

# FRENCH

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Paper 9716/01  
Speaking

## General comments

### Recording

In the last few years, there has been a great improvement in the quality of recordings. Examiners are aware of the need to ensure that not just candidate responses are audible, but also their own questions. However, it should be remembered that any external microphone, where used, should be positioned to favour candidates rather than Examiners, since candidates often speak more quietly than Examiners. In order to minimise disruption to candidates and possible loss of parts of an examination, since each examination should last approximately 20 minutes, only **one** candidate should be recorded per side of a 60 minute cassette and only **two** per side of a 90 minute cassette. If using CDs, please ensure that they are formatted to be played on a CD player. If there are candidates for both A and AS Level, they should be recorded on separate cassettes/CDs, since they may be required to be sent to different Moderators.

Recordings were generally clear, but Examiners should always spot check cassettes/CDs before submitting them for moderation. During the recording of an examination, the recording should run without pause or interruption until the end of that candidate's examination.

### Administration

Centres should be sure that they have sent the correct sample, according to the number of candidates they have entered for the syllabus. For fewer than 6 candidates, all should be recorded, and the recordings submitted for moderation. If there are more than 6 candidates, a sample of 6 should be chosen, and this sample should cover the range of marks as evenly as possible, from the top to the bottom mark. It is important that cassettes and CDs are adequately protected by their packaging – there have been instances of CDs sent in a standard envelope which have arrived damaged.

The Working Mark Sheet should be completed with the details of the Centre, syllabus, and each candidate's name and index number, and for each candidate a mark should be entered in each column of the WMS, according to the criteria set out in the Speaking Test Mark Scheme (whole marks only). Where a candidate does not score a mark in one or more elements of the examination (e.g. seeking information and opinions), a zero should be recorded in that column of the WMS. It is important that Moderators receive a copy of the WMS, so that they can offer more precise advice on marking approach and pitch.

Examiners should ensure that the addition of marks is carefully checked and that the total has been correctly transferred to the MS1, where used. Lozenges should be shaded for each candidate's mark, and the total in figures should be entered in the mark column. The Moderator's copy of the MS1 (or a copy of the marks submitted to CIE) should be included with the recorded sample and the WMS when they are sent for moderation, and the Centre should retain the Centre copy of the MS1 in case of enquiry.

### Conduct of the examination

Before they begin the examination, Examiners and candidates alike should be familiar with the format and requirements. There are 3 parts to the Speaking test, and there is only one element which should be prepared before the examination:

- a Presentation, lasting 3 to 3½ minutes, on a single topic chosen and researched/**prepared** by the candidate before the examination – this should make clear reference to francophone culture or society;
- Topic Conversation, lasting 7 to 8 minutes, on the **same** topic chosen by the candidate for his/her Presentation, but not previously prepared;



- General Conversation, lasting 8 to 9 minutes – the candidate cannot prepare this ahead as he/she does not know exactly what topics will be discussed, and they will certainly be different from the one chosen for the Presentation, and should differ from candidate to candidate.

Candidates are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections – there are 5 marks available for this in **each** conversation section, and Examiners must prompt candidates to ask questions where there are none asked in the course of conversation, so that candidates are given the opportunity to work for the marks.

### **Presentation**

Candidates chose a very wide range of topics, from those relating to society in general (*Famille* - including topics such as *Polygamie*; *les Jeunes*; *Education* - including *Laïcité*; *Tabagisme*; *les Drogues*), to technological advances, leisure, including *Voyages* and *Tourisme*, television & the media, and cultural topics. Sport was also popular, as was health in general, and healthy eating (*Obésité*, *Végétarisme*) – a number chose to talk about various aspects of *gastronomie* and regional *cuisine*. Pollution and the environment continue to appear, along with nuclear energy. This year there were a number of political topics as well, clearly of interest to the candidates who chose them (*Les enfants soldats au Congo*, *la Crise Economique*).

