

# MANDARIN CHINESE (PRINCIPAL)

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| <p>Paper 9778/01<br/>Speaking</p> |
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## Key messages

- The prepared topic presentation must last around 2 minutes and must relate to the history, current affairs or culture of the Chinese world.
- The best way to prepare for the exam is to have as many 'Mandarin-only' conversations as possible. This will help candidates to respond to questions in a natural and spontaneous way.

## General comments

Most candidates had prepared sufficiently well for the examination and they used various Chinese idioms to express themselves. Candidates had clearly been encouraged to expand their knowledge through independent learning and research.

There were still some occasions when candidates simply recited pre-learnt sentences in the conversation sections, which meant that they could not access the higher mark bands for comprehension and responsiveness.

Candidates should not worry if their answer to a question is not factually accurate or does not really reflect what they think; the Examiner is only interested in their ability to speak Chinese.

Candidates should remember that Examiners are on their side and want to reward candidates' strengths so will try and give them every opportunity to do so. This may mean asking some more stretching questions but the Examiner will adapt the questioning to suit the ability of the candidate and enable them to demonstrate the best of their abilities.

## *Administration*

Centres are reminded that Visiting Examiners are unable to accept requests for specific dates for speaking tests. Examiners have a number of centres to visit and must plan their time carefully using the information provided by each centre on the *Cambridge Pre-U Visit Arrangement Form*. Centres must give as much choice as possible and it is not acceptable to offer a very narrow range of dates in which the Examiner's visit might take place or to request another, preferred date in response to the Visiting Examiner's proposed visit date. The range of dates in which the visits are scheduled to take place is published well in advance of each exam series, and centres should be prepared for the examinations to take place on the earliest possible date if required.

Some *Prepared Topic Submission Forms* were not received by the deadline stipulated in the *Speaking Test Information for Centres*. It is important that the Examiner has the forms no later than two weeks before the date of the examination to allow them sufficient time to prepare. If the exam falls in the two weeks after the Easter holidays, centres must ensure that forms are submitted **before** the holiday starts.

Examiners found it very helpful when candidates included on the *Prepared Topic Submission Form* not only the title of their presentation but also a few bullet points outlining the content of the presentation.

Most centres had allocated a suitable room for the speaking examinations. The ideal location for this type of examination is a room away from background noise and there should be a sign outside the room indicating that an examination is in progress in order to avoid any disturbances.

Centres should not talk to the Visiting Examiner about candidates' predicted grades nor should they ask the Examiner how the candidates performed.

Centres should have a signed copy of the attendance register ready for the Examiner and hand it to him/her after all the candidates have taken the examination.

### **Comments on specific sections**

#### ***Section 1 – Prepared topic presentation***

Most candidates delivered well-prepared presentations of an appropriate length. In a few cases, however, the presentation was not related to the history, current affairs or culture of the Chinese-speaking world as required by the syllabus, and this had an impact on the marks awarded for Content/Presentation.

Many candidates chose fascinating topics this year, such as the popularity of WeChat in China, the life of migrant workers and the marriage 'market' in Shanghai. Candidates are advised to choose topics which they personally find interesting as they are more likely to take the initiative in researching and preparing the presentation.

Whilst candidates should be encouraged to use as sophisticated language as possible, they should also be aware that over-stretching themselves can do more harm than good.

The weaker performances came from those who had not prepared adequately. Candidates have plenty of time to prepare for the presentation and they should practise it regularly to make sure they can deliver it smoothly on the day. For those feeling nervous, a cue card with some words often helps candidates to feel more confident on the day of the examination.

#### ***Section 1 – Topic conversation***

After the candidate has finished his/her presentation, the Examiner will say 好, 现在我来问你一些问题 before beginning to ask the follow-up questions.

In many ways this part of the examination is considered to be the most challenging one. Whilst the Examiner is trained to be acting as a curious layman, the conversation unavoidably covers some daily-used phrases. In advance of the examination, it is a good idea for candidates to think about what questions the Examiner might ask and practise possible responses to them.

Candidates are advised to also practise different ways of asking the Examiner to clarify a question if they are unsure what has been asked. It is totally acceptable for a candidate to ask the Examiner to repeat a question, and this is far better than attempting to answer a question (often with a pre-learnt response) without fully understanding what the Examiner was asking.

Answers must not necessarily be complicated and absolutely perfect in order to access the higher bands of the marking grids. Learning how to speak in short and correct sentences to convey information and opinions is an important and valuable skill.

#### ***Section 2 – General conversation***

When the conversation on the prepared topic has finished, the Examiner will say 现在我们来谈一谈其它的话题 to move from the Topic conversation to the General conversation.

Most candidates appeared to have prepared well for this part of the examination, particularly for the first three topics 家庭、教育 and 年轻人. Generally speaking, candidates are more confident at this stage as they understand most of the questions and cope well with unexpected questions.

