

FRENCH LANGUAGE AND FRENCH

Paper 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

Once again, candidates from many regions have entered this examination, and it is notable that the vast majority of centres have produced audible recordings and a suitable sample of candidates to enable international standardisation of assessment. Teacher/examiners are to be congratulated on their efforts to encourage candidates to do their best and then to assess them appropriately, even though they may themselves have only a few candidates and therefore a limited range of ability. In general, assessment has been carried out very consistently, which is of immense value in the moderation process.

Though the majority of recordings varied from good to excellent, it is still the case that, before the examination, thought needs to be given to the position of the microphone. In some instances, the introduction to the tape was excellent, but when the exam started, it was clear that the examiner and candidate were in a different position relative to the microphone: candidates were generally (though not always) audible, but this was not always the case for examiners, who sometimes sounded distant and muffled. Teacher/examiners are fortunately aware that candidates tend to speak more quietly, and it was not unusual to hear candidates encouraged to speak up, or come closer to the microphone.

It is important to observe the timings of the examination: 3 to 3½ minutes for the Presentation, 7 to 8 minutes for the Topic conversation, and 8 to 9 minutes for the General conversation – approximately 20 minutes per candidate. Candidates who continue with their presentation for longer than 3½ minutes should be interrupted by the examiner. Keeping to these timings will ensure that 2 examinations will fit on one side of a 90 minute cassette. In the interests of fairness to candidates, a maximum of 2 candidates should be recorded per side of a 90 minute cassette, and only one per side of a 60 minute cassette – starting the exam of an additional candidate and then being obliged to turn the cassette in the middle may disturb the candidate and cause the loss of parts of the exam.

It is noticeable that the performance of candidates obliged to sustain an examination of longer than 20 minutes often deteriorates, and the examiner is left with an overall impression which may not be a true reflection of the candidate's ability.

Where there are fewer than 6 candidates in a Centre, the examinations of all candidates should be sent: where there are more than 6, a sample of 6 candidates should be sent. Their marks should be spread as evenly as possible across the range of **all** the candidates. **This sample should be accompanied by the Moderator's copy of the MS1 and a copy of the Working Mark Sheet.** There should be a mark entered in each column of the WMS (see mark scheme in the syllabus booklet) and where candidates do not ask questions in one or other conversation section, a zero should be entered on the WMS in the final column for that section. The mark scheme contains no half marks, so only whole numbers should appear on the WMS: in the case of the halving of the Content/Presentation mark for lack of reference to France or a francophone culture, the mark should be rounded up to the next whole number.

Presentation

Candidates chose a good variety of topics, ranging from linguistic and cultural choices, to more general social problems. In the majority of cases, they made clear reference to France or a francophone culture, but there are still a few instances of a candidate choosing a topic such as *La Drogue* and then only talking about the situation in his or her own country. Teachers preparing candidates for this examination must make sure that candidates are aware of the syllabus requirements and advise them accordingly. Where there is no connection with France or a francophone culture, the mark for Content/Presentation must be halved.

Topic and general conversation

Teacher/examiners are aware that encouraging a candidate to talk or take part in a conversation requires a great deal of skill on their part. If examiners ask a long and complicated question, the candidate's answer is likely to be short. If they ask a factual question, again the answer may be short, or may consist merely of *oui/non*. The art, for an examiner, lies in asking candidates for additional information, for reasons and justification, without intruding into the conversation too much themselves, and allowing candidates the maximum possible time to express and develop their ideas and opinions. Examiners may need to remember to restrict their own contributions, particularly when responding to questions asked by candidates.

Examiners should try to aim for a real conversation with candidates – there is not necessarily going to be a “right” answer to questions the examiner asks and it is important that candidates be given the opportunity to express their own ideas, which may, in fact, be in direct variance to those of the examiner.

The General conversation is not intended to be a swift gallop through every topic area studied during the course, and candidates in a Centre should certainly not all be asked the same questions. What is needed is some sort of interaction between examiner and candidate. Instead of just a series of questions followed by a response from the candidate, then a question on a different topic, and so on, the examiner should follow up the original response and explore the candidate's ideas – better the development of 2 or 3 topic areas in depth than superficial practised responses to 10 or more questions.

