

FRENCH

Paper 9779/01
Speaking

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion.

General comments

Centres are to be thanked for their meticulous adherence to every detail of administration, and for their admirable preparation of candidates. It was obvious that candidates had clearly enjoyed their research, and this shone through in the enthusiastic way they discussed their chosen topics. Overall comprehension was excellent, and even the grammatically weaker candidates exuded infectious enthusiasm.

In no case was there evidence that nerves at the prospect of having to face a Visiting Examiner had a deleterious effect on the candidates' performance. Quite the contrary: alert, engaged and expansive, they had patently been well prepared for the experience.

DISCUSSION OF ARTICLE

Of the four articles, the most popular was on health and fitness, followed by the environment and then law and order. The least popular topic proved to be the passage on human relationships. In the majority of cases, choices were judicious in that the candidates felt at home both with the article they had chosen and, importantly, with the umbrella theme. It was pleasing to note that there were relatively few cases this year of *ce passage s'agit de*.

1. Health and fitness

Almost without exception, candidates approved of the government reform banning the sale of alcohol and tobacco to under-eighteens, most agreeing that there is a significant maturity gap between 16 and 18. That said, candidates were quick to point out that circumventing the restriction was signally easy. By the same token, many thought it naïve to ban Internet advertising on youth and sporting sites alone, as if these were the only sites youngsters were exposed to. A number expressed critical surprise at the availability of alcohol in motorway service stations. Most candidates understood the government's dilemma in having to placate the wine industry lobby. While vocabulary held few surprises, it was clear very few candidates could pronounce correctly *alcool* and *tabac*. Thematic discussion ranged over such areas as privatisation of health care, remuneration of doctors and nurses, a school's role in promoting health, the growing incidence of psychiatric problems, the addiction to physical exercise and euthanasia.

2. Law and order

All candidates were familiar with the Gallic dislike and distrust of the police, though surprisingly few were aware of the difference between a CRS and a gendarme. Opinions varied as to the role of the police, be it one of protection or repression. The question of racism in police attitudes was fully dealt with, and a number of candidates who had seen or studied *La Haine* made pertinent references to scenes in the film. Not least, the concept of excessive force and who is to judge what is excessive and what is not generated some lively discourse. General discussion focused on such topics as police presence in schools, the problems in prisons, the moral acceptability of certain crimes, torture, pornography, terrorism and the death penalty.

3. Environment

Most candidates felt that the idea of “cutting back”, even in a capitalist economic system, was not only desirable but feasible. They were less favourable to the idea of *magasins bio*, some citing these as a luxury for the rich. Interesting lines were taken on the idea of stress, though few felt “possessed” by their possessions. Equally, few were impressed by the thought of a week without TV, mainly on the grounds that they did not watch it much anyway. Areas that proved fruitful for the purpose of general discussion included ecoscepticism, the role of science, space exploration, Vélib, sound and visual pollution, eco-towns and nuclear energy.

4. Human Relationships

Surprisingly few candidates opted for this article, but those who did were able to discuss pertinently issues such as the declining role of marriage, society’s facilitating of divorce, the pros and cons of the PACS, single parents, and the institution of the family in general. Broader topics for discussion included the nature of friendship, relations with grandparents, paedophilia, family solidarity, group behaviour, social Internet sites, jealousy, same sex marriage and homophobia.

TOPICS

The range of topics chosen was even varied and original, with no evidence whatsoever of bulk classroom preparation. In a very small number of cases, however, there was little or no reference to the target-language/culture on the bullet-point sheet: candidates would be well advised to ensure, either in the topic title or sub-headings, that they are relating their topic to a francophone country or culture. Candidates now have the hang of the one-minute uninterrupted presentation, designed to give an overview of the topic they have chosen. The best presentations are those which explain why they think that the topic is important and which do not simply list the various aspects they wish to discuss.

The following gives an idea of the dazzling variety of topics chosen:

Literary: Gide, Molière, Racine, Stendhal, Flaubert, Voltaire, Rimbaud, de Beauvoir, Zola, Balzac, Alain Fournier, Camus, Colette, Sagan

Philosophical: Descartes, Michel Foucault, Sartre

Historical: Pre WW2 Fascism, the Mitterand generation, Richelieu, Algerian Independence, Haussmann, Haiti, Napoleon, the Bastille, May 68, Henri IV

Artistic: French Punk Rock, Godard, Gustave Courbert, Satie, Lully, French organs and organists, Coluche, Xavier Veilhan, Gainsbourg, Matisse, Camille Claudel

Social/Political: Muslim integration, Le Pen, the National Identity debate, the Charte de l’Environnement, youth unrest, social housing, *l’expulsion des Roms*, the Grandes Ecoles, *le problème énergétique*, Médecins sans Frontières, *la burqa*, terrorism in France, prostitution in France, La Côte d’Ivoire

LANGUAGE ABILITY

In nearly all cases, linguistic output reflected two years of post-GCSE study. Many candidates deployed sophisticated lexis and syntax with a commendable degree of accuracy and a gratifyingly high number coped well with subjunctive clauses, even if mispronunciations did crop up from time to time, e.g. *ait* pronounced *aïlle*. Occasionally the t of *et* was sounded, while *aussi* in initial position (to mean “also”) was not uncommon.

FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

By and large, this was highly impressive, and most candidates struck an excellent balance between facts and personal opinion/reaction. Nearly all topics had been thoroughly researched and many candidates coped with aplomb when questions ranged outside the ambit of their sub-headings.

FRENCH

Paper 9779/02
Reading and Listening

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

Texte à lire 1

Question 1

This proved to be an appropriately straightforward “warm-up” question and most candidates scored the point. Those few who did not, tended to focus on the material contained in the first two sentences of the opening paragraph rather than on the final sentence.

