



2008

LOTE: Serbian GA 3: Examination

Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students prepared reasonably well this year for the oral examination and performed well in the Conversation section. Some students performed exceedingly well in the Discussion section of the examination, where their choice of topic, in-depth research and interest in the topic showed that learning about Serbian culture, language and literature can be very interesting and rewarding.

Teachers and students must remember that fluency in the language cannot be a substitute for knowledge and preparation for the examination. Students should view their study of the language as important and should prepare thoroughly.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Most students should be commended for their conversational skills. They could speak well about their interests and hobbies, school subjects, future aspirations and family. They usually understood and responded well to questions, and often expanded their responses without prompting. They generally used the language well. Minor use of anglicisms was noted when they tried to translate subjects or professions into Serbian language. A few students used inappropriate expressions. Teaching these students the difference between formal and informal settings and the appropriateness of language in these settings is very important, and teachers should make every effort to do so.

Students who were well prepared showed that they had read widely, hence their rich vocabulary which enabled them to cross easily between the topics discussed in the Conversation section.

While overall, students performed well and showed that they had prepared well for the Conversation section, teachers should encourage students to participate more in group and pair work where speaking and listening skills will develop and can be monitored by teachers to ensure proper use of the language. Encouraging students to use the language for a variety of purposes and to express themselves in the classroom setting more often should lead to better results in the oral exam.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students chose topics including historical and literary topics and modern living. The historical topic covered Kosovo as a historical battle, and as a literary source for folk poems, myths and legends. Students also chose to talk about historical figures such as famous rulers of medieval Serbia like Czar Lazar, or about priests and educators of the Serbian people such as Nikolaj Velimirovic or Saint Sava.

Literary topics covered folk poems, stories about Saint Sava, poems by the most famous Serbian poetess Desanka Maksimovic, and the poems written about the Great War (WWI).

Topics that covered modern living spanned science and famous scientists such as Nikola Tesla, architecture and life in Belgrade as it is known today.

A number of students who chose the historical topic *Battle of Kosovo* struggled to define their topic and sub-topic and often veered off the course of their topic and simply spoke about what they knew or remembered. They also chose to base their knowledge of the topic only on the movie that they had watched and a small amount from the Internet sources. Some students could not recollect what they had learnt. They struggled to form and express their opinion when discussing the major issue in the battle of Kosovo.

Teachers could use the movie *Battle of Kosovo* as a support for the reading materials as well as a valid work of film art to support this Discussion topic.

Some teachers gave students more options to explore a range of topics and issues not only in traditional Serbian society but in modern Serbia. The students who tackled the topics in relation to modern Serbia showed that they had read widely, understood their topic well and could draw parallels with events that influenced lives today.

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Well-prepared students used a variety of resources, such as paper-based and audio-visual materials and the Internet, and could easily explain what they gained from each source. They were also able to mention sources when introducing their topic.

Well-prepared students spoke clearly and without hesitation. They sometimes used prompts such as a picture or map to help them explain what they had learnt. They compared their sources and were able to form their own opinion on the topic discussed, agreeing or disagreeing with the major source and able to explain their reasoning. They also had a very rich vocabulary and could use well structured sentences when explaining their point of view.

Most topics chosen this year were again very challenging and required a great deal of reading in order to successfully present the Discussion section of the exam. Those who opted for new topics like Nikola Tesla or Nikolaj Velimirovic seemed to enjoy discovering more about these two great men.

Students who drew their knowledge only from the Internet sites or the movie struggled to explain their point of view. These students should be encouraged to read more and discuss/present their topic in class before the oral exam. In doing so, they will gain more confidence, fluency in the language and will also know how to time their discussion, as well as prepare clever responses and a well-presented point of view.