It was clear that candidates had generally chosen something they were particularly interested in, and most remembered that they must make reference to francophone culture or society. It is not enough merely to say *...et en France, c'est la même chose...*, but candidates need to ensure that the theme is firmly rooted in francophone culture. They should also remember that the criteria reward ideas and opinions, so a strictly factual topic may not score particularly well for content. Candidates should certainly be choosing their own topics – Moderators would not expect all topics from a Centre to be the same – and they should be allowed to talk for 3 to 3½ minutes before Examiners begin asking any questions. If the presentation shows no signs of coming to an end after 3½ minutes, Examiners should interrupt and begin their questions, but should try to avoid the candidate returning to previously prepared material. Candidates may use a cue card to remind them of the outline of what they want to say, and may bring visual aids if they choose (maps, postcards, photos, for example). Candidates may structure their presentation to finish with a question, but should avoid asking questions of the Examiner during the presentation itself, as any response from the Examiner will cut into their allotted time.

### **Topic Conversation**

This section of the examination should last some 7 to 8 minutes, and Examiners should aim to draw out candidates and give them opportunities to develop the conversation. Examiners' questions need to be carefully framed so that they do not just ask for the same information that the candidate has already given in the presentation, but require something more of the candidate - this may be additional factual information, or perhaps the sort of open question which asks the candidate to expand on a particular aspect: "Tell me more about...".

Examiners need to be prepared to engage with the candidate and follow up interesting observations for further discussion, and should be aware that the candidate will not necessarily agree with their own views. Examiners should not be looking for a "right" or "acceptable" answer to their questions, but instead they should be trying to enable the candidate to express his or her own ideas and opinions, and develop, defend and justify those opinions.

Candidates are expected to ask questions of the Examiner and may need reminding of this. If they do not ask questions during the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt them to do so – marks cannot be awarded where no questions are asked! There is no penalty attached to a question asked by a candidate in response to a prompt from the Examiner, the full range of marks is available.

Examiners should signal the end of the topic conversation section and the beginning of the general conversation section, so that candidates are aware of the change of focus.

### **General Conversation**

The General Conversation section, (8 to 9 minutes) is uncharted territory as far as the candidate is concerned. He/she will have been able to prepare to some extent for the sort of questions which the chosen topic might provoke from the Examiner in the topic conversation section, but in this section candidates have to be prepared react to whatever the Examiner chooses to ask.

Even at AS level, candidates should not expect questions solely on the candidate's family, or what they did in their holidays – conversation should go beyond this. They may be asked something from the areas studied during their course, or something of topical interest, but whatever the question, they should remember that what is being assessed is their understanding and ability to respond spontaneously – some candidates may need encouragement from the Examiner to venture beyond the basic response, but they should make every effort to develop their own part in the conversation – Examiners may need to restrict their own input to give candidates the maximum possible time to develop their ideas and opinions.

The aim is not a series of predictable responses to predictable questions, but rather an exploration of perhaps 2 or 3 topics in some depth. At this level, candidates are expected to be able to hold their own in a mature conversation.

Examiners should remember that the General Conversation section should not return to the topic chosen by the candidate for the presentation – candidates need to be able to demonstrate that they are able to express themselves on a variety of topic areas, and where there are several candidates at a syllabus level, in the interests of fairness to all, they should not all be asked the same series of questions – topics should be varied from candidate to candidate.

Once again, candidates are expected to ask questions of the Examiner, and should be prompted to do so where necessary. If they do not ask any questions, no marks can be awarded for this element of the examination, and a zero must be recorded on the WMS.

### **Assessment**

Most Centres and candidates followed the requirements of the syllabus very closely and in many cases only minimal/no adjustment to the marks was necessary. Centres are to be congratulated on their efforts to observe the criteria of the mark scheme and provide an accurate assessment of their candidates' abilities.



# FRENCH

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Paper 9716/02  
Reading and Writing

## General comments

This year's paper featured a very accessible topic and concepts familiar to all candidates. Despite this, most candidates resisted the temptation to launch into their own views on the subject and concentrated on reporting on what they had read in the texts.

As usual, a major source of lost marks was the word-for-word copying of phrases and sentences from the texts ('lifting') as answers.

Most candidates completed all sections of the paper and there were few signs of candidates having been under undue time pressure. A number of candidates wrote considerably more than was needed but the majority tended to make the necessary point(s) succinctly and proceed to the next question. Many candidates made mistakes when copying words from the text and did not use the grammatical clues provided in the texts or the questions. A wide range of marks was recorded.

