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# FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

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Paper 0505/02

Reading and Directed Writing

## General comments

There was a wide range in performance this year, but although occasionally candidates omitted to perform a certain task, the vast majority of candidates had something to write in response to every question. Success depended partly on the ability to understand and write good German, but also on the ability to read questions carefully in order to work out what type of answer was required. The best candidates showed that they had not only fully understood the texts, but also the questions.

The overall standard ranged from excellent to very weak; many candidates coped adequately with **Question 1** and were able to produce an appropriate interview for **Question 2**. For **Question 3**, only a small number chose to write a story, of whom only a few were able to use an appropriate register.

Attention is drawn to the following, relatively frequently occurring errors in:

- imperfect tense forms and simple past forms of strong verbs
- the use of prepositions and cases
- subject-verb agreement
- spelling, such as *mann* instead of *man*, the omission of capitals for nouns, the confusion in use between *ss* and *ß*
- punctuation: many candidates did not use any commas, some omitted several full stops and few showed full understanding of the appropriate use of exclamation marks or question marks
- the use or non-use of *Umlaute* (*ä/ü/ö*).

On the whole, the language used in the answers was encouragingly idiomatic, but most candidates struggled with structure and style in their responses to **Question 2** and **Question 3**. Many problems with **Question 2** and **Question 3** arose from candidates' inability to distinguish between the formats of an interview, speech, article and letter.

Lastly, Centres are reminded to make sure that the pages of individual scripts are fastened together in the correct order.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Most candidates found both texts accessible and there were only a few misunderstandings. No candidates omitted to answer **Question 1**, but many answers were too short. On the whole, the quality of summaries was mixed. Some candidates produced excellent summaries and then proceeded to write in-depth comparisons, finishing off with a short paragraph in which they offered their personal opinions. However, in many cases candidates wrote *about* the texts without attempting to provide a summary, concentrating rather on their personal opinions in response to the texts. Strictly speaking, giving a personal opinion is not the objective of this particular exercise and no credit can be given to answers which solely consist of such opinions. Literal reproduction of content from the texts and a lack of structure rendered a number of answers inadequate and incoherent. The best answers consisted of comparisons drawing on linguistic or stylistic points, supported by examples from the texts and which then proceeded to describe the effect of certain rhetorical devices on the reader. Weaker candidates listed rhetorical devices, but failed to find textual evidence for them or neglected to explain their effect. A large number of candidates did not compare the texts at all and lost out on valuable marks. Others struggled to find the right idiomatic introduction for their answer (e.g. *Der Text handelt um.../Der Text behandelt von...*). Better candidates were aware of the correct register and understood that colloquialisms and informal language should be avoided in summaries, unless quoted from the text.

**Question 2**

The answers to **Question 2** were of mixed quality. Many candidates produced very good answers by including an introduction and a conclusion to the interview, while making excellent use of the stimuli provided in the texts. Weaker candidates often produced answers that were either too short or incoherent or both. On this particular question, confusion between the use of the conditional and the subjunctive occurred in several answers. Sustaining an appropriate register once it had been established in the greeting (e.g. *Sehr geehrte Hörer... or Hallo liebe Hörer...*) also posed problems for many candidates. Occasionally, a mixture of *du* and *Sie* and their related forms was used. Some of the weaker candidates ignored the question which stated that they should write an interview, and produced a speech or monologue.

**Section B****Question 3**

A small number of candidates failed to attempt this task. A large majority produced articles rather than stories, but some responses consisted of a mixture of both genres. Some of the stories were well written with a well-developed plot and cast of characters, which were a joy to read. Some aspired to the same level of excellence, but showed weaknesses, such as inappropriate mixing of tenses and lack of coherence. Few candidates produced very good articles which were clear and coherent. Many responses were lacking in structure and paragraphing generally appeared to be a problem. Future candidates should be reminded to give their story or article a headline or title, and to introduce and conclude their work in a fashion appropriate to the genre.