It is helpful to both candidate and Moderator to know when the examiner moves on from the Topic conversation to the General conversation. That is the point at which, where a candidate has not asked any questions, he/she should be prompted to do so, and similarly at the end of the General conversation. It is often difficult for a nervous and polite candidate to ask a question to an examiner unprompted! Candidates need to be aware that they should try to ask questions which are relevant to the topic under discussion. It is easier for them to prepare questions they might ask about the material in their presentation: questions in the General conversation can be a real test, and difficult for a candidate to formulate. Many opt for the simple *...Et que pensez-vous, Monsieur/Madame?* To score the maximum for this element of the examination, candidates need to be able to use an accurate range of question forms (for criteria, see the mark scheme for Speaking in the syllabus booklet).

Overall, there were few clerical errors in the addition of marks, examinations were well conducted and assessment was carried out in a very conscientious way – for approximately a third of all Centres entered, no adjustment to their marking was required.

FRENCH

Papers 9716/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The overall performance was satisfactory. The best candidates gave accurate succinct answers in fluent French whilst the weaker candidates found difficulty in re-forming information and often wrote at great length. There were few very weak candidates who found the comprehension of the texts and writing accurately in French too difficult.

It was very encouraging to note that only a few candidates failed to complete all the questions. Usually candidates managed their time well and did not copy the question as part of their answer.

Lifting phrases and whole sentences from the text in answer to a question remains a problem. The rubric quite clearly states that *vous devez répondre sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. Candidates may use material from the text in their answers but in such a way as to show understanding of the text. Copying wholesale from the text does not demonstrate comprehension and will not score any marks. As a general rule a sequence of five words taken from the text will count as copying. Even quite small changes will show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language. The candidate may extend the quoted material or include a short phrase of two or three words in a sentence.

The quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers to questions. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If individual questions score 0 for content, the final mark for language will be adjusted accordingly.

Q5 carries 20 marks and it is important that candidates approach it correctly. It consists of two tasks; firstly a summary of specific points made from the original texts in 90 to 100 words and secondly a personal response to the text in 40 to 50 words. A general essay written in response to the first part is likely to get a low mark for it is unlikely to make the specific points required.

It is important that candidates observe the word limit which is 140 words for the whole of **Q5**. Only 10 extra words are allowed beyond the limit. Candidates will not be awarded marks if they make the content points or personal response after the word limit.

A number of candidates use bullet points to illustrate the points that they were making for content. Although the content marks were awarded, the language mark may be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the sentences lack fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally well answered and candidates had little difficulty finding correct alternatives for dictionary definitions. Minor copying errors were tolerated. Most candidates followed the rubric which stated *Trouvez dans le texte le mot ou l'expression qui correspond le plus exactement*. Where mistakes did occur they usually resulted from adding an extra element to the word that was being sought. Item **1(a)** was an example of this where many candidates answered *devait viser* instead of *viser*. Items **(a)**, **(d)** and **(e)** were well answered. In item **(c)** many candidates answered with a verb instead of a noun e.g. *revivre* or *faire revivre* and where the noun *régénération* was given, no definite article was required. Likewise in item **(e)** it was incorrect to add *de* to the phrase *mettre sur pied*. A number of candidates incorrectly gave *organiser* as the answer.

Question 2

Item **2(a)** was generally well handled and candidates came up with several variations such as *la proposition de Pierre de Coubertin en 1887 était que....* ; *la proposition que Pierre de Coubertin a faite était que....* ; *la proposition de Pierre de Coubertin en 1887 a été d'intégrer....* . Where candidates tried to use a preposition with a direct object, the agreement was usually missed.

Item **2(b)** was generally well answered.

Item **2(c)** required the use of the subjunctive after *il est possible que....* and this proved to be too difficult for most candidates. Where candidates did manage a subjunctive the present *soit* was used or the circumflex on *fût* was missed.

Item **2(d)** was generally well done although the verb attracted a few errors such as a singular auxiliary, the pluperfect or agreement on the past participle.

Item **2(e)** proved to be too difficult for all but the best candidates. Few realised that the conditional was required and where it was used, it was often in the plural instead of the first person singular or in the conditional perfect.

Question 3

This set of questions was generally well answered but a lot of lifting of phrases from the texts was noted. It should be remembered that copying sections of the text, even if they include the correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can alter texts to provide the correct answer.