Question 2

Most candidates had understood that the western lifestyle and/or the emphasis on consumerism/economic growth is/are largely responsible for the ecological crisis facing the planet. However, only better candidates tended to take into account the final two short sentences of the second paragraph and inferred that man’s failure to consider the consequences of his actions was also an integral part of the problem.

Question 3

Unfortunately it seems that a number of candidates have mis-rad the question. Their answers focused on the present-day situation rather than on the conditions that prevailed in the sixties and how they were worse than those we know today.

Question 4

All that was needed here was the noun *le chauffage*. Not without some reservations, the invented form *chauffement* was deemed to demonstrate comprehension but, for obvious reasons, *réchauffement* did not pass muster. The majority of candidates scored the mark but a number again did not heed the wording of the question and homed in on *nos déplacements en voiture, en avion*.

Question 5

A substantial proportion of candidates successfully conveyed the idea that reducing our carbon footprint is possible without making major changes to our way of life. Quite a few, however, contented themselves with copying the phrase in the text, *sans rien concéder d’essentiel*, which could not be deemed to demonstrate comprehension.

Question 6

A quite common mistake here was taking the two distinct elements referred to in the first sentence of the final paragraph, notably *la domination de la nature* and *la possession*, to be just one item, which resulted in such answers as *L’auteur dit que c’est le but essentiel de la vie de faire de la possession de la nature*.

Question 7

This proved an easy mark for the majority of candidates, many of whom wrote simply *les choses matérielles*. Just a few wrote mini-essays, parts of which usually strayed from what the author means by *l'avoir* and thereby did not score the point. A few thought that it was a reference to the desire to dominate nature referred to in the previous paragraph.

Question 8

Most candidates had no problem in identifying the problem highlighted by the author, notably poverty or the inequitable distribution of wealth. Some answers were too vague (e.g. *l'inégalité*) while others were too specific (e.g. *les formes d'énergie qui existent aujourd'hui qui se distribuent d'une façon inéquitable*).

Texte à lire 2

Question 9

A number of candidates didn't score the mark here because they missed to specify that it is how we used to live before the advent of technology that has become difficult to understand. The answer *How we used to live before* was not accepted.

Question 10

Those candidates who simply wrote *None* were spot on. A few candidates spoiled their answers by writing that women were either absent or they opposed them (*les révolutions techniques se sont faites sans elles, voire contre elles*).

Question 11

The attitude suggested by some candidates was not sufficiently negative to render *réfractaires à*, e.g. *sceptical, not really interested, suspicious, reluctant to be part of it*.

Question 12

Most candidates experienced no problems here. Some, however, suggested that the ground had already been made up and thereby did not heed the tense used (*elles regagnent le terrain*) as well as the statistical detail given.

Question 13

This proved to be an easy point for the vast majority of candidates. Just a handful distorted what they had read by suggesting that 47% of women are Internet users.

Question 14

The most common mistake here was to offer transliterated versions of the French original, witness *A feminine Internet does not exist* and *There are no quotas, debates or concessions*, neither of which demonstrates full comprehension of the two points being made, notably that there is no specifically female version of the Internet and that when it comes to using the Internet, it does not matter whether one is male or female since there are no special conditions or restrictions that apply to one sex and not the other.

Question 15

A small number of candidates did not recognise the word *réseau* which was given as *research*, while some ignored it altogether, which resulted in such answers as *Having knowledge is more important than power*. A few candidates misunderstood the sense of *est porteur de*, e.g. *To use the Internet you need knowledge rather than power*.

Question 16

Most candidates qualified for the point here. However, there was again a certain incidence of unthinking transliterated versions of the phrase *faire avancer l'égalité*, witness to *advance equality* or *to make equality advance*.

Texte à lire 3

Generally speaking, the translation was quite well done: most candidates scored at least 6 out of 10 marks; marks of 7 and 8 were fairly common and some candidates managed 9 and even 10. The items of vocabulary that most frequently caused candidates to stumble were *growth*, *instantaneous*, *mother-in-law*, *moved to* and *gadgets*. Perhaps most surprising was the number of candidates who offered distorted versions of *Canada* of which the most frequent were *Canade* and *Canadie*. Concordances were sound in the majority of cases though there was a certain incidence of such items as *vie quotidien*, *la communication immédiate*, *qui a déménagé* and *être égal à son mari*. *Vouloir que* presented no problems for most candidates and some found another opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the subjunctive with the item *Perhaps she is afraid*. However, there were a few who thought that *Peut-être que* required the subjunctive. Following infinitive structures with *apprendre*, *permettre* and *avoir des problèmes* were well managed in the main, though a number of errors incurred here e.g. *apprendre comment à utiliser*, *la permettre à envoyer* and *n'a pas de problèmes d'utiliser*. On the other hand, *What shows that.....?* quite often proved challenging: *Qu'est-ce que montre* and *Quoi montre que* were two of the versions that figured in quite a lot of scripts.

Texte à écouter 1

Question 18 & 19

Like its counterparts in the Reading Comprehension section, these opening listening questions proved to be quite accessible.

Question 20

- (a) Most of the attempts to transcribe *êtres humains* were successful. However, there were a number of exceptions of the sort *trumans* and *trumains*, and examples were again in evidence here of candidates not paying sufficient heed to the question ("QUI est responsable...."), which resulted in such answers as *le réchauffement climatique*.
- (b) A number of responses were not comprehensive enough and did not convey the detail of what was heard, notably that man has destroyed the eco-systems which used to protect him against viruses/infections. Others picked out Professor Bricaire's statement *ils* (les éco-systèmes) *laissent passer les virus directement sur les hommes*, which is, of course, not an answer to the question as to why human beings are responsible for the increase in the number of epidemics.

