

FRENCH

Paper 8670/04

Texts

General Comments

Centres are reminded that candidates should answer one question from **Section 1**, one from **Section 2** and one other. For every question, **either (a) or (b)** is chosen. In the **(a)** questions in **Section 1**, all three parts, **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)** should be completed, and it is not necessary to copy or quote long sections of the passage. Please note from the mark scheme that if the candidate uses the set passage 'as a springboard for storytelling' then this can only be awarded 10-11 marks. If they 'can extract one or two relevant points from a set passage' then this qualifies for 12-13 marks.

There was evidence that past papers had been used by candidates in preparation for sitting this paper. While this can be good practice, candidates should beware that it is not relevant or appropriate to emphasise the same themes as previous years when the questions are different. Thus credit could not be given for knowledge, which was detailed but not used relevantly, of other recent extracts in **Section 1 Question (a)**.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

Maupassant: *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre*

- (a)** Candidates coped well with **Question 1(a)**. They understood well that after a period of successful retaliation against the occupying Prussian forces, *le père Milon* sustained an injury and was found out. During questioning by the Prussians, he explained at the beginning of the extract that he had killed eight Prussians in return for his father's death and another eight in revenge for his son. Not all candidates showed that they understood the patois ('fieu' was not always identified as 'fils' and was sometimes rendered 'frère'), or included that *le père Milon* explained that he had no quarrel with the Prussians, people he did not even know, but he objected to their presence on his home territory, which they were commanding as though it were their own, which was a contributing factor for his actions. In part **(ii)**, the Prussians' attitude in the middle of the extract was better understood than that at the end, and opportunities to contrast the two were rarely taken. By discussing quietly among themselves for a long time, their indecision was made manifest. A captain empathetically defended Milon and the colonel spoke in low tones so as not to be heard except by Milon as he tried to set out a way in which the patriot could be spared. After Milon spat in his face twice, a scene of confusion followed, with all the officers shouting orders at the same time. Candidates who did not understand about the spitting found it impossible to explain or justify the subsequent violent reaction of the soldiers, and there was a tendency for candidates not to restrict their answers to the extract, as requested in the question, but to refer to the rest of the story and to other *contes* in their answers. *Le père Milon* had no intention of striking a deal with the Prussians. Patriotism and vengeance had been more important to him than his own life. He made it clear that he did not repent of his action, and crossed his arms defiantly '*dans une pose d'humble héros*'. The first part of **(iii)** was usually quite well answered provided that the candidate did not suggest that Milon was ready to die because he had achieved his aim. Candidates should also have given their opinion of Milon's conduct in the second half of the extract, including his spitting and finally death, smiling at his son and family. Many did not, and of those who did, some did not understand that this was the simple peasant's only way of expressing the vehemence of his utter contempt, a few finding it inappropriate, if not disgusting.
- (b)** This was the more popular of the two questions on this book. The best answers were quite well balanced and covered a wide range of texts. Some candidates argued that the characters in *Boule de Suif*, despite their initial outrage at the proposition made to *Boule de Suif*, ultimately pursued

self-interest, and that this supported the statement in the question. The most discerning candidates, however, noted Rachel's success in *Mademoiselle Fifi* and the unwavering heroism of the *Deux Amis*, *Le Père Milon* and *La Mère Sauvage*, even though it cost all of them their lives. In *Le Lit 29*, Irma suffered a slower, even more painful death, but had the satisfaction of knowing the damage she had inflicted on Prussian soldiers. The weakest responses saw nothing positive on either the Prussian or French side in any of the stories, or else contained much generalisation about violent, cruel assassins (the Prussians) oppressing the defenceless, innocent people (the French). One or two answers simply provided diatribes against war, with no reference or visible relevance to question or text.

