidates understood that leaving his brother behind caused the author's '*remords*' so they gained at least one mark. Adding '*dans les collines*' invalidated a few answers. The second mark was more elusive: either the brother's loneliness was not mentioned or linguistic confusion made it hard to decide whose '*solitude*' they were writing about.
- (b) All candidates could cite Paul's reaction, but to receive credit they needed to mention what triggered this reaction (*la vue des pièges*). Many successfully explained what the author had to do as a consequence. Over-reliance on the wording of the text was noticeable, to the extent of keeping the first-person pronouns.
- (c) The ironic/sarcastic tone was generally correctly identified, even if the justification was not always given, in spite of the two marks allocated to this question. A few mentioned punctuation as a justification. This was valid, but insufficient.
- (d) Many scored full marks here. Those who did not do so omitted one of the '*farces*' or introduced invalidating information, especially when relating the second of Paul's misdemeanours. Passing judgement on Paul's pranks, e.g. '*les farces peuvent être considérés [sic] comme la torture et le harcèlement. Elles sont cruelles, injustes et très désagréables pour la petite sœur qui ne peut pas se défendre*' provided a very sound analysis of the situation but not an answer to the question.

- (e) Paul's fear of having poisoned his sister was often clearly expressed. For the other mark, candidates tended to use the wording of the text instead of explaining what had actually happened. For example, stating '*...pas d'une confiserie, mais d'un lapin*') did not show they had understood '*pastille de réglisse*', nor what Paul had done.
- (f) This was a more demanding question. Many candidates did not seem to know the difference between an action and a feeling, so they stated what the brothers had done without stating how it made them feel. Those who wrote that they had inflicted the same '*farce*' on their brother and sister could easily have developed this by saying it made them 'close'.
- (g) When a specific line is mentioned in a question, candidates should realise that quoting this line or answering '*c'est la référence à Shakespeare à la ligne 27 qui montre que le texte n'a pas été écrit par un enfant*' falls short of the expected answer. Many could give a suitable explanation (e.g. '*Les œuvres de Shakespeare sont bien trop difficiles pour les enfants, alors un enfant ne connaîtrait pas Shakespeare.*') or honed in on '*beaucoup plus tard*' which was equally acceptable.
- (h) Many candidates gave a perfectly valid definition of a '*jour fatal*' but omitted to go beyond the definition. They should have applied it to the specific event that happened on that day in the text.
- (i) A very successful question. Nearly all candidates were able to say that his mother's harsh words were the cause of Paul's sorrow – although a few thought the '*fessée*' to chastise him was the reason. This was another instance when candidates over-relied on the wording of the text.
- (j) As with question (f), describing 'feelings' proved challenging to most candidates. The mark scheme was flexible and allowed a number of interpretations; even so, few candidates managed to score full marks here and many scored none. They often referred to what the various characters did instead of showing how their actions were indicative of their feelings. When feelings were mentioned (*la peur, la colère, le remord, la tendresse, l'amitié...*), it was often without any justification in the form of specific examples taken from the text. A few candidates referred to stylistic techniques (e.g. *les métaphores, les hyperboles*) with suitable examples taken from the text. This was a valid interpretation of the question.

Question 2

The ability to produce a summary of the differences/similarities between two texts on the same theme in no more than 250 words requires skill and method, especially as marks are also awarded for the manner in which it is achieved (organisation and style). Candidates need to develop a technique to identify relevant details and present them in a coherent and cohesive fashion. There was evidence of planning (two columns, one each for similarities and differences) and of an awareness of the 'style and organisation' element (short list of link words that could be used to vary and enhance the comparison). Some candidates were also conscious that they had to keep to a word limit, (crossings out and numbers in the margin). This was very wise because credit cannot be given to points made outside this limit. Candidates need practice in this exercise type to ensure they do themselves justice.