Centres are urged to inform candidates that in **Questions 3 and 4** there is no point including the questions in their answers as a pre-amble. This wastes candidates' time, and means that they have less time available for checking the accuracy of what they have written.

In **Question 1**, candidates did not always appear to be aware of the need for the word or words given as the answer to be interchangeable in all respects with the word or words given in the question. The focus of this section is on the **meaning** of the word or words to be replaced: a phrase may replace a single word, but the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing. Marks were frequently lost by the addition of superfluous words, or by the omission of essential words. A minority of candidates struggled to understand the meanings of the words in the questions and offered grammatically inappropriate answers, for example, an adjective offered to replace a noun.

In **Question 2**, the re-working of the sentence must begin with the words specified in the brackets. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary. Candidates should not change the vocabulary in the sentence for its own sake, but merely re-arrange the words and make any changes to the grammar required by the new start to the sentence given. In other words, answers to this question should use the vocabulary of the original wherever possible.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, the rubric quite clearly states that candidates should answer "*sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*". Copying sentences or whole phrases verbatim from the text (or indeed the question) in the hope that they contain the answer does not demonstrate understanding and is therefore not rewarded. Candidates should try to express relevant ideas using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or manipulations of the text can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language. Candidates are also advised to look at the number of points awarded for each question (indicated in brackets) as a clue to what may be required in terms of answers.

In **Question 5**, a number of candidates far exceeded the word limits set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, which could be sensibly split into 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. Material beyond 150 words overall is not marked. Other candidates did not manage to produce anywhere near 140 words for this section, and lost marks as a result.

An efficient summary of specific points drawn from the texts is required in **Question 5 Part (a)**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates keep track of the number of words they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is

taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *qu'est-ce que c'est?* It is also helpful if candidates make a clear distinction between Parts (a) and (b) in setting out their answers.

A number of candidates used bullet points to illustrate the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark may be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the answer consequently lacks fluency.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

This question was generally answered well. **Question (a)** caused the most problems, with candidates frequently offering the single word *près* as opposed to the required phrase, *à peu près*. In **Questions (b)** and **(d)** a number of candidates invalidated their answer by including an indefinite article, e.g. *un impact* instead of *impact*. In **Question (d)** some candidates failed to realise that *manque* was a noun and produced the adjectival form *insuffisante*. Inaccurate copying from the text meant that some candidates offered *novice* instead of *nocive* for (c) or omitted the final letter from *sensée* in (e).

#### Question 2

- (a) This question was generally well done, with most candidates realising the need for a passive construction (although it was possible to circumvent this by rendering *Le risque que la télé augmente est celui de quitter l'école sans diplôme*).
- (b) It was possible to gain this mark either by following *On recommande aux parents de supprimer.....* etc. or by the subjunctive *qu'ils suppriment .....* etc. A further requirement was to change the possessive adjective from *votre* to *leur*, which was problematic for a number of candidates.
- (c) Many candidates were not successful in producing the accurate subjunctive *vous limitiez* in this phrase, although more able candidates often came up with ..... *le temps passé devant la télé soit limité*.
- (d) The verbal construction *Après avoir examiné ...* was not generally known, and attempts to get round this frequently featured the English word *examination*.
- (e) This question proved difficult for a lot of candidates. The use of an infinitive after *pour* was not always known; the expression *en la reliant* was left untouched; even when candidates produced *ont relié* there was no object pronoun or if there was, there was no corresponding preceding direct object agreement for the past participle. The correct form was *l'ont reliée*.

#### Question 3

- (a) This question was generally well handled, but unfortunately, despite the huge variety of possible rewordings, many candidates reproduced *impact sur les progrès académiques* from the text. The second mark was gained by any candidate who mentioned length of time plus negative effect, but again, many candidates lost the mark by copying *exposition prolongée* from the text.
- (b) This was well answered, with most candidates scoring at least three marks, but again a significant minority lost marks by directly 'lifting' from the text phrases which were easy to reword such as *déficit de concentration* and *comportement incorrect*.
- (c) The first idea of poorer arithmetic results was usually achieved, but thereafter frequently nothing could be rewarded as *en lecture* and *en compréhension* were left unchanged, even though a simple change from noun to verb would have gained the marks. Where candidates did understand this principle, *liser* was often produced instead of *lire*.
- (d) Again much "lifting" was in evidence - *lien* and *négative* frequently made an appearance - and candidates did not always make the distinction between the two age groups as far as academic achievement was concerned.