<b>Paper 0505/03</b>
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<b>Continuous Writing</b>
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**General comments**

As is the case in most sessions, performance ranged from the excellent to the very poor, but generally the standard of writing was encouraging. The recent spelling reform has highlighted new areas of weakness as there was an increase in spelling errors. However, there was evidence to suggest that candidates had been taught well and had a good command of the language. Stronger candidates obviously enjoyed demonstrating how they could use German in a creative way. Less able candidates displayed carelessness when it came to accuracy, even in relatively simple areas, such as the use of pronouns, cases and prepositions. Poor word order and a lack of relevant vocabulary was noticeable in the work of all but the best candidates. On the whole, there appears to be a slight decline in linguistic accuracy, which is noticeable above all in poor spelling, poor word order and the poor use of dative and personal pronouns.

**Comments on specific questions****Question 1**

This was, by far, the most popular essay title. The best candidates wrote essays in which strong convictions in favour of or against TV and intelligent reflections were presented in a clear and persuasive manner. Such candidates showed good linguistic skill in building their case, even if clear-cut conclusions were not always reached. Some candidates' work, however, was marred by poor spelling (e.g., *eigentlich, virusen, bemerked, forstehlen, Kielometer*), a lack of punctuation and inappropriate style. Despite many candidates' familiarity with this subject, the weakest essays were very poor, with little or no relevance to the title, written in inaccurate German containing elementary errors such as the confusion in use between *das* and *dass* and *man* and *mann*.

### Question 2

Only a handful of candidates chose to tackle this title. Most candidates demonstrated a good command of German, although inaccuracy in the use of gender, adjectival endings and comparative forms occurred regularly with weaker candidates. Among the more striking errors this year was the tendency to double up letters in certain words, examples of which included: *jeddoch*, *die Vortteile*, *desshalb*, *ess ist* and *warren*. From this, it would appear that the recent spelling reform has made some candidates somewhat unsure in certain areas of spelling and grammar.

### Question 3

A small number chose this title. Some essays were inspired, others lacked inspiration and were thin on content. Mistakes included *gewint*, *files* (for: *vieles*), *fielfältichkeit* and *Lanzleute*.

### Question 4

This essay title allowed candidates to use German in a more creative way, and the best handled the title superbly, writing some very engaging stories, which sustained the interest of the reader. A lack of relevant descriptive vocabulary and elementary grammar in some other stories suggests that it is still essential to concentrate on consolidating knowledge of basic grammar and essay-writing skills, before essays can be written successfully during an examination. The overuse of words such as *machen* suggests that candidates need to improve their word-range. In some cases, candidates appeared to have an insufficient grasp of the title and consequently wrote confused essays.

### Questions 5 and 6

These titles proved to be the least popular. One essay was outstanding, containing excellent idiomatic usage, a variety of expressions and a high standard of accuracy. Some offered random statements without creating connections between them. Candidates are encouraged to read widely and update their knowledge on current issues, in order to enhance both their vocabulary and ability to write on a variety of topics.

### Question 7

The overall standard was pleasingly high with the most interesting essays arising from what appeared to be a genuine passion for the subject. However, in trying to express their convictions, some of the candidates' language became a little confused, e.g. *Wenn man so die kleinen Kinder sieht mit den Müttern, dann denkt man eigentlich als Mutter dass der Zoo gut ist*. Weaker essays contained little relevant material, showing an inability to structure an essay and develop an argument.

### Question 8

Most candidates were able to write relevant and interesting essays, although some were rather limited in scope. Some candidates showed a sophisticated development of ideas, producing confident, well-structured essays. A small number of candidates introduced ideas that bore little relevance to the essay title. Inadequate vocabulary and basic grammatical errors often confused the ideas some of the weaker candidates were trying to get across.

### Question 9

Some essays were very thorough and the language used was generally appropriate. However, weaker candidates lacked the necessary vocabulary to produce good essays.