Content (a) and (b)

Candidates are reminded that there 15 marks are available for this section of the test. Some of these were fairly easy to find. Comparing ages and sexes of perpetrators, victims and narrators could produce six easy marks. The motives of the perpetrators, who was punished, how and by whom, provided another four accessible points. Most candidates quoted a good number of these – some laboriously mentioning '*dans le premier texte ...mais dans le deuxième texte*' for each and every element they compared. The best answers dealt with these more obvious points elegantly and effortlessly, grouping them for better effect and using a limited number of words in the process. This left them plenty of scope to deal with the more complex points requiring lengthier explanation and/or justification. It also boosted their mark for 'Style and Organisation'.

Most candidates started with an introduction explaining the nature of the task upon which they were about to embark. This generally used up words unnecessarily. Then they dealt with differences and similarities in two separate sections. Some combined (a) and (b) to great effect, but such an approach required clear focus and organisational skills that not all candidates possessed. Candidates need not set the scene of each passage; instead they should come to the point quickly and purposefully. A short paragraph dealing with some of the more obvious differences could provide an adequate introduction, as in this example: « *Ces deux textes ont pour thème commun les farces au sein d'une même fratrie. Écrit par un adulte qui se souvient de son enfance, le premier texte décrit les tours que jouent son jeune frère à leur petite sœur, alors que le second*

texte raconte des événements récents, au cours desquels une petite fille, la narratrice, prend son frère cadet pour cible. Si le motif des méchants diffère – simple désir de s’amuser dans le premier cas contre jalousie dans l’autre – les « plaisanteries » sont tout aussi dangereuses pour les victimes qui auraient pu être respectivement empoisonnée (la petite sœur) ou noyée (Arthur). »

To improve, candidates should:

- plan and identify as many differences/similarities as possible (use highlighters, make lists)
- compare like with like (e.g. the mothers’ reactions on becoming aware of the problem, the victims’ attitudes, the culprits’ feelings)
- compare details occurring in both texts and avoid mentioning details featuring in only one of them (e.g. the father is mentioned in text 2 but not in text 1; we know the name of the little victim in text 2 but the little girl is not named in text 1)
- remain focused and avoid omitting the second half of the comparison
- select relevant information and avoid excessive reliance on the story line of the texts and describe differences/similarities at length
- refrain from stating the obvious (e.g. the texts have different titles) or the trivial (different number of paragraphs or lines in each text) and concentrate on the content of the texts.

Style and organisation

Organisation is closely linked with content. Those who followed the guidance above were likely to group and link ideas into a purposeful and fully relevant answer. Typically, they introduced several ideas in one sentence. Others were more likely to deal with ideas in a series of short sentences, often following the same pattern, so that the overall effect was somewhat repetitive and disjointed.

Style relates to the range and complexity of structures and to the breadth and appropriate use of lexis – or the lack of it. In this session, fewer candidates were at the extremes of the scale: Examiners did not read many stylish or purposeful responses, and on the other hand, neither did they read many poor responses that were difficult to read with ideas randomly presented in a basic and barely adequate language.

Accuracy (Questions 1 and 2)

Overall, the quality of the language used by candidates was better this year than in previous years. As a few corrections were in evidence, some had obviously paid heed to the advice to check spelling and grammar before the end of the examination.

More errors occurred in **Question 1** than in **Question 2**. Areas where there is scope for improvement are:

- agreement of adjectives and participles
- confusion over infinitive or –er verbs and past participles (*les frères sont reliaer...*)
- verb endings, especially third person plural of regular –er verbs
- use of pronouns – confusion over direct and indirect object pronouns (*il lui abandonne...*)
- confusion over *a* and *à*; confusion over *et*, *est* and *ai*
- phonetical spelling (*il ‘attaquine; ont vois que ce texte*).

In **Question 2**, it was pleasing to see some ambitious language that was almost free from errors.

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/02

Writing

Key Messages

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 generally accurate with a use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary, be 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). This paper generated some truly excellent work which demonstrated not only accurate and fluent linguistic production but also good understanding of the issues requested in **section 1** and maturity of thought. For **section 2** candidates who scored good or very good marks for content wrote essays featuring an exceptional description or narration which engaged the reader throughout. When less able candidates ran out of ideas they tended to resort to padding and including irrelevant ideas repetitively. Some work had a very succinct introduction and conclusion or repeated the title set in **section 1** whilst others had difficulties making their essay progress in **section 2**. There was a small proportion of seriously deficient essays let down by the lack of language control. Pertinent exemplification and illustration are to be encouraged and rewarded, however there is very little point in enumerating a list, for example in **Question 1c**, involving reality tv shows.