Question 2

Anouilh: *Antigone*

- (a) This was the more popular of the two questions on this new play to the paper this session. The best answers to part (i) pointed out Antigone's need to explain and justify her actions and decisions as she anticipated her imminent death as punishment for having tried to bury her brother, as well as her wish to bid a final farewell to Hémon. Answers to part (ii) were very mixed. A few candidates saw the guard's role in enabling Antigone to express her true feelings of fear, doubt and regret. He had initially been reluctant to transcribe the letter as Antigone dictated it, but agreed in return for Antigone's gold ring. Several of the more perceptive responses understood the comic touches added by the guard's actions and the stage directions: the guard's 'grosse voix', repetition, 'peine', protestations, sucking the pencil lead and double checking, all lightened the tension of the scene. Answers to part (iii) were generally fair. Antigone rejected life as desperately meaningless and insisted that she wanted to die, and to do so alone (when her sister, Ismène, declared her desire to die with her). *Le Chœur*, at the end of the play, agreed with her sentiments in the final line of this extract, however, she sought to uphold individual freedom against infringement to perform a personal obligation (to bury her brother) so had reason to win the reader's support and have her claim 'Sans la petite Antigone, vous auriez tous été bien tranquilles' rejected.
- (b) It was important for candidates to focus on 'ce que dit le Chœur au sujet de la tragédie', and unfortunately some offered more general material on what *le Chœur* said, while others also put great emphasis on *Le Prologue*. *Le Chœur* first entered as Créon was mystified about the 'enfant' who had attempted to bury Polynice. That was a decisive moment, and *Le Chœur* marked a turning point in the action: 'Cela n'a plus qu'à se dérouler tout seul. C'est cela qui est commode dans la tragédie. On donne le petit coup de pouce pour que cela démarre...'. Just as *Le Prologue* had outlined what would happen at the outset, *Le Chœur* helped to understand the play in as much as it gave certainty about the dreadful outcome and did not attempt to escape it. 'La mort, la trahison, le désespoir sont là, tout prêts...' Through *Le Chœur*, Anouilh defined tragedy: 'C'est propre, la tragédie. C'est reposant, c'est sûr... Dans la tragédie on est tranquille... parce qu'on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir...' and contrasted, 'Dans le drame... On aurait peut-être pu se sauver'. Antigone, however, would not lie about trying to bury Polynice, nor attempt to escape, nor betray fear in the face of death.

Question 3

Molière: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

- (a) There were a few very capable responses to **Question 3(a)** which did not succumb to the temptation to launch into narrative, give too much explanatory detail or become engrossed in the plot to the detriment of the question. Candidates pointed out that M. Jourdain's first reply in the passage was rude but typical of the way in which M. Jourdain spoke to his wife among others. His accusation of 'extravagances' was ironic given his own actions, as was his allegation that Mme Jourdain could not be made 'raisonnable'. There were a wide range of answers to (ii) as some candidates appeared not to understand that the word 'truchement' or interpreter referred to Covielle, Cleonte's valet, in disguise. Cleonte, having been refused Lucile in III, xii for not being a Gentilhomme (by M. Jourdain), reappeared in the guise of 'le fils du Grand Turc... un Seigneur d'importance'. Covielle, in complementary disguise, prepared the way for Cleonte's arrival, 'teaching' some of their 'language' (really eastern sounding gobbledegook). In this scene, M. Jourdain invited his wife to greet 'le fils du Grand Turc' using the *truchement*. Shortly after, Covielle was able privately to reveal to her his true identity and Cleonte's, completing the circle of people whose understanding was needed. Some responses merely explained the purpose of the masquerade, occasionally without reference to Covielle or his specific role. Others seemed to think

it referred to “trickery”, and this often led to narrative about the gullibility of Monsieur Jourdain and those who took advantage of this weakness. M. Jourdain had revealed in III, vi that he would arrange for his wife to have dinner with her sister so that Dorante could introduce Dorimène to him ‘en pleine liberté’. Mme Jourdain discovered his plan when she returned in IV, ii and was neither pleased with Dorante and Dorimène’s part in the plot nor impressed at their social standing. This was the next time that she encountered them, and her continuing annoyance caused her to speak to them this way. Explanations of her attitude to Dorante were fairly good. Much less detail was given in the case of Dorimène.

- (b) As for **Question (a)**, there were occasional good and relevant responses. Candidates needed to identify Nicole and Covielle as the main ‘domestiques’ and to comment on their contribution to the comedy and plot, whether in simple ways such as Nicole’s giggling, or Covielle and Cleonte’s discussion in III, ix trying to find fault with Lucile, the symmetry in III, x with Nicole and Lucile, too, or Covielle’s role in the Turkish disguise. There was also mention of the *Laquais*, whom M. Jourdain used amusingly to show his ‘authority’ in I, ii.

