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FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Candidates performed well on this paper and the standard was consistent with that of previous years. The topics in **Section One** and **Two** were familiar to most candidates and they were able to write fluently, using their own words. Examiners were pleased to note a decrease in the practice of copying chunks from the original text as compared to previous years.

Comments on specific questions

Section One

Question 1

As stated in the comments above, candidates were familiar with the topic and usually had few problems expressing their ideas. However, a tendency to rely on description rather than analysis meant that few candidates achieved top marks. It was common for candidates to describe how people celebrated Chinese New Year in the past, move on to describe present-day celebrations, but without making any connections between the old and the new. It was important to discuss the changes and to analyse why they were taking place. Although there was scope for candidates to focus on personal experience, they needed to use this personal experience to exemplify and analyse what was happening to society as a whole.

Unfortunately some candidates who wrote well organised answers with good content were let down by simple and/or faulty language.

Section Two

Question 2

The issues for Examiners when marking this question were very similar to those in the previous question. Again, essays tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Most candidates wrote about fashion without taking the debate any further and discussing the reasons why certain types of clothes are favoured by young people. There were a number of candidates who talked about fashion in general without making any reference at all to young people, who were the focus of the question.

Section Three

Question 3

The great majority of candidates did well in this question.

Question 4

Some candidates hesitated between **(a)** and **(b)**.

Question 5

This question proved to be quite difficult for many candidates. For **(a)** and **(b)** some did not understand the idioms and, therefore, could not give the meaning of the underlined words. For **(c)** and **(d)**, although most candidates seemed to know the meaning, they found it difficult to convey this precisely in their own words.

Question 6

The majority of candidates did well in this question. Full marks were awarded as long as they demonstrated their understanding of the saying.

Question 7

Again, this question posed no particular problem to the vast majority of candidates.

Question 8

This question tested measure words and it was surprising how many candidates had problems with them. This is clearly an area which would benefit from more practice.

Question 9

Most candidates did well in this question.

Question 10

The majority of candidates got full marks for this question.

<p>Paper 0509/03 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

In most cases, candidates wrote essays that were appropriate, detailed and which included plenty of examples. Much of the work produced was interesting to read. It was a shame, however, that in some cases, although the essays displayed great potential, arguments were not well developed or there were too many examples of incorrect grammar, word usage and characters. There were also cases where candidates seemed to lose their way and much of the essay was irrelevant.

The overall structure of the candidates' compositions was generally good, with adequate paragraphing and many examples of good beginnings and endings. However, there were also cases where the ending seemed rushed or where paragraphing was haphazard or even nonexistent.

In the best answers, a strong sense of audience was apparent. Writing was clear and fluent with good use of varied vocabulary and a clear desire to engage the interest of the reader. At the other end of the scale, it appeared that little thought had gone into the writing, which was rambling and monotonous.

Accuracy is one area that could be greatly improved. Although the majority of candidates showed competence in word usage, grammar, character correctness and punctuation, there were too many who did not seem to be aware that these form the basis of any sound piece of writing. In the worst examples, faulty language and inappropriate use of punctuation meant that whole sections of the work produced were difficult to understand, if not incomprehensible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write about bitterness and happiness. This was one of the most popular titles and produced some interesting compositions. Where candidates did not score so highly it was often because they had not thought about what they wanted to say before they started writing, resulting in confused and contradictory compositions.

Question 2

Only a few candidates chose to demonstrate their understanding of this well-known Chinese saying. There were some convincing pieces, clearly based on personal experience.

Question 3

A reasonable number of candidates opted for this title and wrote about the book they love reading the most. The most successful pieces were those where candidates developed their material beyond the superficial in order to convey why a particular book was so special to them.

Question 4

Candidates were invited to write an article for “The Music Lovers’ Journal” discussing the role of music in people’s lives. Again, many essays suffered from a lack of organisation and planning.

Question 5

This was one of the most popular titles. There were some interesting and even moving accounts of a hot summer’s day. A few candidates had not read the title carefully enough and wrote about a hot summer.

Question 6

Another popular title, which inspired some excellent writing.

Question 7

Examiners were surprised so few candidates chose this title which required them to write about an outstanding/heroic person.

Question 8

A large number of candidates elected this title and wrote newspaper articles discussing the pressure that exams place on pupils in secondary and high school education. This was clearly a subject close to every candidate’s heart, resulting in some pleasing work.

Question 9

Candidates were expected to use this well-known line from a Chinese poem as inspiration for an article or story. Though not a popular choice, some good work was produced by candidates who all approached the title in their own unique way.