Item **3(a)** was well answered with candidates clearly understanding that they had to explain the quotation in their own words. Some candidates were extremely concise, giving correct alternatives for each of the three parts of the quotation – *réduire le stress à l'école*. Some candidates tried to use *faire face à* in place of *faire obstacle* but ran into grammatical difficulties with the relative pronoun.

Item **3(b)** was generally well answered but attracted a lot of copying especially of *le développement du corps et de l'esprit* where a simple change to *développer le corps et l'esprit* would have scored 2 marks. In addition some attempt to explain *harmonieux* was needed. A fourth point was available for saying that sport should play an important part in education.

Item **3(c)** was quite well answered and again required the re-working of a quotation. Most candidates offered *le sport aide* or *grâce au sport* for 1 point but then failed to provide an alternative for *l'humain*. The idea of reaching one's potential was well done but *sur tous les plans* needed unravelling, saying how they contributed to development such as physically, intellectually, emotionally or giving examples such as working in a team or accepting defeat or victory.

Item **3(d)** was well handled though there was a great deal of copying from the text. Some candidates missed the point scoring altogether; others were careless in offering the wrong year whilst others managed to say there was a meeting but failed to add where it was held.

Item **3(e)** proved to be quite difficult and produced a lot of guessing. Many candidates managed to say that the Olympic Games started in Greece and some went on to explain correctly that the Olympic Committee wanted to pay homage to the original games. Some, however, thought that de Coubertin was born or lived in Greece or that Greece was a nice place so that it was a good choice; others thought that the ruins of the ancient site meant that Greece had good facilities to hold the Games.

Question 4

This text proved to be very difficult and many resorted to copying from the text to try to score marks. This resulted in very long answers in which candidates tried to cover as much material as possible in the hope of including some of the correct information.

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Item **4(a)** was quite well answered. This question brought a lot of copying about ceremonies and generally candidates made the point clearly enough to score a point. Many candidates managed to identify *la manifestation la plus planétairement suivie* although adjectival agreements were quite weak. Some realised that there was a link to ancient times but often simply copied the whole phrase from the text with any re-working. Only a few candidates succeeded in giving the fourth possible answer of *sens spirituel*.

Item **4(b)** was quite well answered but again copying was a problem. Some candidates misunderstood the question taking *compromis* to be *compris* thus changing the meaning of the question. Most candidates identified that drugs were a problem but only very few managed to explain the term *ambivalence* although some re-worked *amateurs et professionnels* even though it was often spelled *professionnelles*.

Item **4(c)** was quite well answered with many candidates scoring 2 out of the 3 marks. Most said that de Coubertin wanted to unite countries and to bring peace. They could have gone on to say that the Olympic Games could allow countries to know each other better, understand each other's culture and develop friendships. A further point could have been made for indicating that the games could take place in a peaceful setting.

Item **4(d)** was again quite well answered especially the conflicts, whether political or economic, and problems made by the media, all of which prevented the establishment of peace. However, the quotation *l'idéal pacifiste* was not well done. *Pacifiste* was often misunderstood as referring to the Pacific Ocean.

Item **4(e)** was a difficult question and most candidates managed only 1 point for identifying that the press sought to concentrate on values contrary to the Olympic ideal such as celebrity and making stars of athletes. Some of the best candidates managed to include the influence of money and how sponsors were able to use their influence. Few mentioned cheating, drug taking, winning at all costs or equality of opportunity and taking part being more important than winning.

Question 5

This question is designed to make the candidates summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to reflect on them giving their own views. The summary should consist of 90 to 100 words which can gain 10 marks and the personal response of 40 to 50 words which attracts a maximum of 5 marks. The two together give a maximum number of words between 140 and 150 words and examiners will not mark beyond this limit. The task is aimed at conciseness.

It was interesting to note that some candidates began their answer to **Q5** with a personal response. There is no reason why they should not do this but they should remember that the personal response can gain only 5 marks and if they write more than 40 to 50 words, they are reducing the limit for the summary which is worth 10 marks.