Many candidates also appeared to be well prepared for Topics 4, 5 and 6 and many spoke with good knowledge and understanding of the new topic for this year, Equality of opportunity.

It was clear that some centres had included Chinese culture in the teaching and learning process, which helped candidates to cope well with unexpected questions.

Centres should encourage candidates to prepare for more challenging questions on all six topics as Examiners are required to ask a variety of questions. The more difficult questions are intended to stretch candidates and allow them to show off the best of their linguistic ability.

*Impression – Feel for the Language & Accuracy of Tones*

The linguistic standard was often very good with accurate pronunciation and tones. Many able candidates used the target language well to discuss complex issues.

Many centres appeared to have prepared candidates using a variety of approaches according to their ability: stronger students were able to use advanced sentence structures and complex idioms well, while others had been trained to give reasonably good answers to all types of questions using the vocabulary and structures at their disposal.

# MANDARIN CHINESE (PRINCIPAL)

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| <p><b>Paper 9778/02</b><br/><b>Listening, Reading and Translation</b></p> |
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## Key messages

- Centres are advised to prepare candidates by practising past papers.
- It is important that candidates fully understand and adhere to the rubrics and answer according to the number of marks required.
- For the Listening section of the examination, particularly tone recognition, candidates are advised to practise and have as much exposure to listening to the language as possible.
- In preparation for the Reading section, candidates should avoid over-reliance on dictionaries in the examination as this can waste valuable time and can often lead to misunderstandings.
- When candidates answer the open-ended questions, they are advised to provide full answers.
- In the Translation section, candidates should not be over-literal. Instead, their objective should be to use common sense to produce translations which read naturally.

## General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the language and appeared to have been adequately prepared for the examination.

The Reading exercises and translation task were handled well by a large percentage of candidates.

Dictionaries continue to be a double-edged sword. Some candidates use them to polish their responses, while for others the presence of a dictionary triggers self-doubt. For example, some candidates amended perfectly competent translations only to replace them with stilted and literal dictionary translations which sometimes had an impact on the marks which could be awarded.

A small percentage of candidates continue to miss out on available marks by misunderstanding the rubrics or questions. Candidates should be encouraged to read all instructions and questions carefully and check that their answers address what has been asked.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1 – Listening**

Candidates displayed some excellent knowledge and understanding in the Listening section this year.

**Exercise 1** (pinyin with tones) was generally handled well by most candidates with some producing some outstanding results. However, a few candidates experienced challenges with the second tone and the third tone (e.g. *shí yòng*).

Most candidates performed extremely well in **Exercise 2**.

**Exercise 3** was a challenging exercise for a minority of candidates and there were some unconvincing and opaque responses. For example, answers to **Question 7** such as 'good habit' and 'no waste' were too vague to score the marks available.

In **Exercise 4** (summary) the overall level of performance was high. Candidates were required to respond in continuous prose, not bullet points or other note forms. Whilst it is acceptable to jot down key vocabulary, candidates must be able to convert this to full prose in order to access the available marks.

## **Section 2 – Reading**

The majority of candidates performed well across both reading tasks. This included the requirement to provide full responses where appropriate. One area to be considered going forward is the tendency to draw false conclusions. For example, in **Question 13**, a large number of candidates showed they understood the key vocabulary yet responded along the lines: 'University students spend 25 per cent of their leisure time online' rather than '25 per cent of university students spend their leisure time online'. This could have been avoided with a little more careful reading.

The majority of candidates successfully answered **Question 18**. In some answers, while candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of the concept, they were unable to address the comparative form for this task which meant that some marks could not be awarded.

## **Section 3 – Chinese sayings (Chengyu)**

Most candidates were able to articulate good responses in this section, although a smaller percentage could only partially complete the tasks.

The key message here is that, when preparing for this part of the examination, candidates should be encouraged to learn the origin of the idioms and their historical background if they are to competently demonstrate their meaning and usage. There was some evidence that candidates had relied on internet translations, the provenance of which is unknown and unreliable, and this had an impact on the marks awarded. Candidates should provide explanations of each saying in their own words and should be advised against giving equivalent English sayings/proverbs as these do not fully explain the meaning of the Chinese saying.

## **Section 4 – Translation**

There was an over-reliance on dictionaries by some candidates in this section. Conveying the meaning is more important than literal correctness. An example of this was when some candidates wrote 'some people in the middle hasty experience natural beauty', instead of 'some people experience the beauty of nature through flowers and grass'. Candidates should be encouraged to leave time to sense-check their translations to avoid these sorts of responses.

