

FIRST LANGUAGE PORTUGUESE

Paper 0504/01

Reading

Overall Comments

Performance was fair this year. Candidates generally performed much better on the first section than on the second. Strong candidates were concise and accurate in the first exercise. The Examiner noticed a series of problems in the weaker candidates. The first was spelling – candidates should be reminded that missing accents constitute a spelling mistake in Portuguese and that Portuguese words are not generally spelt with double consonants (this was a particular problem for candidates from English-speaking regions). The second was organisation – candidates should be reminded to read all the questions before beginning to write and, where appropriate, plan a response before penning a final version of their answer.

Individual Questions

Question 1

Overall candidates performed strongly in this question. The main issues pertaining to individual elements of this question are as follows:

- (a) Almost always correctly answered.
- (b) The weakest candidates identified acid rain as a means employed by developed countries to preserve forested areas. Candidates are reminded to read the question carefully and to think over their answers before concluding the exam.
- (c) The weakest candidates gave the information appropriate for **Question 1(d)**. Some candidates then answered section **Question 1(d)** correctly without adjusting their response to **Question (c)**. Candidates are reminded that each question in this section pertains to a particular segment of the text and that no two questions require the same information.
- (d) Almost always answered correctly. Some of the weakest candidates did not include all three elements required in their response. Candidates are reminded to attend to the number of marks available for each answer as a guide to their responses. A good rule of thumb is that, depending on the nature of the question, a separate noun, clause or sentence is needed to earn each mark available.
- (e) Weaker candidates confused the description of the rainforest with the argument the text was conveying concerning the importance to the environment of wooded areas. Again candidates are reminded to read the questions with care before answering. Reading the whole text and identifying which section is appropriate to which answer before writing is one way of avoiding this sort of mishap.
- (f) Generally well answered. The weakest candidates again gave illogical answers. Candidates are reminded that five marks are available for the quality of their language and that this should encourage them to re-phrase the precise wording used in the source texts. This operation could well help avoid mistakes caused by the unthinking copying of the source texts.
- (g) Generally well answered. The weakest candidates confused the felling of trees with the hunting of animals. Candidates are reminded that in no case will these questions require information from outside the source text.
- (h) Though this question was well handled on the whole, the weakest candidates did not give enough information to earn the totality of the marks available. Candidates are reminded that questions

worth more than one mark will almost always require more than a one sentence response to earn all the marks available,

Question 2

Performance was generally much weaker in **Question 2**. The best candidates paid close attention to the texts, were succinct in their writing styles and grouped their answers so as to make the most efficient use of the word limit permitted, writing answers which appropriately drew points of comparison and contrast between the two situations described in the source texts. The most common problems displayed by the weaker candidates were as follows:

- Some answers providing excessive personal opinion. Although some general reflection was needed to frame the response, and contributed to the points earned for language and organisation, some obviously capable candidates wrote excessively about their own ideas concerning the issues discussed in the texts and missed out on the bulk of the marks available. Candidates are reminded that the reading exam is primarily a test of their comprehension of written texts.
- The weakest candidates gave repetitive responses, often containing tautological generalisations that occupied a lot of space, but never attained a high degree of relevance. Candidates are reminded that in no case is the same information worth two points, even if phrased differently.
- The weakest candidates provided badly organised answers. Candidates are reminded that a composition should include some sort of introduction and conclusion and that bullet points constitute an inappropriate style.

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Paper 0504/02

Writing

General comments

The overall mark for this component was 50, for two compositions. The first part of the possible mark for each composition was 12, for style and accuracy. The second part for each compositions was out of a maximum of 13, for content and structure. This year there was a range of marks awarded. A number of candidates achieved higher marks (40 to 48). A majority achieved marks in the mid-range (30 – 40), and a few at the lower end of the scale. Those who received marks in the higher range demonstrated fluency and skills in the use of well-structured sentences. The resultant writing was stylistically ambitious, with complex sentences. Paragraphs were linked and well planned. There was a strong sense of audience, especially in the descriptive and the discursive passages, creating a sense of expectation and holding the reader's attention. The majority observed the stated word limit. However, some candidates exceeded the limit of 500 words. Candidates should be reminded that going beyond this does not improve the quality of the work presented and may indeed increase the likelihood of errors occurring.

Some candidates demonstrated knowledge of a broad vocabulary and fluency of expression. Unfortunately not all candidates matched this knowledge with an ability to develop their ideas.

More care should be taken in reading and understanding the questions. For example, one candidate confused the word *espacial* – failing to see that this meant outer space, so he wrote about the spatial dimension here on earth. Sometimes candidates failed to understand that the questions were open-ended with the need to articulate the reasons for the answers they gave.

Once again, it was very good to see candidates expressing opinions from the perspective of personal experience.

It is best to avoid colloquial terms and slang, such as *tava*, *tô* and *a gente*. The over-use of the word *coisa* should be avoided. It is a common word and there are circumstances in which it would be appropriate. But too often it seemed to be used to mask limitations in vocabulary.

Yet again, there were repeated examples of difficulties with spelling and grammar, such as: *concenquencia*, *cientista*, *anxiosa*, *difrença*, *tornasse*. There were examples of difficulties in the use of the subjunctive: *que os jovens sabem*; and difficulties with the future tense: *tornará-se* and *fizerão*. The position of pronouns posed problems: *carregar ela*, *lhe apresentar*, *se sentir*. There were cases of starting a sentence and sometimes even a paragraph with a pronoun and many others of misplaced pronouns: *me lembro*, *tem tornado-se*, *se sentir*, *se divertir*, *nos dando*. In addition there was some confusion between *a*, *à* and *há*. Sadly there were cases of poor presentation and bad hand writing which make the task of the Examiner more difficult than it should be.

One particular problem this year was the failure of some Centres to attach the individual papers together in accordance with the instructions provided.

It was encouraging to see that some Centres had prepared their candidates very well for this component, resulting in well prepared and clearly presented answers. It was also heartening to see a large proportion of candidates ending their compositions with clear conclusions.