- (e) Usually the idea of difficulties with homework was dealt with adequately but the verb form *nuit* was confused with the noun. It also seemed that many candidates did not understand *sommeil*; although those who did, wrote very pleasing answers. A number of candidates lost the mark through misunderstanding the verb *empêcher*, resulting in statements such as *ça les empêche de ne pas dormir*.

#### Question 4

- (a) This question was generally well answered, with many candidates scoring all three marks. However, the first mark was sometimes lost by candidates who included *les dessins animés* in their list of beneficial programmes: if a candidate appears to be presenting the Examiner with a list of possible right answers, the whole mark is lost even if the right answer is in there somewhere.
- (b) The first point about TV being easier was made in an appropriate manner, but thereafter, candidates frequently resorted to “lifting” and could not be credited with comprehension marks. Conjugation of the verb *retenir* caused problems for many. Again, some candidates attempted to use the English adjective ‘instant’ to replace *immédiat*.
- (c) Most candidates managed to reword *en profitant* to gain the first mark about learning from the experiences of others, but many missed the second point by misguided efforts to reword *satellite* - an impossible task - when merely mentioning satellite television in a phrase which did not include the text’s ... *est venu s’ajouter le satellite* would have gained the mark.
- (d) The verbs *se distraire* and *se détendre* were usually known, although a minority produced the Spanish *distraer* or the non-existent *distracter* or *détenir*. Many candidates failed to appreciate the meaning of the phrase *consommer avec modération* and could not score the second comprehension mark.
- (e) No real difficulties apart from the expression *la prise de poids*. A number simply expressed the idea of TV not being good for one’s health or that the TV itself was unhealthy! The concepts of parents encouraging some physical activity and being a role model were usually dealt with appropriately.

#### Question 5

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two texts in **Part (a)** and then to reflect on them in **Part (b)**, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. Candidates were required to summarise ‘*les bienfaits et les dangers de la télévision pour les jeunes*’. Although there was a relative scarcity of candidates who managed to score all the ten available marks for identifying ten of the eighteen points for which marks were available, many managed to identify and list quite a high proportion.

Highest marks were scored by those who dealt simply and systematically with making the points without further elaboration and moving on. Others made one or two points several times over or got entangled in unnecessary definitions and scored poorly. Many resorted to wholesale quotation from the text, which, while not penalised as such, resulted in the use of a lot of words for very few points.

Most candidates managed to identify several disadvantages of television, but found it more difficult to express the advantages: again, over-reliance on the language of the texts often resulted in quotations which failed to express adequately the point they wished to put across.

Many of the personal responses in **Part (b)** could not reach their potential often as a result of a failure to read and respond to the question: many candidates offered their views on the value of watching television rather than saying what rules they would make for their children if they were parents themselves. Others gave general rules for bringing up children which made little or no reference to television. Those who did try to answer the question were frequently hampered by an inability to manipulate verbs, or to produce a reliable conditional: answers frequently featured an imperfect (*si j’étais parent ..*) followed by a future (*je permettrai à mes enfants ...*) followed by a present (*ils ne regardent pas ...*).

## Quality of language

The quality of language over the paper as a whole is in need of improvement: many candidates found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, although a number of candidates wrote accurately and well. Verb endings were common sources of error, in particular the confusion of infinitives with past participles. A very common error was *ils faisent* supplied instead of *ils font*. In many cases, agreements of adjectives with nouns and of verbs with their subjects appeared random.

Negatives caused particular problems: either *ne* or *pas* was omitted, resulting in some very confusing answers. Negative infinitives were rarely correctly rendered, although many candidates attempted to use them.

The conditional was widely misunderstood: candidates appear to know what it sounds like, but have problems spelling it, leading to forms like *il regarderai*.

Possessive adjectives were another problem area: many candidates appear to be under the impression that *ses* means 'their'.

Reflexive verbs were another source of confusion, frequently losing their reflexive pronouns and occasionally changing meaning as a result.

Words which could conceivably have been French were often used in ways which made it very clear that candidates had their English meaning in mind, notably *distraction*, *examination* and *instant*.

