

FIRST LANGUAGE JAPANESE

Paper 0507/02
Reading and Directed Writing

Key Message

In order to do well in **Part 1** of this paper, candidates need to:

- ensure that the content is relevant to the question, and focussed on the theme of the 2 passages.
- ensure that their composition is coherent and includes a brief introduction and conclusion.
- show a confident grasp of the issues, taking ideas from the passages and developing them to relate to the task set.
- produce a clearly structured argument.
- display accurate grammar, well-formed sentence structures, effective linking between sentences and paragraphs, appropriate style for the genre with consistency throughout the prose, and good knowledge of kanji.
- observe the word limit

For Part 1, Question 1

Candidates should summarise passages A and B succinctly, making a comparison between the two and describing the difference in their approach to a common theme. Candidates need to give their own opinion as to which of the two approaches they agree with and to what extent.

For Part 1, Question 2

Candidates need to compare and describe the similarities and/or differences between personal experience and the situations described in A and/or B concerning a common theme. Candidates need to support their arguments with a brief logical discussion, preferably providing a concrete example.

General Comments

Candidates generally performed well although with varying levels of accuracy and fluency. Most candidates completed all the questions in Parts 1 and 2, demonstrating good time-management and familiarity with the exam format.

Most candidates showed that they had a good understanding of the two passages, and managed to describe the main messages in passages A and B adequately in both questions in Part 1. Stronger answers managed to accurately describe contrasting approaches to the common theme in a coherent prose. Weaker answers were characterised by the lifting of sections directly from the passages, or by the lack of a structured argument.

Many candidates expressed their ideas and opinions coherently, making suggestions or stating opinions, which were supported by concrete examples and logical argument. Some candidates also demonstrated originality and developed interesting ideas.

Candidates at this level are expected to compose a coherent discourse using longer sentences and structured paragraphs. However, there was a general tendency towards shorter, simple sentence structures and a lack of conjunctive expressions. Missing particles, unfinished sentences, inconsistent sentence-ending styles, and idiosyncratic syntactic structures were also observed among weaker candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

Stronger candidates produced clear and well thought-out compositions, showing evidence of pre-writing planning. These essays gave a succinct summary of the two passages, including a brief introduction and conclusion. When comparing the main points of the passages they demonstrated a good grasp of the content and were able to make a clear case for their preferred option, using excellent grammar and wide vocabulary. In contrast, weaker candidates developed the material in a more limited way and used less varied sentence structures and vocabulary but managed to communicate messages sufficiently using very simple but accurate language. Such essays demonstrated good paragraphing, accurate basic grammar and effective use of conjunctive expressions.

Question 2

This year, candidates were asked to write a brief article for a newspaper to make “suggestions for the future of agriculture in Japan (or the country where the candidate lives)”. Candidates were expected to: describe personal experience of agriculture (from any aspect) relating to passages A and B; make suggestions about the future of agriculture in a chosen country, giving reasons and concrete examples to support the argument.

Candidates generally responded to the question positively with a sense of involvement. For example, candidates chose the stance of either A or B and explained reasons why they adhere to that approach to agriculture, describing the similarities and/or differences to their own experience. Stronger candidates argued for an ideal approach to agriculture and how the current situation can be improved. They provided concrete examples to support their arguments in a logical and convincing manner.

Part 2

In this section the majority of candidates demonstrated good lexical and grammatical knowledge and a good command of *Kanji*.

FIRST LANGUAGE JAPANESE

Paper 0507/03
Continuous Writing

Key Message

On this paper candidates must demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1. Material presented should be relevant, appropriate and accurate.
2. The structure should be coherent and cohesive in particular with regards to paragraphing and sentence structure and candidates should include an introduction and conclusion.
3. The style should be appropriate to the audience and should include a varied range of vocabulary and sentence structure.
4. Candidates' work should be accurate, particularly regarding grammar, punctuation, and usage of *Genkō Yōshi*.

Candidates should also ensure that they adhere to the specified word limit.

General Comments

Many candidates produced competent and original compositions. In general, successful candidates chose a subject that was suitable to their linguistic level and personal style of writing. Such a choice of topic helped many candidates to gain high marks by producing a readable and interesting composition in a style that was appropriate to the genre and content.

Stronger candidates tended to choose topics which required an analytical and argumentative approach. Such candidates typically used a wide range of vocabulary and employed complex sentence structures. Furthermore, they were able to write coherently using a clear three-part (Introduction-Content-Conclusion) structure. Some candidates skilfully employed a traditional Japanese four-part discourse structure to maintain coherence in an authentic Japanese style.

Stronger candidates' essays demonstrated relevance of content to the chosen topic, clarity of arguments, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and paragraph links. A few candidates distinguished themselves in terms of originality, use of *Kanji*, and appropriateness of lexical choices.

Weaker candidates, in general, opted for imaginative stories and free composition in a simple style.

Comments on specific questions

Nine titles were given to call for the candidates' imaginative, descriptive or argumentative responses in an appropriate style.

1. Finally, my dream has come true, but I still cannot believe that this is really happening to me. I cannot put it into words how I have longed for this day ... (Continue the story from here).
2. Discuss "the importance of learning a foreign language", giving reasons and clarifying the grounds for your claim. Write convincingly.
3. What does the proverb, "children do not fully appreciate the love of their parents", mean to you? Write an essay using concrete examples.
4. Consider possible causes of "social-divide / social un-equality". Suggest solutions.

5. What can candidates do to create an environment where they can enjoy studying? How can that be promoted? Give your opinion and make suggestions using concrete examples.
6. Write an essay using the expression, “vital energy/vital force”, at least once.
7. Write freely about the following idiomatic four-character compounds: “sober seriousness” (i.e. calm and reassuring).
8. State whether you agree or disagree with the opinion that “candidates should be taught more practical vocational skills rather than academic theoretical knowledge only”.
9. Write your personal response to the photograph below (i.e. picture of a young boy who is about to kick a ball). You can choose any viewpoint.

Candidates who chose Topic 1 generally performed satisfactorily and many chose to tell a story using their own experience. Some opted for a more imaginative story, but did not manage to create a coherent story with a clear ending.

Topics 2, 4, 5 and 8 required candidates to indicate their standpoint first, and then to develop analytical and logical arguments in a consistent manner. The candidates who chose these topics tended to be stronger in language use and in writing skills.

Topic 3 required creativity and effective use of language to express personal opinions. Successful candidates discussed the concept of “love between parents and their children,” drawing examples from social affairs or personal experience.

For Topics 6 and 7 a clear and succinct explanation of an idiom/proverb was required. These should be followed by a discussion about the idiom/proverb in a coherent manner. Successful essays explained how idioms may be paraphrased in more ordinary language, and proverbs can be explained taking an example from daily-life situations.

Topic 9 required creative writing from a visual stimulus. Candidates were expected to describe vividly what they see in the picture and to develop the material by supplying an original story or by discussing issues arising from the photo. This year’s photo showed a teenager playing a football.