Question 21

Again, a number of candidates picked out and correctly transcribed a section of the text which, alas, did not properly target the question, witness *les virus n'ont pas le temps d'être détruits par le froid*. Notwithstanding, though some did choose to use their own words to detail the connection asked for, it was perfectly possible to score the mark by simply transcribing what was heard, and quite a few answers did just that – *la baisse de la durée d'enneigement...est à l'origine de certaines infections*.

Question 22

Most candidates managed *l'irrigation* but *l'élevage* or *les grandes concentrations d'animaux* proved more problematic.

Question 23

Most candidates supplied at least one, and many supplied both, of the requirements specified by Professor Bricaire, notably *les moyens financiers* and *les ressources médicales*.

Texte à écouter 2

Question 24

It was possible to access this point by a number of routes, and indeed the majority of candidates managed to do score the mark.

Question 25

The majority hit the target, though a few answers were not specific enough, e.g. *Difficult, Very hard*.

Question 26 & 27

These questions proved to be accessible to most candidates.

Question 28

The majority of candidates successfully supplied all three of the points made by Michel. Where a mark was lost, it was frequently because the third answer given picked out a section of the text heard that did not target the question, e.g. *People never forget a photograph*. A number of scripts made the same point twice, omitting the idea of being a witness which is the essence of Michel's first statement about how he sees his role, e.g. **Question 21** *To report what is happening in countries affected by war* and **Question 22** *To show the world the daily hell of those involved*.

Question 29

Most candidates successfully provided both of the details required to score the mark, notably *at school* and *using any old camera that he could lay his hand on*. Where one element was omitted, it was usually *at school*.

Question 30

One suspected that quite a lot of the candidates whose answers did not acknowledge the presence of the word *racines* in *me permettent de mieux comprendre les racines du conflit* knew perfectly well what it meant and that their mistake was one of lack of precision rather than lack of knowledge.

Texte à écouter 3

Most candidates notched up some useful scores in the summary exercise: scores of 7 and 8 were common and the best candidates managed 9 and sometimes even full marks. However, there was a noticeable increase this year in the number of candidates who wrote more than the prescribed 100 words: in the interests of fairness, nothing beyond the 100 word limit was credited. A very small number tried to cram in more by writing in note form but, in all cases, this proved to be self-penalising since some of their note-form points were lacking in clarity and therefore did not score. Another pitfall was that encountered in other parts of the paper, notably the tendency to offer up unthinking transliterated versions of what had been heard, the most common example being *...dans ce pays riche de nos identités mêlées*, for which there were rather too many versions of the sort *....in a country rich with mixed identities*.

FRENCH

Paper 9779/03
Writing and Usage

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

General Comments

The Writing and Usage paper (Paper 3) is designed to test candidates' ability to write a discursive essay on topics that have been studied over the two years of the course and also their ability to use correct verb forms, to manipulate language and to demonstrate comprehension of a current affairs article by filling in gaps with the appropriate word or phrase. The paper gives all candidates the chance to perform according to their ability with stretch at the upper end provided by some testing grammar points and essay topics allowing scope for critical thinking and cogent argument.

The selection of essay topics covered the impact of newspapers, the state of the environment, the role of women, aid to the third world, and the breakdown of contemporary society. The usage section of the paper tested knowledge of verb forms in Exercise 1 including use of the imperfect tense, subjunctive usage, formation of a present participle, sequence of tenses with a *si* clause and preceding direct object. Exercise 2 tested candidates' ability to manipulate language and included subjunctive formation, passive voice, use of *avant de*, and a manipulation of direct speech into indirect. Exercise 3 provided candidates with a newspaper article about the impact of the virus H1N1 on Schools in France. Candidates were given a choice of four possible words and phrases to select from to fill in the gaps in the text. For the Discursive Essay 24 marks were awarded for language and 16 for content, Exercises 1 and 2 were worth 5 marks each and Exercise 3 was worth 10 marks.

The paper was well understood by all candidates and there was a significant cohort of very good marks at the top end. It was very pleasing to note that candidates were able to write relevant answers to the essay questions and there was clear evidence that topics had been well studied, appropriate vocabulary learned and genuine balanced opinions formed. The best essays were characterised by a high level of accuracy and a wide range of vocabulary and structures, as well as a mature and measured argument. At the lower end of the spectrum, verb forms, concordances, prepositional usage and the like were sometimes quite haphazard and self-expression was rather awkward and laboured as candidates tried to describe their ideas within the confines of a narrow lexical and structural range. It must be said that candidates, whatever their ability, demonstrated clearly that they had been exposed to the French language in a variety of forms and had ideas about a range of challenging contemporary concerns.

Common errors in the essay section involved:

- incorrect genders of common words such as *public*, *crime*, *pays*, *question*, *Bible*, *réchauffement*, *manque*
- confusion of *penser à* and *de*
- misspellings such as *existence*, *chaqu'un*, *personnellement*, *agressif*, *délinquance*, *néanmoins*, *environnementale*, *renouvelable*, *aujourd'hui*, *charbon (carbone)*
- numerous accent errors such as *société*, *ménace*, *existé*, *créés* (past participle), *achété*, *religions*