Q5 does not need an introduction or a re-statement of the question. Because of the restrictions on the number of words that candidates can use, it is important that they begin immediately on identifying point scoring information. The two areas indicated for the summary were *les idéaux olympiques* and *les conflits qui s'opposent à ces idéaux*. Candidates handled the *conflits* very well, pointing out examples such as drug taking, the ambiguity between amateur and professional, political problems and the media – sometimes the sponsors were mentioned and their need for profit and publicity. The *idéaux* were less well covered although most candidates offered ideas such as uniting countries, peace, creating a great sporting event and an idealised concept of the human being but could have added answers such as destroying racial prejudice, amateurism, the development of body and mind and improving the lot of poor countries. Many candidates wasted words on the history of De Coubertin's attempts to revive the Olympic Games.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic and this is the place for general comments.

The quality of language for **Q5** is marked out of 5 according to the grid given in the mark scheme. The mark is allocated on the 140 to 150 words written about the summary and the personal response. A candidate who writes less than 120 words cannot expect to score the full language mark. The quality of language was generally good but mistakes on spellings, genders, plurals and adjectives were common. There is still some doubt in some candidates' mind over the use of *se* and *ce*, *son* and *sont* as well as *on* and *ont*. The use of *faire face à* with relative pronouns was weak as was the use of *se servir de*. *Les Jeux Olympiques* were often followed by a singular verb or feminine plural pronouns. *Faire partie de* was often misused and there were more anglicisms in evidence this year.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/03

Essay

General comments

Candidates were given a choice of six questions, one each on the following topics: *Aspects contemporains de la francophonie*, *Les jeunes*, *L'ordre public*, *La vie urbaine et rurale*, *Le sport*, and *L'innovation technologique*. The essays were marked out of 40, with 24 marks for Language and 16 for Content. Overall the level of achievement was slightly higher than last year with a good number of scores in the mid to upper thirties.

The strongest candidates produced well structured, relevant and detailed essays couched in accurate and fluent French revealing breadth and depth of vocabulary. Towards the bottom of the range answers were characterised by a lack of structure, little development of ideas and too much emphasis on generalisation. Here, essential topic-specific vocabulary was frequently lacking and the scripts of numerous candidates were marred by careless, elementary errors that could have been greatly reduced if candidates had carried out a more thorough and systematic revision of what they had written. Introductions and conclusions tended to be rather pedestrian and contrived, being pointed at the general topic rather than at the specific question under discussion.

It was however pleasing to see that this year most candidates observed the rubric on the number of words to be used, although some exceeded the recommended number, though not greatly so. Only a very small minority wrote excessively long essays.

Common linguistic problems included:

- Misspellings of: *contrôler*, *polluer*, *agressif*, *agressivité*, *autorité*, *pilier*, *trafic*, *entraîner*, *blamer*, *prôner*, *athlète*, *alcool*, *vengeance*, *dépendance*, *problème*, *ressources*, *chacun*, *caractère*;
- Confusion/misuse of: *vers/environ*, *entre/chez (les jeunes)*, *ce qui/ceux qui*, *servi/utilisé*, *mal/mauvais*, *donc/dont*, *où/ou*, *ces/c'est*, *ces/ses*, *leur/leurs*, *tandis que/pendant que*, *meilleur/mieux*, *cela/ceux-la*;
- Constructions: *ils sont défendus de sortir*, *permettre leurs enfants à*, *tel comme*, *l'obésité peut être réduite*, *entre onze à quinze ans*;
- Omission of *ne*, particularly when followed by *que*;
- Gender of important, commonplace nouns: *pollution*, *problème*, *crime*, *acte*, *manque*, *valeur*, *monde*, *chômage*, *loi*, *punition*;
- Confusion about which pronoun/adjective to use in conjunction with *on*.
- Failure to link a verb to its subject: *Ce manque de voleurs morales entraînent...*;
- Past participles used instead of infinitives and vice-versa: *Il faut donné*, *Ils ont donner*;
- Government of verbs: *permettre leurs enfants*, *obéir les parents*, *commencer fumer*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was the least popular and attracted only few candidates. Most who attempted it did so with a reasonable degree of success, though many candidates restricted their reference to only one French-speaking country. There was a tendency to point out the increasing dominance of the United States as an economic power and to stress the ever-growing use of the English language throughout the world, which some candidates regretted, though recognising its inevitability. Most candidates outlined the influence of certain aspects of American culture and pointed out that it seems to be young people who embrace it the most readily, even though they recognised the fact that certain traditions in the French-speaking world would inevitably be eroded. Fashion, music, the cinema, fast food outlets, computers, communications were amongst aspects of the American culture considered.