*Beaucoup* was frequently teamed with inappropriate words, e.g. *très beaucoup*, *trop beaucoup*, *plus beaucoup*: additionally, *très* was used when *trop* was meant.

Many candidates appeared unaware of the use of the apostrophe in French to elide words, resulting in frequent instances of *que ils*, *beaucoup de aspects*, etc. Additionally, candidates often produced, e.g., *à le* instead of *au*, or *de les* instead of *des*. The important difference between *a* and *à* was not understood in a large number of scripts.

Homophones were often confused: *ces/c'est/ses*; *et/est*; *ce/se/ceux*; *on/ont*; *sa/ça*; *son/sont*; *face/fasse*.

# FRENCH

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Paper 9716/03

Essay

## General comments

As per the syllabus specification, 5 titles were set and of the 40 marks available, 24 were awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. In terms of popularity there was a strong preference for **Questions 1, 2 and 3** with **Questions 4 and 5** attempted by fewer candidates. The actual order of preference in descending order was **Question 2, Question 3, Question 1, Question 5 and Question 4**. **Question 2** often seemed an excuse for candidates to describe tourism in their countries with little actual reference to the title. **Question 3** was perceived as a good option by those candidates who had prepared an essay on pollution but regrettably few were able to make their learned essay fit the title. All questions generated answers across the full range of marks.

Some candidates used a good range of vocabulary and idiomatic expression but had problems with structure and accuracy, while others exhibited weakness in all areas. Some candidates took great pains to define the terms in the question, explaining for example what maturity means or what travel is, others made no attempt to define terms or the parameters of their answers, so their answers were meandering and lacked coherence. Candidates often disregarded the given titles, preferring instead to write a general essay on the topic area. Essays often lacked exemplification and were therefore too abstract and vague. There were a number of very poor answers with little or no sense of French grammar. However, there were also mature and measured essays, balancing their arguments and supporting them with relevant and well-chosen examples.

The best essays were characterised by a high level of accuracy and a wide range of vocabulary and structures. At the other end of the spectrum, verb forms, concordances, prepositional usage were inconsistently applied and candidates struggled to make their points given their lack of vocabulary and grammatical awareness. Among a number of recurrent weaknesses and errors, the following points were highlighted by Examiners:

- errors in the formation of the third person plural present tense of common verbs, e.g. *conduient, suivrent, vivrent, reçoient, boient, produissent*
- errors in the spelling of such words as *délinquance, trafic, néanmoins, aggraver, agression, alcool, ressources* and *renouvelables*
- use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de*
- phonetic misspelling of words such as *ont* for *on*, *ces* for *ses*, *ce* for *c'est*, *non pas* for *n'ont pas*
- inaccurate use of accents including words in the questions such as *dégâts* and *progrès* and multiple examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences
- inclusion of *y* and *en* when not required e.g. *il y en a* or *il s'en sert* for *il se sert*
- use of *les humains* for *les êtres humains* and *les progénitures* for *la progéniture*
- over-reliance on the present participle and the use of *comme* for 'since'
- incorrect use of the passive, using the infinitive instead of the past participle with *être*
- incorrect genders of common words often those used in the questions e.g. *une manqué, une problème, le priorité*
- disregard for appropriate register, e.g. *truc, boulot*, the omission of *ne* in negative structures



### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 – Les Jeunes**

Many candidates ignored the question altogether and wrote an essay about *les jeunes* and the generation gap. Those who did understand the significance of the question set wrote about maturity and responsibility in young people. They described maturity in both physical and emotional terms, pointing out that being physically mature does not necessarily mean intellectual and emotional maturity. They contrasted the actions of a mature and an immature adolescent and suggested reasons as to why differences might exist such as environment, family, personality. The mature adolescent makes rational decisions, knows what he/she wants to achieve in life, broadens his/her experience by talking to people of all ages, reading, watching news programmes. The immature adolescent acts according to instinct, makes frequent errors from which he/she does not learn and has no future plans. Most candidates believed that maturity equals responsibility and described the ways in which young people can begin to show this by studying hard, looking after family members, helping in the home, doing voluntary work and making good decisions. Immaturity was not related to age necessarily but more to environmental factors and temperament and often resulted in young people making poor decisions and, according to many candidates, ending up in prison or prostitution.