- anglicisms such as *actuellement (en fait)*, *place (endroit)*, *change (changement)*, *stage (étape)*, *définitivement*, *à l'autre main*
- use of *aider à (une personne)* and *regarder à (quelque chose)*
- use of *mieux* for *meilleur*, *mal* for *mauvais*, *bien* for *bon*
- problems with discriminating between the forms of *leur* and *leurs* such as *leur enfants*, *leurs donner*
- phonetic spellings as in *car* for *quand*, *en mène* for *emmène*, *ce* for *c'est*, *ses* for *ces* and vice versa
- difficulty with forming reflexive verbs correctly particularly *se rendre compte* in *nous* form
- paragraphs starting with inappropriate link words such as *aussi*, *ensuite*, *alors*

Specific Questions

Part I: Discursive Essay

The essay question gives candidates the opportunity to interpret the question in any way that they wish and there is no correct answer or viewpoint. Most candidates had written a plan and adhered to the instructions in the rubric about the suggested number of words. All demonstrated that they had fully understood the implications of the questions and, having acquired a good knowledge from their reading of French texts and articles, were able to offer some genuine personal discussion of the topics. In general, candidates need to consider carefully their opening paragraph as it is this which sets the tone and parameters of the argument. Many candidates planned their essays in English and then translated the ideas with limited success. Other candidates appeared not to plan but rather to list a number of learned phrases to incorporate into their essays. These phrases designed to provide a framework to a discursive essay were often used to pad a rather thin and often poorly executed argument.

1(a) « Les journaux ont un impact dangereux sur la mentalité des gens. » Discutez de cette affirmation.

This was the second most popular question. It is a widely held belief that the written press has a significant impact on people's perception of the world around them and candidates were encouraged to share their view on the degree to which newspapers can influence readers' thinking. It was, on the whole, well answered. Candidates generally understood the implications of the question and demonstrated a very strong reaction. They saw the main features of newspapers as to inform, educate and entertain but were quick to point out that they had great power over the presentation of material. Some candidates were of the opinion that newspapers have a role in keeping governments in line. They create debates around significant topics of the day and allow the public to ask questions about the things that mean most to them in their lives. The power of the written press is clear in that they can foment hatred and intolerance and destroy the lives of public figures. The reports in papers are often skewed politically or inaccurate and can affect the thinking of the readership. It was pointed out that the press in China is controlled by the government and therefore can be seen to be their mouthpiece. This has been the case through history. It was also shown that the press in the west is also dominated by press barons such as Murdoch and Berlusconi who have tremendous power over the public's perception of events. Another point made was that papers need to be sold and this has a serious impact on their content and style. Candidates understood that this is often the main driver and that therefore it can be hard to trust the integrity of journalists. Comparisons were made between the reporting styles of the Mail and the Guardian in the UK. Overall this question was well answered with some pertinent and relevant points raised. Better candidates argued persuasively for the freedom of the press while recognising its shortcomings. Others described the types of reports seen and talked much about the intrusion on private lives, making mention of Strauss-Kahn and Ryan Giggs in the same sentence.

1(b) « A vrai dire, les gens n'ont pas compris les implications de la crise environnementale. » Partagez-vous cette opinion ?

This was the most popular question and marks were awarded across the range. The question offers candidates the chance to explore what lies behind the current state of the planet and to make some suggestions as to what might be the implications of not changing our behaviour. Candidates had obviously read widely on the topic and were able to refer to numerous examples of ways to avert a disaster including

use of bikes, hybrid cars, wind, solar and wave power, recycling, cutting carbon emissions globally through government accords. Candidates did try to assess whether people were aware of the gravity of the situation and whether they had made any progress towards a solution. It was pointed out that in our current comfortable consumer-oriented world we will be reluctant to make the changes necessary. Candidates felt that people were unwilling to make sacrifices as the disaster was not likely to happen in their lifetime. It was also made clear that some people did not believe there was a crisis. Candidates described the research of the climate scientists and countered it with the arguments of the doubters. It was felt that governments needed to do more to inform the public and enforce changes in behaviour as well as holding international meetings to try and get global agreements on the path to follow. It was understood that countries that were just beginning to thrive such as China and India were understandably reluctant to slow down their industrial production in order to cut global carbon emissions. There were some very impressive essays at the upper end which stated quite clearly the challenges for the modern world and in which candidates expressed their carefully considered and mature arguments in idiomatic and accurate French. Other less convincing essays concentrated on describing the use of bikes and recycling but did not engage with the more widespread issues of climate change. It was certain that all candidates understood the implications of the question and all, in their way, made a good attempt to provide a personal view and reach a conclusion.

1(c) Pensez-vous que l'on puisse toujours parler des femmes comme le sexe inférieur ?

This was one of the less popular questions and interestingly, was attempted by more boys than girls. Candidates generally wrote very well, with good knowledge and insights. They were invited to look again at the role of women – this topic is still at the forefront of public debate. It was very interesting to read the candidates' views on the role of women in today's world. It was clear to them that although much progress had been made, women were still at the mercy of their biology and society had still not fully come to terms with how to cope with maternity leave and the rights/duties of mothers to be with children when young. There was still sexism in many areas of society and it was felt that women were still not fairly paid for carrying out the same work as men. Candidates were keen to point out that girls do better at school than boys and that there are now high profile women such as Ségolène Royal and Marine Le Pen in France and Karren Brady in the UK who have reached the top of their professions and passed through the "glass ceiling". It was recognised by all candidates that much progress had been made but that still more needed to be done as there were areas in the world where it was felt that women were still seriously disadvantaged.

1(d) Êtes-vous d'accord que les pays en voie de développement dépendent trop de l'aide venant des pays développés ?