Question 4

Devi: *Le Voile de Draupadi*

- (a) Fewer candidates answered on this text than on other texts. Of the existing answers some were admirably detailed, identifying Faisal as a ‘vendeur de drogue et meurtrier’ who managed to live in opulence ‘par la grâce d’Allah et l’intelligence de (Dev)’. The case Dev won for him, ‘son premier cas d’Assises’, was outlined in chapter IV and had made Dev ‘cet homme obsédé’. Faisal’s various illegal pursuits were no secret, but ‘de petites enveloppes bien garnies’ to police, lawyers, public and government officials assured that he remained “immune” to the justice system. His fatal blow to his octogenarian father-in-law almost brought his downfall had it not been for Dev’s having him acquitted by compromising justice. Anjali says that through this, she was ‘abandonnée en route’. Dev, Anjali and ‘plusieurs personnalités’ whom Dev would benefit from meeting, are invited to dinner with Faisal and, although Anjali had tried to excuse herself and to encourage Dev to attend alone, he had insisted that she join him, for herself (‘cela te distraira’), and for his sake – which was why she went. Candidates could explain to varying degrees that Anjali was distracted because of her son’s illness, resentful of the ease with which her husband could set that aside and attend a dinner with business associates and disturbed by images in her mind of suffering, particularly that inflicted by Faisal. She had little respect for the host, lost patience and wanted to leave, thinking, ‘J’en ai assez...de singer la civilisation occidentale comme de bons petits colonisés que nous sommes’. It is finally an Urdu poem that Faisal sings to Anjali, despite her request to be spared Urdu poetry (to which his response is, ‘Oui, oui, bien sûr, je comprends, fait-il, me serrant la main avec une déplaisante insistance’) that upset Anjali and caused her to want to leave before the end of the meal. The other guests were surprised, Dev was angry and offered an apology for Anjali, which she resisted. Candidates understood clearly the main events of the book, and knew that relations between Anjali and Dev had become strained during Wynn’s illness. Anjali had been preoccupied about their son and privately critical of Dev’s ability to resume his daily work. A breach had been forming and was now widening.
- (b) There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Section 2

Question 5

Ionesco: *Le Roi se meurt*

- (a) At the outset, the guard presented each character and went on to comment on the action, including announcing the king’s death too soon. Juliette brought the level of conversation down from its elevated heights when she declared ‘C’est quand même pompeux’ and contributed to the comedy, ‘apparaissant puis disparaissant tandis que le Roi se relève’ in the ‘scène... jouée en guignol tragique’. In the main, the responses to this question were fairly short and lacked detail. While candidates were quick to emphasise the importance of these two roles, few could satisfactorily explain why, beyond commenting on incongruity and comedy.

- (b) This was by far the more popular of the two questions and the better answered overall. Generally candidates were able to identify the stages leading up to the King's acceptance of the inevitable and the roles played in his decline by Marguerite and Marie. A few answers also discussed the symbolism and parallelism between the disintegration of the palace, the King's waning authority, the gradual disappearance of the characters and Bérenger's deteriorating physical condition. The question invited the candidate to give their opinion of the way in which Bérenger accepted death and a few candidates also addressed this element of the question.

Question 6

Colette: *Le Blé en herbe*

- (a) There were more answers to this question than to (b), and generally candidates showed fair understanding of the text. Having been family friends since birth, Phil and Vinca were now passing through adolescence, and the simplicity of their past trust of each other had been replaced with the complexity of redefining their positions in relation to each other. Their confidence in themselves was also shaken at this period of their lives and both experienced sadness during their transition from childhood to adulthood. Vinca had good reason to suspect Phil when she saw him sloping off to Mme Dalleray at night. And, although Phil finally got what he thought he wanted from Vinca, he still found himself struggling with sadness. Vinca, by contrast, made that transition more cheerfully than Phil, so that suspicion and sadness were not the overriding feelings at the end of the book. The weakest answers concentrated on the Phil/Mme Dalleray episode and were narrative. There were some sensitive answers, but those who managed to analyse competently often overlooked the necessity of justifying their assertions with solid detail from the text.
- (b) Phil and Vinca are entering the phase of 'l'âge adulte' as yet unknown to them, and which is bringing with it different desires and expectations in themselves and of each other. That these sentiments are experienced in 'une ambiance de mystère et d'interdit' is part of the 'unity' of the content and form of the story. The question required understanding not only of the characters and the action, but also of ways in which Colette provided a backdrop of 'mystère' and 'interdit'. Only a few candidates were able to pursue this aspect beyond the occasional comment, usually in connection with the atmosphere in scenes between Phil and Mme Dalleray.

Question 7

Lainé: *La Dentellière*

- (a) General understanding of Pomme's 'absence' and inability to communicate was evident in candidate's responses.
- (b) This question was not often selected and answers were usually highly narrative, but sensitive, coherent and well supported arguments were seen.

Question 8

Camus: *Caligula*

- (a) There was a tendency for candidates to agree with the statement in the question in its entirety, and for answers to lack detail and reveal superficial knowledge of plot and character.
- (b) This question was less popular than (a). Candidates generally managed to convey Caesonia's love for and loyalty to Caligula, but few were able to develop the theme fully or to support their ideas with much evidence from the text.