Some candidates misunderstood the word *manque* taking it to mean sign of maturity and *manque de maturité* was taken to be having reached maturity. Others found the *se reconnaître* troubling and used the verb in that form throughout the essay without understanding its import.

#### **Question 2 – Le Tourisme et les voyages**

This was by a long way the most popular question. Many candidates struggled to come to terms with the two elements of the question: *voir* and *comprendre*. They became entangled in definitions of the two words and tried to read more into them than necessary. The question invited candidates to assess the value of travel and tourism for the individual, for his/her personal development. Most of those attempting this question understood that we travel to see new things and also to learn about new cultures, traditions, languages and ways of life. They described their own personal voyages of discovery to foreign lands with references to food, song and dance, visits to museums and historic sites. They felt that people should try and broaden their experience through travel as this would inform the way they lived their life in their own country. They talked of the cross-fertilisation of ideas, the new friendships made and the breakdown of racial and religious divides. They pointed out how different it is to visit a place rather than to see it on TV or in a brochure. Candidates pointed out that seeing a historic site or natural landscape is not enough, that the traveller must also comprehend the context, historical and cultural of any place visited.

Some essays were rather superficial and not very detailed, with abstract comment and little illustration. Weaker candidates merely listed places of interest in the world such as the Eiffel Tower which people go to see or places of interest in their own countries. Their essays lacked structure and clarity and often became over-concerned with the verbs *voir* and *comprendre* using them in virtually every sentence and often confusing the two.

#### **Question 3 – La Pollution**

This was also a very popular question which gave candidates a clear opportunity to show their knowledge about the current ecological and environmental issues such as global warming, climate change, renewable energy sources and other “green” matters. Good candidates used their essays to analyse the current state of affairs, its history and causes before moving on to a summary of possible ways forward. They made it clear that the countries of the world have to weigh up the benefits of technology and progress against the desire to save the planet from its inevitable decline. There was discussion of a range of measures which might assure the future for our grandchildren. These went from individuals taking responsibility for keeping the environment litter-free and recycling household waste to international treaties such as the Protocol of Kyoto aiming to reduce carbon emissions across the world. The good essays demonstrated a keen awareness of the fragile state of Earth and the need for urgent action. Candidates, on the whole, remained positive about the future, stressing the need for countries to work together and for every individual to make his/her own contribution.

Weaker candidates restricted their essays to describing the different types of pollution, without making reference to the title. Their essays often quoted incorrect facts and used incorrect terms as they struggled to put their ideas into French. There were many Anglicisms, including the very common use of *pétrole* for

*essence* and *le carbon dioxide*. These candidates often used the terms of the question in the final paragraph despite never having mentioned them throughout.

#### **Question 4 – Les Progrès scientifiques et médicaux**

This was the least popular question and candidates generally struggled to come to terms with the breadth of the topic. Some took scientific research and others medical research, very few dealt with both parts. It was felt that priority should be given to advances in the field of medicine particularly in research into cures for AIDS and cancer. Genetics research and gene therapy received a mixed response with some candidates seeing the advantages for curing genetic diseases and others believing the scientists were playing God and therefore they were to be treated with caution. Candidates believed that governments were not always good at favouring genuine research over the economic advantages to be gained from new technology or new drugs. Overall the question was not well managed and a lot of candidates tackling this topic were unable to reach any clear conclusions on priorities.

#### **Question 5 – L’Alimentation et les boissons**

This was not a popular question and candidates displayed a rather superficial knowledge of the subject. Most essays mentioned genetically modified crops as the way to produce enough food for the world’s population but there was little factual detail given. It was clear to candidates that the real problem is overpopulation in the developing world and that currently the richer countries are not doing enough to help either by providing food, advice on farming techniques or population control. It was also pointed out that food aid often passed into the wrong hands. Most candidates saw the only solution to be more scientific research enabling better, more resistant crops to be developed which could be farmed in countries where poor soils and droughts prevented other natural crops from thriving. Some candidates were suspicious of genetically modified foods believing them to present a danger to health. Overall, answers to this question were relevant but somewhat lacking in detail and subject knowledge.

