

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the target language. Candidates showed they could write fluently and most could express quite complicated ideas through their essays.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates produced good summaries of the two passages, expressing the ideas contained in the texts in a clear and organised fashion, using their own words. The subject matter of the passages seemed familiar to candidates and there were many interesting answers.

Question 2

Again, the performance in this section was satisfactory. Unfortunately, a few candidates wrote good essays, but failed to include the required references to the passage. While candidates are encouraged to use their own ideas, these must arise out of the passage printed on the question paper: this is a reading comprehension exercise and it is up to the candidate to demonstrate to the Examiner that s/he has understood what s/he has read. In addition, answers must be expressed in candidates' own words.

Question 3

Most candidates did well apart from a small minority who did not understand the meaning of **3(a)**.

Question 4

The performance was satisfactory.

Question 5

Questions 5(a) and (b) prove difficult for many candidates who did not seem to know the meaning of the characters.

Question 6

Some candidates did not understand the meaning of the saying. Most knew the meaning of 'the aim is achieved', but did not go on to explain that 'the more impatient once becomes the less likely it is that the aim will be achieved'.

Questions 7, 8 and 9

Most candidates did well on these questions.

Question 10

Again, on the whole, successfully tackled by candidates. Centres are reminded that candidates should copy out the paragraph and insert the punctuation marks. Marks cannot be awarded for a series of punctuation marks listed on the answer paper.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/03
Continuous Writing

General comments

In most cases, content was appropriate. The best candidates included lots of interesting details and/or explanations, provided examples and were able to treat the subject matter with some maturity, displaying a good sense of audience.

Essays were often well-structured, with candidates showing awareness of the need for paragraphing. However, some candidates clearly found it hard to balance the different elements of their essays, e.g. the 'introduction' was so long that the reader was half way through the essay before reaching the 'main body' of the essay and conversely the 'ending' was so rushed as to be almost non-existent. It is worth reminding candidates that time spent planning their work before they start writing will help them gain better control of their material.

Many candidates would benefit from improving the accuracy of their written Chinese.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question, requiring candidates to write about a close friend who truly knows and understands them, proved very popular and resulted in some interesting essays. Less successful were those essays which failed to convey the 'zhi yin' element of the friendship.

Question 2

Another popular question. Candidates were expected to explain the meaning of a well-known Chinese saying. The most successful answers were those that seemed to be firmly rooted in candidates' personal experiences or based on an event of which they had first-hand knowledge. Weaker answers ranged from the unconvincing to the confusing.

Question 3

Here, candidates were asked to write an article for a local paper expressing their opinion on the phenomenon of mobile phones and their widespread use. Unsurprisingly, this was a popular choice and produced many well-organised and tightly-argued responses. Weaker answers tended to deal with the issue in quite a superficial way, merely repeating the same arguments again and again.

Question 4

A large number of candidates chose to write on the subject of 'a telephone message'. This was one of the questions where candidates tended to stray from the title and some of the weaker answers were quite confusing.

Question 5

Candidates wrote some interesting and moving essays in response to the title 'Silence'.

Question 6

Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about their favourite festival and produced some convincing work based on personal experiences. However, there was a tendency for some candidates to lose sight of the title and stray into irrelevance.

Question 7

This was one of the most popular titles on the question paper. Candidates were expected to write about 'love and hate' and those who took the time to organise their ideas produced some interesting and moving pieces of work.

Question 8

Only a few candidates responded to this question, producing a wide range of work.

Question 9

Candidates were expected to read some well-known lines from a Chinese poem and use them as the inspiration for an article or story. Quite a few candidates chose this question and were able to approach it in a variety of ways. The results were generally convincing.