This was the least popular question and was answered with a variety of results. The top essays were well planned, used appropriate examples, looked at the benefits and possible disadvantages of supplying aid to developing countries, and arrived at a reasonable conclusion. It was felt that the developing countries had no choice but to depend on aid as they were so poor and lacking in essentials such as food and water that populations would perish if it were not provided. Candidates did, however, point out that reliance on aid does create a dependency culture in which it becomes difficult to take initiatives and start to climb out of the state of despair. It was generally considered to be our duty in the West to support the countries struggling with famine, poverty and natural disaster but it was pointed out that this aid came at a cost to our own countries where spending on essentials such as health care might be cut to pay for overseas aid. It was also shown that in some developing countries, regimes are so corrupt that aid money is often channelled into supporting the government and buying weapons. Candidates recognised the real challenge of endlessly providing aid and came to different conclusions about whether Third World countries were too dependent. The candidates were all able to make some significant contribution to the argument which showed that they had fully engaged with the topic and considered its implications.

1(e) « La société commence à se désintégrer à cause de l'indiscipline des gens. » Jusqu'à quel point est-ce vrai ?

This was the third most popular question and it offered candidates the chance to consider contemporary society. Candidates understood the implications of the question but most could not give any historical context. Society today is the product of major changes in the last century and particularly since the 50s and 60s. Changes in the nature of the family, the growth of terrorism, immigration and racism, the growth of crime because of the economic crisis and a move away from traditional religion were shown to be responsible for some of the problems with modern society. Some candidates did not impute the blame for the breakdown of society to people's lack of discipline or the growth of decadence and immorality but more to the economic climate and the gap between the rich and the poor. Other candidates blamed the growth of the Internet and the dependence on computers which was leading to a generation of children without basic literacy skills, poor attention span and a predisposition to violence and sexual excess. Better candidates

moved away from the pessimistic view that society is crumbling and expressed the opinion that modern society has much that is good. It was made clear that while there are doubtless many examples of disrespect, criminal behaviour, decadence, our society still has structure and rules, a thriving cultural life and people who care for their fellow humans. This kind of intelligent balance in essays was well rewarded. Those who merely described the parlous state of society were less well rewarded.

Part II: Usage

Exercise 1

This exercise was generally well understood by candidates, with most achieving between 3 and 5 marks. The most discriminating questions were **Question 4** and **Question 6**. Many candidates wrote *atteindant* in **Question 4** and missed the feminine preceding direct object agreement in **Question 6** writing *achetés*.

Exercise 2

This exercise tested a range of grammatical points. Few candidates achieved full marks but many achieved 3 or 4 out of 5. The following incorrect answers were most common:

Question 7 – *mettre eux-mêmes, vous mettre, mettre les*

Question 8 – *avant sortissant de, avant je sors de, avant de sortir la maison*

Question 9 – *avait prononcé, était prononcée, a été prononcé a prononcé*

Question 10 – *qu'il viendra, qu'il va venir, qu'il vient*

Question 11 - *sans qui, sans que, dont, sans ça*

Exercise 3

Candidates mostly achieved good marks on this exercise, showing that they had a good understanding of the content and grammatical structure of the passage. **Questions 17, 18, 25** were the best discriminators.

FRENCH

<p>Paper 9779/04 Topics and Texts</p>

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- read the question with care and think about what they are asked to do
- plan their answer and organise their material with close attention to the question
- take care to include analysis and argument, and avoid simply retelling the story.

General comments

Candidates should plan their essays before setting pen to paper. A well structured essay will be sensibly paragraphed, and the discussion will lead from an introduction to a conclusion.

In responding to the question on a literary text, candidates should reflect on the whole question, not just focus on one specific word.

For the Cultural Topics section, it is recommended to write on two sources rather than three.

For both parts of this paper, a good level of understanding and knowledge of the texts and films is required, expressed in well argued responses with relevant illustration. The topics section invites the acquisition of a broad cultural knowledge of the topic studied through the material chosen. For answers in French, candidates should strive to achieve a high level of accuracy and determine to use a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence patterns; a sense of idiom would be a bonus.

In both parts of the paper, candidates should:

- read the question carefully
- plan their answer keeping the question in mind throughout
- define the terms of the question in the introduction
- support any assertions with close references to the text and/or film
- make sure quotations, if used, support the argument
- make sure all quotations are accurate
- use paraphrasing and allusion as an alternative to overlong quotations
- make sure to include analysis and argument, and avoid narrative
- demonstrate knowledge by using it as supporting evidence for the argument
- exclude information that is irrelevant to the question.

Part I: Cultural Topics

Candidates should:

- make sure that they learn the necessary vocabulary to write about their topic, when preparing for this part
- remember that the rubric requires reference to only two of the works. Writing about all three may lead to a lack of depth
- try to demonstrate their knowledge of underlying themes, and mention comparisons and links between the two works
- proofread carefully after writing, paying special attention to verb forms and agreements.

Part II: Literary Texts

In context questions candidates should:

- make sure they analyse the extract showing how its content is related to the rest of the work
- avoid using the passage as a springboard for a general essay
- be careful to analyse, rather than re-tell the story of the extract.

This was the second year of the examination, and it was evident from the quality and consistency of candidate performance that Centres had successfully built on the experience of preparing the first cohort and had refined their teaching of the cultural and linguistic requirements of the course. It was clear from reading the scripts that candidates had engaged enthusiastically with the films and texts and enjoyed their study of cultural and literary elements of the pre-U. The quality and range of answers from these candidates confirm that the objective of the syllabus to raise cultural awareness and to develop critical faculties is being fulfilled, often with an impressive level of achievement.