Question 2

This proved to be a popular question and attracted candidates across the ability range. Many candidates, however, either ignored or had difficulty with the wording of the question. The underlined words in *La société sous-estime l'importance des jeunes* were in very many cases variously interpreted as 'my parents', 'the older generation', 'teachers', and 'underestimates young people', 'does not understand young people/me', 'does not show us/me enough respect', 'does not trust us/me to make decisions'. This led to many what appeared to be pre-learned essays on the generation gap which, more often than not, listed aspects of contemporary teenage culture which are not appreciated by older people, such as fashion, piercing, tattoos, music, smoking, staying out late, having a boy/girlfriend.

Stronger candidates, however, succeeded in focusing more clearly on the question and in being more objective. Some very pertinent points were made. The amount of money that most societies are prepared to devote to the improvement of educational standards and facilities, the work of UNICEF, the fact that many countries have a Minister responsible for opportunities given to young people, re-habilitation Centres for young offenders, encouragement in sport were but some of references made in order to show that society does indeed not underestimate the importance of this age group. Such essays were on the whole better structured and more convincingly argued than the more predominantly subjective ones.

Question 3

This was another popular question and on the whole was dealt with more successfully than **Question 2**. Weaker candidates chose to ignore the phrase *en grande partie* and to limit their response to a list of ways in which the media are responsible for negative aspects of young people's behaviour, often with some degree of exaggeration. Television, the cinema, video games, even cartoons, and the Internet were portrayed almost exclusively as purveyors and encouragers of violence in its many forms (e.g. pornography, tobacco and drug abuse). However, some candidates attempted to counterbalance this view by pointing out the more positive effects of the media on society such as providing information on healthy living, the environment and presenting informed comments on politics.

The stronger candidates did address the notion *en grande partie*, and took into account other factors in addition to the media responsible for delinquency such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, broken families, parents as poor role-models, peer-group pressure, lack of prospects, the decreasing influence of religion in some societies. Many pointed out the need for parents to take more responsibility for that their children watch and to make sure that they develop strong moral values. Essays taking into account some of these issues almost invariably were better structured and argued, with a clear line of thought leading to a relevant conclusion.

Question 4

This was quite a popular question. Most candidates realised that they were to discuss urban life; however, many had difficulty in focusing on *illusoires*, either ignoring it altogether or misinterpreting its meaning. Weaker candidates restricted themselves to listing the advantages and disadvantages of town life and country life, with little analysis or argument. Only the stronger candidates saw the need to point out the difference between expectation and reality, to analyse the expectations of those who are attracted to large towns, and the reasons for this. These tended to be a glowing, idealised picture of urban life painted in the media, a misguided, over-optimistic view of the opportunities to earn more money than in rural areas and the failure of people who have moved into towns to admit that they made a mistake when they are confronted with some of the harsher realities of town living. Quite a number of candidates fell into the trap of listing good reasons for living in towns if one has a well-paid job; their cultural attractions, better-equipped schools, better medical facilities, public transport and their wide range of shops and entertainments.

Unfortunately, quite a number of candidates then tried to point out that these attractions are rendered illusory by the negative aspects of life in many large towns (e.g. the high cost of living, the lack of green spaces, overpopulation, a high crime rate, unemployment, grim suburbs, pollution and stress). However, some candidates did go on to point out that if people had been aware of these drawbacks before thinking about moving from the country into a town, they would not have been so disillusioned once they had made the move. In this way some candidates managed to get their argument back into focus.

Question 5

This question attracted by far the greatest number of candidates across the ability range. Most of the candidates looked at both the positive and negative effects of sport in the world, and the vast majority came to the conclusion that it is certainly still predominantly a force for good.

Quite a number of candidates started their essays with a rather long introduction consisting of lists of sports and sporting activities and/ or a prepared and not always accurately reproduced definition of what the word means, thus using up quite a high proportion of the words allocated to the task. Most underlined the important contribution that sport can make in one's personal life in terms of healthy living, fighting obesity, increasing self-confidence, co-operation with others, a controlled spirit of competitiveness and respect of one's opponent/s. Candidates usually went on to look at sport as a force for good from a broader perspective: meeting and developing respect for people from other nations, of different colour, different religions and different political systems. Sport was described here as a dissolver of prejudice.

