

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/01
Speaking

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion

General comments

Assessment

The exam consists of two parts: Part 1 – Discussion of article; Part 2 – Prepared Topic Discussion.

Part 1 and Part 2 can also be taken in the reverse order, although candidates tend to prefer to start with the discussion of the article that they prepared just before the exam.

The discussion of the article (Part 1) represents a freer and more challenging exercise than Part 2. Candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to engage in a fairly unpredictable discussion, based initially on an article which candidates read before the exam, then moving on to explore other aspects of the general theme.

Candidates are generally able to maintain their level of performance over the entire exam. Performances for the two parts of the exam were well balanced, with only a marginally higher mean mark for language in Part 2, as could be expected.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Candidates could choose a stimulus card from four of the following, picked at random by the examiner:

- 1 *I giornali di carta sono destinati a scomparire?* (Topic area: The media)
- 2 *Cresce l'esercito dei senzatetto* (Topic area: Contemporary aspects of the country)
- 3 *Meglio in treno* (Topic area: Travel and tourism)
- 4 *Inquinamento estetico - Le torri eoliche minacciano il turismo in Italia* (Topic area: Environment)
- 5 *Una nuova patologia alimentare: la 'bigorexia', cioè mangiare per diventare più grossi e muscolosi* (Topic area: Health and fitness)
- 6 *Studiare a distanza* (Topic area: Education)

Comprehension and Discussion

Candidates are not required to understand the article in detail, but only well enough to be able to engage in discussion on the issues raised. On the whole, candidates were able to outline the main theme of the article, successfully discuss the issues it raised and broaden the conversation to the general theme.

Card 6 was the most popular choice although it sometimes led to slightly pedestrian discussions of why it was fun to go to university. However, the successive discussion on the general theme of education was often very interesting.

Card 4 was also popular, possibly because the topic area is generally well covered. For Card 3 the summaries tended to be rather dull and narrative, with little awareness of the fact that the article was a promotion of trains. With card 5, those candidates who attempted to get to grips with the mentality of the disorder tended to fare well.

Part 2

Literary texts or films are still the most popular choice, each year with a broader range of titles. It is generally a good choice as it provides scope for analysis, evaluation and opinion and allows candidates to demonstrate their full potential. Any topics lending themselves to analysis, evaluation and opinion represents a good choice. Some topics, although well researched, may remain rather dry and unproductive in discussion unless opinions and points of views are offered. All the chosen topics met the requirement of being related to the history, current affairs or culture of an area of the world where Italian is spoken.

All candidates showed genuine interest in their topic and pleasure in discussing it. Presentations were generally well timed and well articulated, leading naturally to discussion. Most candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and to express their opinions in a naturally flowing conversation with the examiner.

Language (range and accuracy)

In terms of language, there was a wide range of competence. Most candidates were able to use complex structures and a good range of pertinent vocabulary. Accuracy was generally well controlled. As could be expected, scores for language were slightly higher for Part 2, but only marginally so. Even at this level, the most common mistakes remain the use of prepositions, lack of control over agreements, gender and occasionally over verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation

Candidates appeared to master the sounds of Italian, in spite of the occasional misplaced stress and mispronunciation of double consonant or vowel sounds.

Conclusion

Most candidates appeared to have fully understood the requirements of this unit, were well prepared for it and performed to the best of their abilities.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

<p>Paper 9783/02 Reading and Listening</p>
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Key messages

- Reading section: candidates are required to target pieces of information in the text, and tailor an answer to the questions asked, using a degree of inference and justification or providing multiple points where necessary.
- Success in the translation question is dependent on being as directly faithful as possible to the original, and on the ability to identify and re-use key vocabulary items that have been presented elsewhere in the paper.
- Listening section: candidates needed to be able to follow information sequentially, and use the material heard selectively in order to answer the questions. Strong candidates gave succinct answers and ensured that their answers were tailored directly to the question asked.
- In the summary question, high-scoring candidates kept to the word count and responded directly to the bullet points, correctly identifying the most salient points of the passage.