Time management was not a problem for the vast majority of candidates and indeed most candidates chose to write extensively. The length of answers indicated that candidates wished to and were able to communicate a variety of good ideas in generally cogently argued prose and anchor their assertions with close reference to the text or film. The success of their enterprise was generally good or very good and some answers were exceptional in the maturity of approach and expression

The effectiveness of the essays varied according to the quality of discussion and development of argument. Examiners noted that the essays in **Part I (Topics)** benefited from a tighter structure than those written last year, and discussions were brought to a proper conclusion. The analysis of a cultural theme was generally very well handled, with many answers demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of the relevant background as well as of the films and texts themselves. It was felt that those candidates who chose to write on two films (*La ville francophone*) sometimes preferred a narrative approach over analysis or argument, which was apt to lead to a less effective comparison of the themes in the films; consequently the discussion and conclusion were less incisive.

The vast majority of answers engaged well with the terms of the questions, with the best answers revealing detailed knowledge of the texts and films used as supporting evidence in a cogent and coherent line of argument. The overwhelming majority of candidates managed to strike a good balance when approaching two texts and/or films and also, either in the conclusion or in the body of the essay, showed the ability to draw considered comparisons between the two works according to the terms of the question. This year there were fewer scripts which took a purely narrative approach, though some candidates were keen to demonstrate their knowledge of the film and text, and answers here tended to cloud the line of argument.

Centres had been thoughtful and imaginative in their approach to the topics. Some scripts showed that all three elements of a topic had been studied during the course; others demonstrated that additional background material had enriched the teaching programme, notably for *La France pendant la guerre*. This material was often deployed to good effect in answers. A small number of candidates were able to demonstrate awareness of common themes and refer to all three elements of a topic, but Examiners note that this approach makes the comparative discussion more demanding for the candidate: ideas are more difficult to marshal effectively in order to fashion a cogent argument. It is recommended that candidates write their examination essays with reference to only two of the three books or films prescribed for a topic.

The quality of language was generally satisfactory, and often very good. The answers in French were articulate and clear, and it was evident that candidates were comfortable writing extensively in French and that the vast majority had acquired the requisite vocabulary to express points and opinions effectively. The best answers contained an impressive range of verbs, syntactical complexity and idiomatic phrasing.

The best answers to the **Part II** of the Paper (**Texts**) showed an excellent ability to organise material in direct reference to the terms of the question. They also showed solid command of knowledge and understanding of the text studied and a sustained ability to consolidate their argument of comparative judgement with well chosen illustrative references. The majority of candidates had few problems in structuring their answers, and were well practised in defining the terms of the question with a clear introduction and conclusion. Candidates demonstrated that they could produce cogent and considered arguments. All scripts showed a sound acquaintance with source detail. The answers in English were, overall, couched with appropriate regard for register, spelling and grammar, and there was a consistent effort at paragraphing of ideas.

Script evidence confirmed that candidates were better trained in approaching the commentary exercise. The context question was written with a precise rubric asking candidates to look at a particular extract, to refer it to its context and then to analyse specific elements within it. The better answers were able to make convincing cases by close analysis of the text before widening the perspective to show how such elements were evident elsewhere in the work, or to show how such a theme or character developed. There were more candidates this year who gave consideration to stylistic features of the extract; the best example of close linguistic analysis lay in the answers to *Andromaque*. There was a tendency for some candidates to convey a correct interpretation of tone and language, but not refer precisely to the specific detail, or to be implicit rather than explicit in their commentary: this was the case in some answers on Maupassant and Mauriac. Some candidates, though fewer than last year, used the passage as a springboard for a wider, more general essay which therefore did not target the question fully, while others rather than providing an analysis of the passage tended towards a more basic narrative approach to the passage before them. Only a few candidates made use of the line numbers to facilitate detailed discussion.

The remaining questions were of a conventional discursive nature, and candidates responded rather more evenly to these, some showing excellent analytical ability. On occasion some candidates did adopt a rather narrow approach to the question rather than considering the totality of the subject matter: this was particularly apparent in answers on Molière and Mauriac.

Teachers are to be congratulated on the excellent preparation of the candidates for this paper.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Cultural Topics

Question 1A

Candidates showed a good knowledge of their chosen works and were able to use evidence to develop their argument. The most common comparisons were drawn between the film and *La Vie devant soi*, though there was significant support for *Le Blé en herbe*. Candidates were able to choose illustrations from a wide range of material, and the best answers not only distinguished between friendship and love, but also evaluated the different approaches to the theme in the sources. There was interesting discussion of the relationship between Momo and Rosa and his need for companionship, articulated through his invention of Arthur. Relatively few candidates mentioned other characters in the book. Analysis of the film gave rise to some compelling answers, though not all candidates brought out the reasons why Toto was obsessed with the memory of his sister, and comparatively few mentioned Célestin as a foil for Toto's thoughts and emotions, or compared Alfred to Thomas. The answers on *Le Blé en herbe* were effective in discussing the complexities of the relationship between Phil, Vinca and Mme Dalleray. Some essays would have been strengthened by focusing on the importance of love and friendship, whereas there was a temptation simply to outline those themes.

Question 1B

Here, too, candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge and preparation of the two sources, and there was a broad range of illustrative material. Pleasing reference was made to Arthur, the umbrella that Momo makes into his friend in *La Vie devant soi*, and the best answers mentioned the Zaoum brothers' role. It was very rare to read about Nadine or Banania. There was some thoughtful analysis of Phil and Vinca in *Le Blé en herbe*, and some perceptive psychological comparisons drawn between Thomas (in the film) and Phil. This question was generally less well answered than 1A, as there was a focus on only one part of the question: some candidates tended to base their essays on 'points en commun' at the expense of 'le développement des personnages principaux', or to commenting on elements in common between characters within the same work, rather than drawing comparisons between works.