Having considered sport from the positive angle, the majority of candidates went on to look at its negative side. Issues discussed, often illustrated with examples and references, included the use of artificial stimulants, cheating, bribery, match-fixing, over-commercialisation, disrespect of match officials.

On the whole, paragraphing was usually sound and in the majority of cases, the conclusion was usually more clearly related to the argument than was the case in some other topic areas.

Question 6

This was also quite a popular question. Many appreciated the moral issues involved, though not all, some candidates addressing the notion *trop cher* as *très cher*. Weaker essays tended to outline technological advances in various areas such as information technology, the exploration of space, transport, and then tried to show that these were expensive to develop (often providing no statistics to back up their argument). Such essays struggled to produce a convincing conclusion.

Stronger candidates considered such issues as the cost of the environment in terms of pollution in its various forms, i.e. the quality of the food we eat, the decline in family and social life, the evermore frenetic pace of life, robotisation contributing to unemployment. Other areas explored here included the possible proliferation of nuclear weapons and moral issues involved with cloning and genetic engineering, some very strong arguments being produced by candidates addressing these issues

FRENCH

Paper 9716/04

Texts

General comments

As expected, Molière and Zobel were the most popular authors. There was a good response to the return of Mauriac, and a fair degree of interest in that of Flaubert. Fewer opted for Anouilh, Camus, Le Clézio and Del Castillo, but all questions were attempted.

Only one or two Centres presented candidates who wrote at excessive length. As has been the case for some time, an essay which could have scored a high mark was capped at a maximum of 17. Conversely, there were more unduly short essays than usual. Candidates should be reminded that the category 'insubstantial' has a maximum mark of 9. An essay covering only about one side of paper (in average handwriting) would in most cases be insubstantial in content. As usual, a number of candidates answered two questions on the same text. It must be repeated that this practice is self-penalising.

Examiners passed comment on the number of commentaries in which candidates embarked on the first question without appearing to consider the scope of the other two. This led to over-lengthy answers in the former case, and unnecessary repetition in the latter.

The vast majority of scripts were legible and presentable. A major area of tactical error was, once again, the writing of lengthy introductions incorporating irrelevant information about the author, or generalisations about the book. Such material almost invariably announces an essay which does not tackle the question. An introductory paragraph which outlines the candidate's approach to the question and communicates a clear understanding of its implications is of much greater value. At the other end, the best essays have a concluding paragraph which reflects the overall direction they have taken, whereas the weaker ones just stop, sometimes mentioning the essay title/topic but leaving an assortment of loose ends. In between the two, examiners sometimes find a single block of writing with no paragraphing at all, or a series of paragraphs in apparently random order, some of which consist of only one sentence. Thoughtful paragraphing and logical sequencing of points greatly enhance the impression made on the reader. Candidates could also be advised that the paraphrasing of a text, e.g. 'X dit que....' is unwelcome. Examiners are looking for comment, not paraphrase.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Mauriac: *Le Nœud de vipères*

- (a) By no means all candidates correctly identified the specific cause of Louis' state of mind in this extract. In order to provide a full answer, it was necessary to refer to the burnt fragments of letters found in the bedroom grate, as the most significant factor here is the discovery that Isa was jealous of her husband's relationships with certain other individuals. This harks back to their conversation in which she confessed to him that she was often waiting in vain for him to go to her in her bedroom. Weaker candidates answered in general terms about his sense of regret at the mishandling of his family relationships, and their answers unnecessarily overlapped with the second part of the commentary. Most were able to comment in detail on the reasons for Louis' sense of remorse, and also to identify the roles of the characters that had died. What was missing from many answers was a sense of what prevented Louis from responding to people in a way which would have broken the ice.

- (b) The essay on religion produced some very good answers, although many dwelt at length on the negative aspects and gave too little attention to the matter of Louis' 'conversion'. This is often seen as a sudden experience which changed the character from bad to good in a flashback. The novel has a carefully crafted series of episodes in which Louis alludes to the nagging questions in his mind about the hidden meaning of life. This sequence makes the 'conversion' more credible. Thus, candidates who analysed 'bourgeois' Christianity with its hypocrisy and social posturing in contrast with the lonely soul-searching of the central character were given greater credit than those who dwelt only on the domestic tensions generated by religion, important though these are.