General comments

On the whole, candidates performed well on this paper. However, use of prepositions and agreements continue to present variably on the translation question, and there are still some candidates who lose credit for not sticking to the word limit in the summary exercise.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Testo di lettura 1

Question 8

Strong candidates were able to convey what the *positive* note of the message for tourism was; others simply stated facts to do with leaning / lack of and omitted to talk about the safety of the same.

Testo di lettura 2

Question 11

It was necessary to think about the representation of the *cameras*, not of the city as a whole.

Question 16

Strong candidates identified that the content of phase two was as yet unknown, or simply limited themselves correctly to stating that there would be a second phase; weaker candidates sometimes invalidated their answer by extrapolating erroneously as to the content of phase two (putting words into Capitani's mouth). This is to be avoided.

Testo di lettura 3

As stated in the introductory comments, correct use of prepositions is of great importance for this exercise. The 'se' clause and the subjunctive were for the most part handled well. Vocabulary for 'change in quantity' (increase / decrease) is still a point of weakness for some candidates.

Part 2

Brano d'ascolto 1

Question 20

Strong candidates were able to distinguish between the actual waiters and taxi drivers who had helped, and the fictitious actors etc. that they had spread rumours about.

Brano d'ascolto 2

Question 27

Strong candidates were able to pinpoint that what gave Scarpa credibility were his years of experience or the fact that the centre was the most active; not that he simply worked there.

Question 28

Candidates must beware of giving answers that simply repeat the question: a significant minority answered by saying that e-cigarettes were 20 times less harmful than traditional ones, but did not explain the reasons as required by the question.

Brano d'ascolto 3

On the whole well-handled, although as noted above candidates must be rigorous about respecting the word count. Candidates are advised to think carefully about the sense of what they have written in English once they have absorbed the sense of what they have heard in Italian: 'unprofessional actors' are not the same thing as 'non-professional / amateur' ones for example.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

<p>Paper 9783/03 Writing and Usage</p>
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Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and a wide range of lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Part I – Discursive Essay

The best essays here were coherently argued, with points relevantly illustrated, through use of a range of complex structures and pertinent vocabulary. Most candidates kept a good focus on the question and arrived at a conclusion. Candidates should be reminded that, whilst it is possible, it is not necessary to situate their discussion in an Italian context (see page 14 of syllabus). Sometimes the attempt to draw examples from what candidates know about the Italian-speaking world was detrimental as these were not particularly pertinent to the point they were trying to illustrate. Weaker answers suffered from lack of exemplification and from repetition of terms used in the title without definition or use of appropriate lexis to demonstrate understanding. Once again there was a little inconsistency in candidates' grasp of grammar even at the top end of the ability range, for example the impersonal verb *bisognare* was repeatedly misused by many candidates. It remains important to urge candidates to check their work carefully before handing it in.

Question 1

- (a) Candidates who chose this question claimed that young people had been left to sort out the problems created by their parents' generation and concluded that optimism was a better approach than pessimism. It was often not made clear **how** optimism might help. Candidates might have been advised to define their understanding of the noun *dovere* in the title. They could then have taken issue with it. Optimism per se can lead to complacency and lack of action. A healthy dose of realism/pessimism/cynicism might incite young people to act for a better future by becoming socially and politically engaged.
- (b) This was a fairly popular choice of question but was not generally well answered. There was a wide range of understanding as to what a religious school might be. It would have been helpful perhaps to ground the discussion in one particular society. Some candidates offered a defence or a criticism of Islamic schools, which tended to be rather vague, with only few addressing the topical issue of curriculum control. Others mistakenly assumed that all schools in Italy and France were religious schools of Catholic denomination. Most candidates argued that religion should be taught in school but should embrace all faiths in preparation for the young person's life in a multicultural society. Many key arguments were missed.