As far as the quality of language was concerned, the best essays combined high levels of accuracy, fluency and a wide variety of vocabulary and expressions. The majority of the work was characterised by a fair level of accuracy, a positive attempt to ensure varied vocabulary and structures and some fluent expression, despite some clumsiness and lapses in clarity of meaning. Among a number of recurrent weaknesses and linguistic errors, the following were seen:

- Anglicisms e.g. un individuel for un individu, capacité for capacité, mémoire for souvenir, record for casier (in law), achever for réussir, reflection for reflet or reflexion, un degré for un diplôme, la loi for le droit, le regardeur for le téléspectateur.
- Overuse of gens, ça, il y a.
- Omission of accents e.g. a instead of à, ou instead of où.
- Use of the wrong preposition after common verbs e.g. aider de, préférer de.
- Use of verbs such as faire or avoir when other verbs are better e.g. avoir de l'éducation (recevoir), faire un crime (commettre), faire de l'argent (gagner).
- Use plural e.g. les travaux, des profits.
- Misspelling of common words e.g. proffesseur, chaumage, la plus part
- Lapses of register e.g. truc, chose, ça ne marche pas.
- Use of à cause de instead of grâce à.
- Conjugation of first person singular in past historic tense: J'arriva for j'arrivai, j'alla for j'allai.
- Imperfect tense of faire: il fesait instead of il faisait
- Use of the *tu* form instead of the *vous* or *on* form.
- Agreement of past participle using the auxiliary *être* e.g. nous sommes arrives.
- Confusion when using imperfect tense and past historic tense.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question a

Les études académiques sont nécessaires pour réussir dans la vie. Discutez.

This question was by far the most popular and generated some very good responses. Good essays concentrated throughout on how academic study provided appropriate preparation for some careers and on how candidates would be disadvantaged if they failed to choose the right courses. However, some candidates did question the interpretation of success and whether or not there could be another way to achieve it without monetary gain, for some people success meant building a family or simply achieving a particular dream. Nevertheless the main focus of success was to have a well-paid job to buy a nice house, a nice car and although candidates could find examples of famous people having succeeded in life without having studied for very long such as Usain Bolt, Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Walt Disney and even Albert Einstein, they came to the conclusion that it was unlikely for a person to reach his goals without academic study. For instance a doctor has to study 6-7 years at the university before becoming qualified and being able to practise. Some candidates quite rightly explained that in some countries where education is not readily accessible success in life is measured differently. Success might depend on a person's social background, for example a child from a wealthy family may not need to rely on academic studies for success, and his future may already be determined by status. A few candidates' essays focused mainly on the advantages and disadvantages of academic study which lacked the right emphasis. Some also embarked on a detailed but irrelevant description of the educational system in their own country.

Question b

Les délinquants ont droit à une deuxième chance. Qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?

This question was the third most popular. Many candidates agreed that the choice of whether to give offenders a second chance should depend on the seriousness of the crime. Interesting essays focused on young offenders and petty crimes. In this case it may worsen the situation should young offenders be sent to jail as a punishment and may be a better solution to find the root cause, for instance their social background. Indeed people living in a more deprived area are more likely to commit a crime either because of frustration or because their financial resources are very limited. Some essays were very detailed, explaining how a second chance could be given, for example sparing the youngsters from prison would not be sufficient but the main objective would be to ensure that they do not relapse by giving support and setting up specialised Centres. On the other hand, delinquents who committed more serious crimes such as actual bodily harm or sexual assaults should be kept away as they represent a danger to society. Some candidates chose to develop the idea of reinstating the death penalty which was not particularly relevant to the question.

Question c

Selon vous, la télé-réalité est-elle un phénomène positif ou négatif?