Question 2A

A large number of candidates were drawn to this topic, and answers showed very good knowledge of the film and the Vercors text. Many answers incorporated judiciously chosen background material to contextualise their points from the text. Good answers, for example, distinguished between the years of publication of the sources, and the different motivation behind them. Candidates were divided over whether the French could be proud of their conduct during the war, and very good answers argued for opposite conclusions. There was a temptation to overstate the strength of feeling that the niece had for the German soldier billeted with the protagonists, but, on the whole, candidates made thoughtful and pertinent remarks. Tanguy was only mentioned by a few candidates.

Question 2B

There was useful discussion of the film and the Vercors text. Contextualisation of background material was pertinent and helpful in enabling candidates to weigh up negative elements in wartime. Better answers demonstrated that the microcosm of the school community reflected broader issues in wartime France (e.g. the black market, collaboration), and drew conclusions about the temptation to adopt a selfish approach to life set against the need for survival. Anti-semitism was discussed by many, though a few candidates felt that its expression was restricted to wartime. Some of the incisive discussions on Vercors brought out the dangers of Nazi oppression and the intent of the German army to subdue France and subsume French culture. A number of candidates focused their attention solely on the relationship between the niece and Werner, rather than looking at other details in the story, and some were tempted to take Werner at face value as a naive and well-intentioned representative of the German army.

Question 3A

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 3B

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 4A

Of those candidates attracted to this topic, this was the more popular question, and there was broadly equal consideration given to the three films. Responses to the films were good and wide ranging. Views were mixed about the role of Zac's father in *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, and most answers focused on the strained relationship between father and son, though without analysing the end of the film. Good answers also made mention of other adult figures such as Zach's mother, the psychiatrist and Mme Chose. There were some effective pen portraits of the tensions between adults and youth in *La Haine*, and it was most common to see the police cast in the adult role. Very good answers also included discussion of the scene at the art exhibition, where lack of understanding and communication are highlighted alongside a 'clash of cultures'. For *Chatillez'* film, answers centred on the exaggerated distinction between the two families, and there was good knowledge of detailed reference to incidents in the film. There was a tendency to narrative in many essays, whereas good answers could bring out the difference in morality between the two families, and how the Le Quesnoy family fails to preserve its moral integrity despite its wealth.

Question 4B

All of the candidates could write about the city in regard to their chosen areas, but less attention was given to *la ville comme décor* of the question, and about how *l'espace urbain* influenced the behaviour of the characters. Answers displayed a good knowledge of the two chosen films, but many tended to narrate events rather than develop ideas about the urban environment. Nevertheless, answers on *La Haine* brought out some useful discussion, including analysis of the picnic scene on the rooftop and the barren environment of the *banlieue*. Good answers pointed to efforts to improve life, for example Hubert's failed attempt to establish a gym. There were also useful comparisons drawn between the suburb and central Paris. There were sensible remarks on *Chatillez'* film contrasting the cramped council flat with the spacious accommodation of the Le Quesnoy family, and how the canal scene was significant. Candidates might have also pointed to the significance of the police checking ID only in the poor end of town, or to the cohesion, order and discipline symbolised by the Catholic school and show in the church hall, for example. Answers on *C.R.A.Z.Y.* discussed the environment of the house in Canada and made mention of the Church. Good answers also discussed the significance of Jerusalem. Essays could have included consideration of the

North American city or the representation of Zach in enclosed environments (e.g. his house and bedroom, his dream of rebellion in church) to develop a sharper focus on the question.

Question 5A

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 5B

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Part II: Literary Texts

Question 6 A

Answers to this question displayed not only a good knowledge of the play and its background, but also indicated that candidates had been well-trained in commentary technique. There was no problem in identifying the context of the extract, and candidates paid particular attention to the language, structure and style of the passage. The best answers were able to relate the significance of Oreste's descent into madness to the stylistic features, as well as relate the importance of the ending of the tragedy to the structure of the play as a whole.

Question 6B

There was generally a sound appreciation and understanding of the nature of French tragedy in evidence, and in particular the role and function of characters and the workings of fate, discussed with relation to specific characters in the play. Candidates displayed a thorough knowledge of the text and were able to illustrate their responses effectively. Some answers focused more on one half of the question, on feeling sympathy for characters, while others were based around the characters' transparency. The more convincing responses achieved a balance between these two aspects and discussed the question in its entirety.

Question 6C

The answers to this question were thoughtful and well-argued, and displayed sound analysis of the function of the confidant in tragedy. There was proper evaluation of the four characters, and close reference to the text was used effectively to support assertions.

Question 7A

Candidates who chose to attempt the commentary were generally well-prepared, and answers displayed a good knowledge of the text. The question rubric is designed to help candidates structure their answers and cover the necessary ground; astute candidates took note of this, and were careful not simply to write about points in the passage, but to take into account the instructions in the rubric. Good answers explained the situation that Clitandre is seeking Bélise's support in his bid to marry Henriette. Answers dealt effectively with Bélise's reaction, and most candidates could write persuasively about the Bélise's limited understanding of the theories and practices of the *précieuses*, and how this is expressed in her two speeches. Some candidates had difficulty in pointing out Bélise's embarrassment by what she saw as Clitandre's advances: answers would have benefited from the evaluation that her response was dictated by what she perceived to be the appropriate contempt of a *précieuse* for physical passion and marriage. On the whole there was good understanding and knowledge of comic techniques and of the language of *préciosité*, and the better answers were able to pinpoint textual detail to support assertions. Some candidates were tempted to discuss how the plot developed further in the play rather than focus on the passage in hand.