- (c) This was a popular choice of essay. Most candidates alluded to the possibilities offered by music to provide young people not just with entertainment, but with a means of escape from the stresses of everyday life. Better answers talked about the sense of identity and means of self-expression that music can provide. Some answers were somewhat superficial, focusing on how technology enables young people to listen to music continually and cheaply, without really addressing why music has importance. There was a surprising lack of music-related vocabulary in many essays. Interestingly no candidate considered that music might be of equal importance to other generations!
- (d) Many candidates chose this essay title, showed strong personal engagement with the question and were passionate about the importance of making culture accessible to all. Some candidates discussed the financial implications of a policy of free admission to museums, whilst others rather glossed over how such a policy could be financed. Occasionally the clarity of discussion was blurred by candidates who referred both to Italy and the UK, where institutions and policies are quite different.
- (e) This was another popular essay which, to be answered successfully, required more than a superficial analysis. Whilst many candidates did concede that wealth and the propensity for good were two distinct things, too few discussed a broader or relative interpretation of the word *ricchi* and similarly too few considered the reverse of the statement. Most were able to cite examples of rich philanthropists, such as Bill Gates. Several candidates seemed to argue that in order to build up wealth people might have to be less than nice.

Part II – Use of Italian

There were some very good performances in exercises 1 and 2, with many candidates showing an excellent knowledge of some of the most advanced grammatical structures, as well as a very pleasing familiarity with irregular verbs. These are quite challenging exercises, and it was therefore inevitable that towards the bottom of the ability range candidates would find occasionally struggle to come up with the correct answers. The placement of the pronoun *ci* in question 8 puzzled many candidates and it was a shame that several candidates, having identified the need for a noun in 9, made a lexical error choosing the incorrect *letteratura* rather than the correct *lettura*. Exercise 3 seemed to be the less challenging one where even less advanced candidates managed to score a number of marks.

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Paper 9783/04
Topics and Texts

Key messages

To score well in this paper candidates should read the questions carefully and give due consideration to both parts of a two-part question. In addition, candidates should spend time planning which extracts from the books and films best exemplify their response to the question rather than use examples they have prepared which might have a more tenuous link. Quotation for its own sake is not rewarded but accurately reproduced citations can be used effectively if they clearly illustrate a point.

General comments

Candidates answered on four topics – *La Malavita in Italia*, *Il Cinema di Nanni Moretti*, *L'immigrazione* and *L'epoca fascista*. Familiarity with the plots and main themes of texts and films was generally good. Less successful answers were hindered either by lack of clarity due to a less confident command of the language or by an approach which was more descriptive than analytical. Candidates who referred in a detailed and balanced way to two sources generally did better than those who referred to all three in a more superficial manner.

Candidates answered on four texts – *Dante*, *Sciascia*, *Tomasi di Lampedusa* and *Calvino*. Candidates are advised to spend time planning their essays and it is particularly important to define any specific terms given in the question to illustrate their personal understanding of them. Thereafter they should try to organise material in a clear, coherent manner which links directly to the question. Some students might benefit from writing out the question in their answer booklets in order to refer to it while preparing their plan as they are can't be given full credit for sometimes extensive knowledge of the text without an adequate framework.

Comments on specific questions

Part I

Question 1

- (a) Candidates appeared to have engaged well with the text and the film *Romanzo Criminale* and had a good knowledge of the content and context. Several candidates appeared to misunderstand the question and did not refer to the notion of *la malavita*, rather to individual *malviventi*. They thus didn't talk about the importance of the complex system of relationships in Italian society which is essential to the existence and growth of organised crime. Those that did mention the importance of *omertà*, for example, sometimes omitted to define it or exemplify how it works. Many candidates omitted to address the part of the question relating to the *crescita*, the growth of organised crime, in Italy. Simple techniques such as highlighting any key words in the question might help avoid such omissions.
- (b) More successful answers were able to address both parts of the question. In some cases it was argued rightly that the gang in *Romanzo Criminale* operated as a family unit but it could have been pointed out that this dynamic changes over time. Most candidates were able to cite Freddo's revenge for his younger sibling's death as an instance of how family relationships influence behaviour. In *A ciascuno il suo* family is clearly central to the crime and we see the powerful interlinking of *omertà* and *famiglia* when the family closes ranks and refuses to cooperate with the investigation.

