

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

As in previous years, candidates demonstrated a high level of mastery of the Chinese language. Their answers were fluent, logical and written in sophisticated Chinese. For both **Parts I** and **II**, the candidates were able to organise their material effectively showing good awareness of audience.

Comments on specific questions

Part I

Question 1

The candidates could clearly relate to the content of the two articles which dealt with the wide range of after-school activities on offer in today's society and the important role these activities can play in a young person's development. Overall, the quality of answers was high with candidates showing an impressive ability to assimilate the ideas expressed in both passages and write a summary that was well organised, precise and to the point. A small number of weaker candidates simply copied out a selection of sentences from the two passages, an approach which could not attract much reward.

Part II

Question 2

Candidates seemed to enjoy the task of writing to a friend who is lonely in order to give advice on how to relate to other people. Many were able to write at length using information from the passage and also incorporating ideas of their own, but arising out of the passage, on the subject of friendship and how to get on with others. The majority of candidates expressed their ideas in their own words using language that was appropriate to the task.

Part III

Questions 4, 7 and 9 were well answered by candidates.

Question 3

Most candidates did well in this question, successfully using the words provided in a sentence of their own devising. However, it would be helpful if candidates could be asked to write slightly longer sentences in order to provide Examiners with a context. Where candidates wrote very short sentences it could be difficult for Examiners to judge whether the given words had been used correctly or not.

Questions 5 and 6

Candidates often found it difficult to explain the meanings of the Chinese idioms/sayings provided. Where candidates could at least provide the literal meanings of the idioms/sayings, one mark could be awarded, but some candidates could not even do this and therefore scored no marks.

Question 8

Most candidates could identify at least one or both adjectives. Unfortunately, some lost a mark because they also identified other parts of language, e.g. verbs, as adjectives.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/03 Continuous Writing
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General comments

- 1 **Material:** in most cases content was relevant to the question set and appropriate in terms of maturity. Candidates attempted to incorporate interesting detail into their essays, in the form of argument, description or narrative, depending on the type of essay they had chosen. The very best essays produced by candidates were interesting to read and often moving. Weaker candidates tended to fall into two categories: those who produced work which was at best only partially relevant to the title and those who wrote at length on the title but who produced work that was very repetitive.
- 2 **Structure:** in general, candidates seemed aware of the importance of structure. Essays had clear beginnings and endings (or introductions and conclusions) and material was set out in paragraphs which were clearly linked. However, there were cases where poor time management or lack of planning had clearly been a factor and where the ending was rushed or where there was no attempt at drawing the various threads of the writing together in the form of a conclusion. It is a shame when what is otherwise a good piece of writing comes to an end abruptly. It is worth reminding candidates that time spent planning their work before they start writing will help them gain better control of their material.
- 3 **Style:** at the very top end, Examiners saw examples of essays written in sophisticated Chinese, where candidates made use of an excellent range of vocabulary and complex sentence patterns. In general, however, although candidates showed a good sense of audience and were able to write clearly and fluently with an awareness of style, they would benefit from reading more. This would help to widen their vocabulary and allow them to express themselves with greater variety and clarity. Weaker candidates often adopted an awkward or heavy style which at times made it difficult to follow what they were trying to say.
- 4 **Accuracy:** although many candidates showed good control of grammar, characters and punctuation, for many this was an area where there was room for improvement. There were cases where candidates had shown good ability to develop and structure their material, but where the overall quality of the work was adversely affected by the inaccuracy of the language used. Regrettably, there were a few cases where the level of inaccuracy was such that Examiners had difficulty following the gist of what the candidate was trying to say.

Argumentative, narrative and descriptive writing all require different approaches. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of playing to their strengths and choosing a question in the examination which allows them to do the type of writing they are best at. Teachers can help by practising these different types of writing in class and ensuring that candidates are aware of their differing requirements.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write about a good teacher or discuss the subject of what makes a good teacher in more general terms. Unsurprisingly, this proved a popular question and on the whole the level of work produced by candidates was good. Some wrote with a great deal of insight and were able to analyse their personal experiences and draw interesting conclusions. Weaker candidates often wrote about teachers in general without exploring the qualities that help make a good teacher.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to explain their understanding of a well-known Chinese saying ('There's always a higher mountain') and exemplify it. This proved a fairly popular title and where candidates wrote answers based on personal experiences, on what they had observed around them or on their knowledge of history, they usually produced interesting and insightful work. Weaker answers tended to stray too far from an interpretation of the saying, perhaps because candidates were not familiar with it.

Question 3

This question required candidates to write an article for a journal aimed at young people in which they discussed the ups and downs of being a teenager and growing up. It proved another very popular choice and the best answers not only exhibited a great deal of maturity, but were also often very moving. Weaker answers tended to be repetitive or failed to come to grips with the title at all, instead discussing how teenagers ought to behave in today's society.

Question 4

This was one of the most popular titles in this examination and it inspired a high proportion of well written answers dealing with moving personal experiences and offering interesting insights. At the other end of the spectrum, candidates tended to write a simple description of their home town without attempting to convey any notion or feeling of what it is to be 'homesick'.

Question 5

For **Question 5**, candidates were expected to write about their favourite subject at school. A full range of responses was seen. As is usual with this sort of title, the best answers were characterised by the ability to write thoughtfully and fluently, drawing on personal experience to provide convincing exemplification.

Question 6

'Wonderful time and beautiful scenery' proved another popular title. The best pieces were written with great style by candidates who showed excellent command of Chinese. Weaker answers only explored the title partially or dealt with it in a superficial fashion.

Question 7

Some reflective responses to this well-known saying. Occasionally, candidates merely described an outing to the Great Wall without attempting to address the true meaning of the saying.

Question 8

Only a small number of candidates chose to write about 'Spiritual life and religious belief'. The best answers were written by candidates who were able to organise their material effectively and produce a clear and sustained argument. Weaker answers were often repetitive as candidates only explored some very narrow aspect of the title.

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. The candidates who chose this question were able to approach it in a variety of ways. The results were generally convincing.