

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/01

Reading

General comments

This is the first year of the revised syllabus and new format of question paper, and in general, candidates coped very well. The standard demonstrated by candidates is comparable to that of previous years. Most were able to thoroughly understand the passages and to express themselves in their own words. Candidates seemed to find writing the summary the most challenging area, and this is where improvements could be made.

Centres are reminded to inform their candidates that the use of Pinyin is strongly discouraged. Candidates should aim to answer the whole paper in Chinese characters.

Some Centres provided candidates with loose sheets of paper. This is acceptable, but sheets must be properly fastened and arranged in the correct order.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question correctly. The important point to mention was that the event happened a long time ago.
- (b)(i) Most candidates did well in this question.
- (ii) Most candidates answered this question well. In order to gain the mark, candidates needed to point out either '新校址' or '男女学生特别多'.
- (c) Some candidates needed to read the text more carefully in order to gain the marks here. They sometimes mixed up the candidates with the teachers by saying that the older teachers were from '闽粤两地' and '他们听不懂学生的口音'. Some said the new candidates came from '全国各地' which was not specific enough.
- (d) Candidates needed to make four separate points to gain full marks for this question. Some candidates failed to mention that the new candidates were curious - '好奇'.
- (e)(i) Most candidates answered this question well. Some only scored one mark because they did not mention the fact that '冰心希望学生通过自述... ..'. '自述' needed to be mentioned.
- (ii) Most candidates did well in this question.
- (f) This question required candidates to mention five points from the original text which expressed how Bing Xin built her relationship with the candidates. Most candidates did very well in this question, but should be reminded that they should attempt to answer using their own words.
- (g) The majority of candidates coped well with this question.

Question 2

This question required candidates to read two given passages and to summarise the key points from the passages, which related to building good relationships between teachers and students.

This proved to be the more challenging section of the paper, with some candidates failing to answer the given questions, and rather providing a précis, or even a thorough retelling of the two passages. Candidates are reminded that they must use the information provided in the passages, and select relevant points to answer the questions. No credit can be given for adding details from the candidates' imagination or personal experience.

As both passages discussed the positive effects of teacher/student relationships, Examiners were surprised to read essays which were wholly negative in their message, as this did not accurately reflect the passages themselves.

Candidates should aim to use their own language as much as possible, and to avoid substantial lifting from the original passages. Whilst two bullet points are provided to candidates to help structure their essays, there is no need for them to produce two separate essays, one is sufficient.

Answers should be precise and relevant. Some candidates reiterated points about '学生和老师之间应有好的关系' or '老师要有正确的态度' which do not answer the question. Answers need to be precise and specific before marks can be awarded.

However, many candidates successfully picked out the key information points from the given passages and organised their answers well to relate the points to the questions asked.

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Paper 0509/02
Writing

General comments

- 1. Material:** In the majority of cases, content was interesting and relevant to the question set and showed sufficient maturity at this level. Many of the candidates who attempted argumentative questions produced very balanced and well supported arguments and most of the stories were convincing. Although relatively few candidates chose to do descriptive writing, most of the work produced was actually of a good standard, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates. Most candidates wrote at an appropriate length as required. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the questions carefully, to ensure their responses are relevant to the questions asked.
- 2. Structure:** In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays had clear beginnings and endings (or introductions and conclusions) with appropriate signposting between paragraphs and ideas. In a small number of cases, essays lacked a clear progression of ideas, which affected the coherence of the piece. For such candidates, organisation could be improved by avoiding repetition.
- 3. Style:** At the very top end, Examiners saw examples of sophisticated writing with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. It is clear such candidates are very well read and have a good grasp of idiomatic expressions, quotes and relevant literary and historical knowledge. In general, most candidates had a clear awareness of audience. Examiners saw variety in candidates' grasp of the language. Most were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures whilst others tended to be repetitive in content and used limited expressions. It was evident that some candidates seldom read in Chinese and clarity of thought and expression was an area where improvements could be made. Extensive reading in Chinese and discussion of well chosen reading materials would help in this area.
- 4. Accuracy:** While many candidates showed good control of grammar, characters and punctuation, others made fairly frequent mistakes in characters, most notably in the number of misused homonyms. E.g. 鬼*计 instead of 诡计, 先*在 instead of 现在, 偏*偏*起舞 instead of 翩翩起舞, 恐据* instead of 恐惧, 为*一 instead of 唯一. Some errors were caused by carelessness or confusing characters of similar shapes, e.g. 板*纸 instead of 报纸, 床*祝 instead of 庆祝, 考*顺 instead of 孝顺.

Some candidates did not distinguish between the grammatical structural words 的, 地 and 得. They also confused male and female personal pronouns 他 and 她.

In general, the level of achievement on this paper was pleasing. Candidates at the top end produced very sophisticated arguments, beautiful descriptions or very touching stories. Some papers contained frequent grammatical and character mistakes. Most of the errors in characters could be eradicated by comparison and contrast, practice and attention to detail.

In terms of time management, most candidates managed well, except a very small number of scripts had strong evidence of rushing towards the end. More timed essay practice should improve in this area.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write an argumentative piece about friendship. Although this was not a popular choice in this section, those who did decide to answer this question produced work of a very high standard, indicating a high level of maturity in thinking and sophisticated mastery of the language. Some candidates were able to quote from ancient texts appropriately and to very good effect.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to write about their view on corporal punishment. This proved to be the most popular question and most candidates were able to present both sides of the argument in a very structured manner whilst still putting across their own point of view. Many cited their own experience or recent press stories. Their language tended to be fluent with some complexity in structure and expressions. Weaker candidates tended to produce work which was repetitive and used a very limited range of expressions.

Question 3

Candidates were expected to write about the importance of spring. A fair number of candidates chose this question and did a good job. They were able to develop the materials with clear logic, varied structures and expressions.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to discuss the role of advertising in their daily life. This was also a popular question, enabling stronger candidates to produce defined and logical arguments. Weaker candidates tended to lack coherent progression of ideas and did not manage to write with sufficient depth.

Section 2

Question 5

Candidates were expected to write about how an object may cause them to think about a particular person or trigger a memory. This could be a descriptive or narrative piece of writing. This was the second most popular question in this section and most candidates handled it well, producing some very touching stories. Some descriptions contained sophisticated expressions, creating vivid imagery.

Question 6

Candidates were expected to write about the happiest day of their life. On the surface, this question appeared easy and many weaker candidates chose it. The standard was varied. While some produced fairly good work, many essays were repetitive and shallow. The weakest candidates all chose to write about their birthday, listing details such as where they went, what they ate, the games they played and the presents they received. Such candidates tended to have a poor grasp of the language, which was reflected in the frequent errors in characters and the limited structures and vocabulary.

Question 7

Candidates were expected to describe a difficult event or tell the story of how they overcame difficulties before achieving the end result. This did not prove to be a very popular question but those who chose it tended to be very strong and produced convincing stories with good structure and a well managed climax. The language was generally fluent and had verbal sophistication.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write a descriptive piece about a clean and white world. Most candidates wrote about winter scenery or a family holiday on a snowy mountain, while some talked about how pollution is destroying the natural world. Only a small number of candidates chose this question, most of them producing good quality work.