Question 2

- (a) All candidates who chose this topic chose this question. There were a variety of answers but virtually all concluded that Moretti's view of Italian life was pessimistic, citing Moretti's criticism of contemporary film and television (*Caro Diario – In Vespa and Il Caimano*), the medical profession (*Caro Diario – Medici*) and failed marriage (*Il Caimano*) or irresponsible parenting (*Caro Diario – Isole*). Candidates should be careful not to ascribe a view to Moretti without supporting evidence, for example several candidates alluded to Moretti's pessimistic view of the decline of religion in Italian society but did not provide any evidence for such. Candidates could have balanced this pessimistic view with examples of optimism found in the films, such as the portrayal of the possibility of happy family life in *La Stanza del figlio* or the courage of individuals such as Bonomo in *Il Caimano* (and perhaps therefore Moretti) to act to expose evil.

Question 3

- (b) Answer to this question tended to show fairly limited knowledge of the text, and a rather restricted understanding of the film *Una giornata particolare*. Rather than describe the methods by which fascism was imposed on ordinary people and how the people who benefitted from it did so, some candidates focused on how individuals benefitted: Emanuele could mistreat his wife without risking divorce; Antonietta benefitted because looking at photos of Mussolini made her happy. The plight of Gabriele was ignored. The question carries the implication that some people did not benefit and some discussion of the abuse of the peasants in *Fontamara* was present though with little analysis and there were significant omissions.

Question 4

- (a) *L'immigrazione* was a popular choice and all candidates chose question (a). Many candidates had done an admirable job of learning some key statistics from *Blacks Out*, which they could use to support their arguments. Some answers pointed to the fact that many immigrants are 'welcomed' in order to be exploited by unscrupulous gang masters though there was little discussion of what would happen in the absence of such immigrants. In general the element of the question '*diversa da prima*' was ignored which perhaps limited the insight of answers. Whilst racism is clearly a factor to discuss with respect to Italians' welcoming attitude, some candidates appeared to confuse racism with exploitation. There was the opportunity for abundant exemplification from the text *Blacks Out* which candidates used with a varying degree of success. Candidates appeared to have studied both *Terraferma* and *Terra di Mezzo* and both provided ample material for an answer to this question. Good answers pointed out that the very title of *Terra di Mezzo* suggests that immigrants are far from feeling fully welcomed or integrated into Italian society. Candidates pointed out that it is precisely the differing views of Filippo and Ernesto in *Terraferma* which is addressed by this question. Wisely, candidates discussed one or other film along with the text, not both. Weaker answers were overly descriptive and narrative and did not provide any analysis.

Part II

Question 6

- (a) Candidates who chose this question were able to correctly identify the passage as early in Canto IV, the entry into Limbo and that the souls' 'sin' was that of not being baptised. Some discussion of Virgil's personal painful reaction was given and candidates alluded to the dual meaning of *pietà*. That said, there was a lack of attention paid to the language of the extract. Candidates should be discouraged from inserting words from the poem into an English language sentence as this does not demonstrate understanding, e.g. "He explains that souls are not 'peccaro' but their merits are 'non basta' because they were not 'battesmo'." The commentary question requires candidates to pick out detail from the passage in front of them and their answers should not be over-general or refer extensively to other cantos the candidates may prefer. This does not mean, however, that candidates should ignore the significance of the passage within the work as a whole, in fact they are specifically asked to consider the context. This was a crucial omission in this case as it is because of Virgil's presence in Limbo that he is unable to guide Dante beyond *Inferno* and an other guide will be necessary.