Question 2

Molière: *Les Femmes savantes*

- (a) The vast majority of candidates identified the role of Vadius in the background to this scene. There was less unanimity as to his status: he was described as Trissotin's friend and as his enemy, and a number thought that he was a true scholar in contrast to the deceitful Trissotin. The best answers concentrated on the vanity of both characters which led to the quarrel. A surprising number of answers commented only in general terms about Trissotin's defence of Philaminte, or related it to his desire to pursue his sinister aim, whereas the significant issue here was the enthusiasm displayed by Philaminte for the poem. Credit was duly given for specific reference to this. The second part of the question produced answers which accurately described Philaminte's intentions, although they were not always sufficiently clear about 'le moyen' which she thought would turn Henriette into an intellectual. Candidates' opinions (omitted by some) were appropriately censorious, referring justifiably to Philaminte's tyrannical role in the household and her single-mindedness. What was sadly lacking from almost all responses was a sense of the absurdity of her plan. Most candidates seemed indignant rather than amused, and examiners were delighted to find the word 'ridicule' on the rare occasions it was used. Answers on Henriette in the third section were generally sound if often overburdened with paraphrase. Those who referred to her as a mouthpiece for Molière failed to convey an understanding of her role as representing one particular attitude towards *préciosité*, which cannot be construed as that of the author.
- (b) Those who discussed Clitandre's 'bon mot' successfully related it to the context, but in some cases dwelt at undue length on the rivalry between him and Trissotin for Henriette's hand in marriage. Attempts to define 'un sot savant' were not always successful. The best answers focused on the absurdity of those who seek to display intellectual qualities which in reality they do not possess. As usual, too much was made of the idea of one character being Molière's spokesman. This led some candidates to overstate the view that Clitandre takes an anti-intellectual stance. It would have been more appropriate to explore examples of the satirisation of excess, obsessive behaviour and, again, the pretentiousness which is invariably at the heart of Molière's comedy.

Question 3

Anouilh: *Becket*

- (a) The first question produced largely accurate answers with varying degrees of detail about the war, and appropriate comments about the King's concern for his own safety. Responses to the other two questions were much more varied in quality. Weaker candidates often misinterpreted the word *ennuyé*. Those who understood it showed an awareness of the King's displeasure at the change in Becket's behaviour, but there was some confusion between his promotion to Chancellor and his later appointment as Archbishop. Candidates broadly understood the difference in the characters' attitudes towards the common people and the King's impatience with Becket's concern for them. Answers to (iii) were all too often vague and general, failing to point out that this remark is a sign of things to come later in the play.
- (b) This might be described as an 'obvious' question with a clear agenda concerning Becket's rift with Henri in the conflict between Church and State. The quality of candidates' answers varied not according to their perception of the issue, but to the amount of detail they were able to provide, and also to the structure of their essays. This was an opportunity for well-prepared candidates to show their paces, whereas weaker ones resorted to narrative and paraphrase. The repeated use of 'X dit que' was found in these answers, and could not be rewarded on the same level as exegesis.

Question 4

Le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

- (a) The first appearance of this text in the main examination session produced mostly sound work in those who chose option (a). What was wanted in (i) was some detail about why Alexis felt the need to leave home again, and this should have included his dislike of 'polite society' and of the working environment, not just generalisations about his preference for freedom. In (ii), candidates were appropriately supportive of Laure's disgruntlement. Some answers could have gone into more detail with regard to her complaint that *plus jamais il n'y aura de place pour nous ici!* Candidates' opinions about Alexis's decision to leave were mostly appropriate, and the best answers, as always, struck a balance between black and white.
- (b) Only a few candidates tackled this question, which was probably just as well. In most cases, it seemed that they ignored the very precise indication provided on the question paper of the context of Alexis's remark. If they had checked, they would have realised that the burden of this issue is about what was to happen next (i.e. the war in France), not what had happened already. As a result of this misunderstanding, many candidates scored low marks here, as their answers did not contain enough relevant material.