# FRENCH

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Paper 9716/04  
Texts

## General comments

The spread of marks was reasonably wide, with a fair number of candidates towards the top end, and a few consistently good performances. However, a number of candidates scored very low marks or even no marks at all. Their scripts were either blank, or consisted of material copied from the examination paper, or paraphrases of the passages set for commentary, with no reference to the question or evidence of textual knowledge. There was also a significant number of scripts in which candidates gave brief and often incoherent answers to two questions on each of two or three texts.

All questions were attempted, the most popular texts being the Maupassant stories, *Candide*, *Les Mains sales*, *Vipère au poing* and *L'Étranger*. Very few candidates answered on Giono. Only a handful of candidates penalised themselves by writing at excessive length. Indeed, far more marks were lost as a result of incomplete or insubstantial answers.

Examiners continue to draw attention to the fact that some candidates do not state, in **Section B**, which essay they are attempting, and it is not always easy to tell.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1**

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

- (a) Almost all candidates successfully identified the context of the extract set for commentary, and were able to show a measure of knowledge about the situation as the journey resumes and about the passengers' reaction to the singing of the *Marseillaise*. Better answers dealt not just with the issue of patriotism (or lack of it) but also with the political implications of Cornudet's choice of lyric. There were also some competent answers on Maupassant's depiction of Cornudet. Whilst most candidates understood the differences between him and the other characters, relatively few saw the ambiguities in Maupassant's portrait: sympathetic on one level, but perhaps more interested in beer and career than in sustained resistance.
- (b) The question as to which story the candidate found particularly memorable was frequently misread as 'quels contes' as opposed to 'quel conte'. This inevitably led to a relatively superficial treatment of the stories chosen. Those who focused on one story, as directed, gave responses which varied greatly in detailed appreciation and credibility of choice. Whilst it was pleasing to read essays which showed thorough familiarity with the plot and characters of a particular story, few candidates were able to provide an appreciation of the stylistic features for which the writer is justly admired. Any illustrations of powerful use of language and/or economy of means were given full credit.

## Question 2

Voltaire: *Candide*

- (a) Most answers successfully located the extract in Venice and showed knowledge of the circumstances leading to Candide's melancholy. Better answers gave details of Martin's assessment of Cacambo's unreliability and the poor prospects of a happy resolution. Answers concerning the mention of El Dorado generally expressed the right idea, with varying degrees of relevance and detail. The more superficial answers did not give due attention to the fact that El Dorado is a fictitious idealised society designed by Voltaire to highlight the problems of the real world.
- (b) There were relatively few answers on the humorous qualities of Voltaire's writing, and such as there were showed a limited knowledge and understanding of the subject. The question invited examples of Voltaire's satire and irony, directed at targets such as the philosophy of the Optimists, Rousseau's 'noble savage', religious hypocrisy, snobbery, the *picaresque* novel, Parisian society, etc. Most were able to demonstrate the comic juxtaposition of Pangloss's assertions and the events which disproved them. Beyond that, there was little by way of appreciation of Voltaire's ability to generate wry humour from all manner of human activity. Obvious examples to cite would have been the Baron's mechanically repeated response to Candide's declarations of intent to marry Cunégonde, the religious 'zeal' of the Dutch pastor's wife, or the episode of the Oreillons and their dietary inclinations. Perhaps the difficulty was that the candidates were not sure about the terms of reference, i.e. satire and irony.

## Question 3

Sartre: *Les Mains sales*

- (a) This question produced a majority of competent responses. Candidates seemed generally to understand Jessica's exasperation with Hugo's procrastination over carrying out his mission, and her scepticism about his ability to do so. With regard to the relationship between the two, comments were often limited to paraphrase or general observations about the lack of affection and understanding between them. Some invented a reason for this, such as a difference in social background, whereas few saw the disharmony as being intellectual. The third section posed no difficulty to those who really knew the text, with the result that many answers accurately described the political issues raised by the meeting. Answers varied, of course, in their level of detail and coherence of expression.
- (b) Answers to the essay question were, in many cases, accurate in general terms but lacking in detail. In view of the confrontations between the characters in the play, a thorough response should have analysed the scepticism of Slick and Georges towards Hugo's commitment, based on their gut instinct that he would never be capable of understanding their point of view. Similarly, essays which took a rather critical view of Hugo's behaviour towards the two men might profitably have examined Sartre's ideas about the barriers between social classes for which neither side could be held entirely responsible. Closer attention to the remark « c'est une question de peau » might have produced, in a good many cases, a more balanced account.