- (b) This was the most popular question for candidates and elicited a wide range of responses. Whilst most candidates used the term *contrapasso*, few gave a detailed definition of the term or explained Dante's reasoning behind this method of punishment. Answers tended to be very narrative and descriptive with little analysis. Most candidates offered *Ciacco* and *Niccolo VII* as examples of sinners but some seemed to list as many as they could think of without much explanation. Few, if any, candidates proffered examples of punishments not fitting crimes. Candidates would benefit from demonstrating an understanding the topography of *Inferno* and the categorisation of sins as this might help structure their answers.
- (c) Candidates attempting this answer had good knowledge of and enthusiasm for the poem. Some of the responses were unfortunately rather uneven e.g. the discussion of form launched into a praise of the *terza rima* with no explanation of how this works. It might have been wise to begin this answer with a description of the overall form of the *Inferno* before focusing on the detail of the rhyming scheme. Candidates fared better in the observation that Dante's use of metaphor and simile helped describe the indescribable and made other valid points about language and contemporary versus current readers. Candidates are reminded of the importance of planning a structured response.

Question 8

No candidates attempted the commentary with the majority opting for question 8b.

- (b) This question received a variety of answers. Better answers took issue with the words 'children's fable' in the question and argued convincingly that *Il visconte dimezzato* was not appropriate for children but many candidates argued that it was a book for children with a deeper message for adults if one were to read between the lines, thereby making no reference to the many brutal images present in the text. Good answers were able to discuss the fable elements (for example suspension of disbelief, stereotypical characters and themes, happy ending etc.) and analyse how and why Calvino had used them. Most answers developed the theme of good versus evil as embodied in the split of Medardo, with varying degrees of success, some delving into Freud and making reference to works such as *Jekyll and Hyde*, if rather fleetingly. A few answers alluded to the historical context in which Calvino wrote the book and offered suggestions as to his purpose in criticising certain extreme political doctrines.
- (c) Some of the candidates who attempted this question demonstrated a rather patchy knowledge of the text. It would have helped perhaps to define what candidates understood by 'reluctant hero' before embarking on this essay. Most of Dr Trelawney's positive attributes and interests were not mentioned, and some of the candidate spent some time justifying the lepers' better qualification as reluctant heroes.

Question 12

- (b) Candidates would be advised with this type of question to imagine whose point of view is indicated in the quotation. This will perhaps clarify a line of approach. Clearly here the quotation can be split into its two parts for a fruitful discussion and candidates may agree with only one or other part of the quotation. Unfortunately some candidates did not do this and got rather tied in knots trying to argue for and against the whole statement. Some candidates had a lot to communicate about the content of the book but were not able to marshal their information in a way that clearly answered the question, for example mentioning the word *omertà* without explaining how it manifests itself. It was important to mention the brick wall that Bellodi encountered by those Mafiosi who denied that the mafia even existed.

Question 13

- (a) Some of candidate who answered this commentary question appeared to be struggling to understand what such an answer is expected to contain. It is important that candidates explain the context from which the passage is drawn and refer in detail to elements of style, including language, and content. Candidates did identify that Don Ciccio has the confidence of the Prince, who uses him as a sounding-board and that the topic was the inevitable rise of the middle-class don Calogero. Nonetheless don Ciccio's humorous style of speech and use of hyperbole in his character assassination of don Colegero were important to mention. There was much content upon which to comment in the passage.

- (b) This was the most popular question. Candidates differed in their opinion of which generation was more sympathetically portrayed and provided a variety of justifications. Some candidates specifically referred to the first part of the question, i.e. the relationship between the generations, and made some good points although these tended to be rather general in nature and there was no specific explication or quotation from the text. Some candidates embarked on rather confused discussions about class and appeared to want to reinterpret the question to fit a prepared answer about individual characters. This should be avoided. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and treat it on its own terms.