Question 7B

Here, too, candidates were enthusiastic in their responses, and were keen to show their knowledge and understanding of the play and its context. On the whole, candidates were able to identify comic features and domestic conflict, and better answers were able to show how the former were created out of the latter. Here was a solid understanding of the comic types in Molière, and many candidates were able to show how conflict is deflated by ridiculous behaviour – for example Philaminte's tyranny in the household - and *coups*

de théâtre. Some answers focused more on just one aspect of the question and were thus less effective in addressing the issue as a whole.

Question 7C

Answers to this question demonstrated familiarity with the idea in the title, and good answers displayed clarity about Seventeenth Century *Préciosité* and its manifestations in the play. Candidates had been briefed well about 17th century Parisian salons, and most candidates were able to distinguish between the real bluestocking and the obsessive characters in the play. Many candidates went on to discuss the difference between characters' pretensions and their incompetence, with Trissotin's ability in poetry well to the fore. Good responses included those which sought to develop ideas in their argument and include illustrative material in support, rather than relying on a more narrative approach.

Question 8 A

The commentary exercise was reasonably well handled by candidates, and all answers displayed a good knowledge and understanding of the text. There was well-informed discussion of Pangloss' ailments as well as consideration of his philosophy. Most candidates could bring out the irony of the storm and ensuing earthquake which undermines Pangloss' philosophy. Equally, answers pointed out that Jacques is one of the few characters representing disinterested generosity in the tale; the remainder are self-serving and grasping, the *loups* in Jacques' perception. Better answers worked their way through the analysis systematically, and anchored their points with textual evidence.

Question 8B

This was by far the most popular choice of question on *Candide*, and all candidates showed a reasonable grasp of the basic function of the episode. Treatment of the El Dorado episode varied from the fleeting to the detailed; likewise the nature of utopia. All candidates mentioned the wealth and unreality of the place; good answers went on to mention other aspects of the kingdom which contrast with their treatment in other parts of the tale: legal system, generosity of spirit, harmonious religion, harmony, order and sense of community. The better candidates explained the implicit criticism of European society. The reason for Candide's departure was handled with varying degrees of success and detail, and a few scripts made no reference to the departure. Not all candidates made mention of Candide's remark "*Si nous restons ici, nous n'y serons que les autres*", and a few candidates interpreted this as Candide becoming bored if he were to stay. Good answers would also finish with a strong conclusion, summing up that El Dorado is a fictitious idealised society designed by Voltaire to highlight the problems of the real world.

Question 8C

This was not a popular choice of question, but those candidates who elected to answer on it showed a good knowledge of this part of the text and were able to discuss in detail the satire of religion through Paquette and Giroflée and the role of Martin to bring Candide to understand the real world. The six kings and the problems of power attracting jealousy and rivalry were dealt with robustly, and there was effective consideration of Pocourante and his boredom with pleasure. Candidates had been well prepared and showed a good understanding of the significance of the Venice episode.

Question 9A

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 9B

Most candidates tackled this question well and gave due consideration to how Charles is presented in the novel. Some set up 'sympathy with Emma' as part of their argument, and this was a productive approach. At other times, however, its inclusion was not handled so successfully, and remodelling the title to measure the extent to which Charles was sympathetic, was less effective.

Question 9C

This question was handled well by candidates whose approach was well-prepared and thoughtful. There was a sensible appreciation of Flaubert's style, with a range of illustrations, as well as an awareness of his satirical humour. Emma's boredom was brought out in part by the very characters whose stupidity and

pretentiousness might entertain the reader. Essays were generally well structured and appropriately illustrated.

Question 10A

The candidates who approached this question did so with good preparation and had very good knowledge and understanding of the stories. All the answers brought out the irony of the capture of Schnaffs and the misplaced self-importance of the colonel together with an analysis of the reaction of the locals. In some answers there was a tendency to narrative, whereas a more effective approach lay in those essays which analysed specific details of the text.

Question 10B

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 10C

This was a reasonably popular option, and candidates understood that the essay was concerned with Maupassant's powers of characterisation. There was a wealth of illustrative material, and although a few answers drifted to narrative, the majority were able to highlight with some confidence a balance between the short, evocative pen-portrait and the caricatural portrait of Prussians, for example. Reference was most commonly made to Boule de Suif, La Mère sauvage, and Walter Schnaffs. A useful point candidates could have included in their answer was to point out that the form of the short story imposes severe restrictions on the author, and despite these limitations, it is possible to portray memorable and identifiable individuals.

Question 11A

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 11B

All the answers to this question were well informed, well structured and showed a good understanding of Mauriac's presentation of Louis. Some excellent accounts gave a balanced view that although Louis was unkind, unapproachable and avaricious, there are a number of compelling reasons why the reader's sympathy could be evoked (e.g. his upbringing, failed marriage, feeling of rejection). There was, though, a tendency for candidates to focus on the phrase "vous le preniez en pitié" in the title, and a number of answers turned out rather one sided, and some simply enumerated incidents which evoked pity, notably his relationship to Marie and Luc. The majority of candidates gave proper consideration of Louis's spiritual quest, from anti-Catholic to repentant believer, and some discussion of his self analysis with his metaphorical *nœud de vipères* was included to good effect. The overall impression was that there had been impressive preparation and attention to detail, including judicious use of quotations, in these essays.

Question 11C

All the candidates who attempted this question showed excellent knowledge of the content of the two letters and wrote extensively about them. The contrast was made between Hubert's self-righteousness and Janine's honest appraisal, between Hubert's obsession with preserving the family's good name and Janine's sincerity and honesty. Candidates showed that the two letters highlighted the avaricious nature of the family, and shed light on Louis' character. Very good answers – and there were a number of impressive essays – were analytical in their approach and made a judgement not only about the reflection of the letters on their authors and Louis, but also showed an awareness of the letters' importance as a structural device within the novel.

Question 12A–13C

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.