This was the second most popular title. Candidates were not short of reality TV examples although these were not always used to their full potential: the question required candidates to argue about the positive versus the negative impact. It was agreed that nowadays everyone either watched or was aware of the existence of reality TV as so many programmes are broadcasted every day. Some benefits were based on the fame of individuals who could be an inspiration and motivation for youngsters for example Masterchef is a reality TV show which can encourage some people to embark on a cookery course or A la recherche de la nouvelle star might offer young singers a platform for their talent. Television has now become an entertainment source and after a long day at School or at work people are looking for an escape from stress and day-to-day worries. Therefore reality TV shows such as Koh Lanta or Secret story are seen as a cure for all social issues and provide, in a way, some benefit for the well-being of viewers. However, notwithstanding those positive aspects, reality TV has also brought some disadvantages: neglect of School work or chores, bad influence on participants, disconnect with reality in the show, the cost of the millions of calls made to the show, a detrimental effect on our society to name a few. As a conclusion some candidates were hopeful that this "reality TV show mania" was only a phase which would eventually die away.

Question d

Les aides humanitaires sont-elles suffisantes?

Not many candidates opted for this title. Those that did outlined how humanitarian aid usually responds to crises including both natural disasters and man-made disasters. Its objective is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity. Organisations such as La Croix Rouge, Médecins sans frontières, UNICEF, OXFAM and many more play a crucial role to countries hit by disasters, epidemics or conflict. Most candidates argued about the positive effects those organisations had on victims by supplying vaccinations against lethal diseases, setting up temporary accommodation and helping out rebuilding homes and supplying emergency food. Many examples described the vital role of humanitarian aid during the Syrian crisis, Nepal earthquake, Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the famine in third world countries. Humanitarian aid relies heavily on governments and on the generosity of individuals to maintain the level of aid. Candidates agreed that there was sufficient humanitarian aid in the world but the main difficulty was either obtaining enough funding and human resources or reaching the people who were mostly affected by the disaster. Overall, there were some good attempts at answering the question. Others argued that in some countries it was somehow a waste of money because of the corrupt nature of some governments.

Section 2

Question a

Décrivez l'endroit où vous vous sentez le (la) plus heureux (se).

This title was the most popular in this section. It gave the opportunity for candidates to describe any place where they felt the happiest; from being in their own bedroom at home or on a beach or out somewhere in the countryside. Some scripts gave an exceptional range of detail using all senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste and feel. Some descriptions were too focused on description of objects which lacked form and dimension. For example when describing their own bedroom, this was just an enumeration of the objects without sense of feeling and immersion. Nevertheless, a lot of scripts demonstrated an impressive attempt at engaging the reader with their own particular "paradise".

Question b

Décrivez une personne qui a influencé votre vie.

This title may have seemed too challenging for all but a few candidates who embarked on a biography of either a famous person or an influential family member. The main objective of the task was to describe not only physical appearance but also emotional connection; how that individual intersects with candidates, how candidates convey their admiration. Once again those candidates who created a vivid experience for the reader focused on all five senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste and feel.

Question c

"Soudain, j'entendis un bruit qui ne m'était pas familier." Incorporez cette phrase dans une courte histoire.

This was the second most popular title. Although there is no specific requirement about where to locate the given sentence it is advisable not to start the essay with it as this misses the opportunity to build up suspense if it is used in the middle or towards the end of the essay. Some candidates produced excellent and well-balanced storylines, a recurrent theme being alone at home at night. As the given sentence was in the past tense some candidates managed successfully to juggle between the past historic and the imperfect tenses, others were slightly inconsistent. It is pleasing to report that fewer concentrated on mundane events, however, some stories were too predictable or the climax was ineffective.

Question d

Vous venez de recevoir une médaille pour votre exploit héroïque. Écrivez le début ou une partie de l'histoire.

This was the least popular title. There was a mixture of responses: Some candidates wrote about rescuing a child or a pet from a house on fire, others about a soldier on a mission, very few chose to write about taking part in the final of a sports competition. The most engaging essays were able to use detailed descriptions of the danger and built up the tension their chosen event was creating, others were too pedestrian where the

story was related without enough sudden excitement. Essays in the past or present tense were perfectly acceptable, very good candidates who used the past tense could demonstrate their confidence in juggling between the different past tenses and gave more panache to their story.