## Question 4

Giono: *Regain*

There were so few answers on this text that it is not possible to provide any comments which would be of use to Centres.



### Question 5

Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*

- (a) There were relatively few attempts at this question. Candidates showed some knowledge of the letters written by Cyrano to Roxane on behalf of Christian, and better answers mentioned the scene at the end of the play in which Cyrano is able to quote by heart the letter supposedly written by Christian from the battlefield. Answers were mostly sketchy, lacking the kind of detail and understanding required for a good mark.
- (b) Much the same can be said of the small number of responses to this question. Answers tended towards the justifiable conclusion that Roxane's losses outweighed the gain of acknowledging her feelings for Cyrano. Likewise, they felt that Cyrano's years of frustration and sense of inadequacy could not be made to seem worthwhile by the developments immediately preceding his death. The main weakness of these answers was their undue attention to episodes earlier in the play, as opposed to the use of this material to illustrate their commentary on the ending.

### Section 2

#### Question 6

Bazin: *Vipère au poing*

- (a) Those who chose this question produced, on the whole, better answers than those who chose (b). The majority of candidates understood that a 'black and white' response did not do justice to the author's characterisation, and particularly to the narrator's self-awareness. Those who relied on a narrative account of Folcoche's cruelty in an attempt to justify the quotation fell well short of those who attempted to give a more balanced answer. It was necessary to give some credit to the decent adults. Better answers also saw that the key to this issue lay in the reprehensible behaviour of the children, whether acting as Folcoche's spy or going to horrifying lengths to reap revenge. It was necessary to see that the narrator himself is a flawed character, and by no means all answers conveyed this.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this question were all too content to narrate the sufferings of Brasse-Bouillon at the hands of his mother and/or the enjoyment he derived from thwarting her regime. An understanding of this novel can only be conveyed by referring to the narrator's account of himself at the end of the narrative. Whilst some credit could be given to those who recognised and illustrated his pain at the hands of mother and teachers, and also, to an extent, his amusement at the success of a number of his acts of retaliation, Examiners looked for a response to the outcome of all this: an embittered and warped individual whose personality has been permanently damaged by the experiences described in the narrative. The fact that he is painfully aware of this at the end of the novel was seldom given appropriate attention.

#### Question 7

Camus: *L'Étranger*

- (a) There were all shades of response to this question. Those who landed firmly on one side or the other gave less convincing accounts than those who attempted a balanced response. It was, of course, preferable to focus on Meursault's rejection of hypocrisy and his preference for execution over submission to a morally bankrupt system than to catalogue his 'anti-social' behaviour and put it down to weakness. That said, only a minority of perceptive answers saw the 'heroism' as instinctive rather than combative, and the 'weakness' as his lack of engagement rather than his tendency to indulge in sensual pleasure. Thus, answers which congratulated him on his support for the social outcast Raymond or castigated him for smoking, drinking coffee and having sex, were only able to convey a limited understanding of the text. Some outstanding answers argued cogently that neither adjective is wholly appropriate to the character.
- (b) Candidates who take the same moral position as the lawyers, the jury or the chaplain cannot provide an adequate response to any question on this text. The predictable narrative accounts of the first part of the novel were followed, in some cases, by the necessary comment that Meursault's behaviour is interpreted by people with whom the reader is not invited to agree. A good mark was

only available to the few candidates who analysed the hypocrisy, false logic and arbitrary judgements of those who concluded that Meursault was a threat.

### Question 8

Radiguet: *Le Diable au corps*

- (a) There were two possible responses here: one could be justified by the text and the other could not. Consequently, those who laid the blame for Marthe's fate entirely at the feet of the narrator were not able to produce a convincing case. Most answers properly described the selfish actions of the narrator in his relentless quest for gratification. The quality of the answers depended simply on the amount of detail the candidate could offer to illustrate the young man's need for admiration and compliance. Better marks were reserved for those who saw, to a greater or lesser degree, that Marthe was under no obligation either to be seduced by an adolescent boy or to go on playing the role of the admiring and submissive 'mistress'.
- (b) Only very low number of candidates attempted this question, and no useful conclusions can be drawn from their answers.