Question 5

Flaubert: *Madame Bovary*

- (a) This question was attempted by relatively few candidates. They tended to make much of Homais' role in the club-foot operation, and of his being the unconscious provider of the poison which Emma used. They were less successful in tracking his presence throughout the novel as a satirical portrait of self-importance and ambition. Examiners would have welcomed more examples than they found of his pomposity and tendency to pontificate. He is, after all, constantly trying to be someone and something which he is not, and the fact that society rewards him for this at the end of the novel constitutes a jaundiced comment on that society which is characteristic of Flaubert.
- (b) The great danger which candidates should avoid in dealing with a lengthy novel is the temptation to recount what happened. There was little merit in narrating Emma's relationships with Charles, Rodolphe and Léon without drawing attention to the ways in which they all fell short of her expectations. Candidates did well to point out that Emma's indulgence in romantic fiction, together with her extremely sheltered early life, were responsible for her delusions about both marriage and adultery. Some referred most effectively to the ball at La Vaubyessard as another stimulus to her capacity to fantasize. Relatively few of them were able to focus on the discrepancy between fantasy and reality which Emma was too naïve to foresee. The best answers alluded to the hollowness of the lives at the château where Emma saw only excitement and romantic intrigue, and to the obvious shortcomings of the three men who were supposed to whisk her away from her humdrum existence. Perhaps a greater awareness of Flaubert's manifest contempt for his characters would have helped some candidates to see the point of the question more clearly.

Question 6

Del Castillo: *Tanguy*

- (a) Both of these questions generated answers which were heavily dependent on narrative. Candidates wasted time and space on relating Tanguy's life with his mother before the two became separated, rather than on her role in his life as an absentee, and on their brief encounter at the end. A plausible case was made by many for the idea of a series of substitute mother figures (including a couple of male ones!). Some took the view that the notion postulated by the title was not acceptable, and answers which provided an explanation as to why the idea was voiced in the first place, as well as alternative suggestions, were welcomed.
- (b) This question produced a majority of competent answers but also a lot of plain narrative. The best answers saw the opportunity to point the contrast between Tanguy's sustained sense of solitude and the warmth of companionship, in most cases temporary, which he experiences at regular intervals.

Question 7Camus: *Les Justes*

- (a) The contrast between Kaliayev and Stepan was broadly understood by all candidates who answered this question. They were able to comment, with greater or lesser degrees of detail and insight, on Stepan's hard-line attitude and Kaliayev's more humane approach. Some candidates felt that Stepan's position was justifiable in view of the treatment he had received in prison, and did not always point out that his inflexibility and dealing in absolutes are not necessarily to be perceived as a strength. Those who sided with Kaliayev were able to produce a more balanced argument, and the best essays showed a firm grasp of the implications of the central debate between the two characters. It must be pointed out, as was the case with recent work on Sartre, that weaker candidates tend to reproduce ill-digested notes about existentialism, and such material is no adequate substitute for an analysis of what the characters say.
- (b) Candidates who chose this question fared less well than those who opted for (a). The implications of the question are bound up with the play's title, and with Dora's despairing cry that being *les justes* excludes her and Kaliayev from conventional happiness. Candidates found it difficult to discuss this issue. The dramatic aspect is of course more a matter of opinion. Critics have taken the view that the emotional and sexual frustration evoked by the relationship helps to counterbalance the high-minded philosophical debate and to infuse some dramatic emotional tension. Some candidates did perceive this, but not with much clarity.

Question 8Zobel: *La Rue Cases-Nègres*

- (a) There is a skill in choosing the right question, and a lot of candidates made a bad decision in this case, because they were not able to do more than relate what the narrator describes in the course of the novel. On the positive side, most did see the importance of José's fascination with the stories told by Médouze, and also the effect on him of going to school. However, the repeated use in many essays of 'José décrit....' led to a superficial treatment of the question. The better answers showed an awareness of the gradual development of the narrator's perspective on life as he becomes more experienced, more aware and more mature. To score a good mark here it was essential to do more than just describe life as lived in the countryside and the town. The child's perception of his surroundings and of society changes, and that is the point.
- (b) A large number of candidates chose this topic, and the quality of answers consequently varied from the sketchy and randomly structured to the detailed and cogent. Weaker candidates got bogged down in an unduly lengthy description of the life and aspirations of M'man Tine. Her ambitions for her daughter and grandson have their importance, but there are other characters to mention, not least José himself. The best essays were able to focus on relevant details and give appropriate weight to the development of the narrator's ambition from success at school to social reform.