# MANDARIN CHINESE (PRINCIPAL)

Paper 9778/03  
Writing and Usage

## Key messages

To prepare for this examination candidates should:

- work on their character strokes, consolidate their knowledge of basic Chinese grammar and expand their vocabulary and use of more complex sentence structures as much as possible.
- read the bullet points in the letter-writing task carefully and use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures, paying particular attention to formal letter register. Candidates are encouraged to practise regularly using a wide variety of question types.
- develop a series of coherent arguments supported by detailed examples in the opinion essay. Candidates should be able to relate to the question of their choice, include a brief, clear introduction and a strong conclusion. Candidates are also advised to draft a simple essay plan before they begin writing the essay itself.

## General comments

There are three sections in this paper. **Section 1** tests candidates' knowledge of the radicals and strokes of Chinese characters, as well as Chinese grammar in terms of grammar markers and measure words. **Section 2** tests candidates' ability to write a letter according to a series of specific bullet points. **Section 3** requires candidates to write an opinion essay on one of six pre-determined topics.

This year, the overall standard was good and candidates performed reasonably well in all sections of the paper.

In **Section 1** candidates generally performed well in **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** although **Question 1(b)(ii)** proved challenging for some. There was a mixed performance in **Question 2**.

In **Section 2**, the majority of candidates showed very good preparation and a good ability to use structures, employ suitable vocabulary and to begin and end a letter in formal style. Some candidates found it challenging to ask a question about dietary requirements.

In **Section 3 Question (d)** was the most popular. Those candidates who showed they could manipulate a wider range of vocabulary, make proper use of more complex sentence structures, and develop a well-structured argument scored highly. Successful candidates read the chosen questions carefully and included relevant arguments in their essays. There were many essays of a very high standard with good focus.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Exercise 1, Question 1 – Radical and stroke order skills**

- (a) The overall standard was high with many candidates able to demonstrate excellent knowledge of radicals.
- (i) Most candidates correctly identified the radical 口 for 国, while a small number of candidates chose 玉.
- (ii) Nearly all candidates correctly identified 女 for 妻.

- (iii) The majority of candidates identified 石 for 碗 correctly, while only a few candidates chose 宀.
- (b) Candidates had variable success with **Exercise 1(b)** which required them to provide the stroke order for three characters.
- (i) All candidates had no problem with 口, while 玉 proved troublesome. Some candidates put the dot or the vertical stroke before the bottom line and therefore could not score the mark.
- (ii) This character 妻 proved the most problematic, particularly in relation to the vertical stroke | which should go before 女. A small number of candidates wrote 女 incorrectly by writing 一 first.
- (iii) The majority of candidates wrote this character correctly although some had trouble with 巳, writing 乚 first which was incorrect.

### Exercise 2, Question 2 – Use of grammar markers, aspect markers, and measure words

All candidates scored at least one mark in this question. Many successfully answered **part (a)** which tested candidates' knowledge of exclamation adverbs 太. The majority of candidates had no problem with **part (b)** which tested knowledge of pivotal verbs 给. **Part (c)** proved challenging for many candidates. It tested their knowledge of frequency adverbs 又. Many chose 没 incorrectly. Some candidates also found **part (d)** difficult, which tested a preposition word. Some chose 的 or 得 incorrectly.

There appeared to be a degree of guesswork from less prepared candidates and they might have benefited from more practice with cloze-type exercises on this demanding skill. Candidates are advised to revise all the common and non-common markers in all kinds of different contexts, not just in straightforward sentences.

## Section 2

### Question 3 – Letter writing

In general, candidates did well in terms of Communication marks. The majority are now aware of using the correct formal letter format, starting with 尊敬的... and finishing by using 此致, 敬礼. However, some candidates still used 亲爱的 and 祝....., and therefore did not get the Communication mark for this bullet point. Most candidates were able to address the first three bullet points: to state the date of the event, activities on the day and who they would meet at the event. A good variety of words were used for 'to meet' such as 会面, 会晤, 见到, 见面. A few candidates wrote 下个星期, 这个星期, 下个月 which meant they could not score the mark for this bullet point. The last-but-one bullet point was challenging for some and many candidates asked if the visitor has any allergies 你有过敏症吗? but did not specifically mention food.

In terms of Accuracy of Characters, most candidates wrote characters correctly and achieved good marks. In some responses there were a number of basic mistakes which could have been avoided.

Examples of incorrect characters were 马 for 吗; 立 for 音; 交 for 饺; 化 for 伦; 舌 for 活; 部门 (EAR radical missing in first character); 经里; 望 dot missing; 春节 (节 missing); 参加 (加 missing); 们 for 们; 学校, 老师 incorrectly written; 除 written without last two strokes; 文花 for 文化; 个种 for 各种. Some candidates used 大事, 事变, 事件, 歌颂, 光荣, 强式 活动 for 'event' which were not appropriate.

In terms of Accuracy of Grammar and Structures, not many candidates achieved full marks. Some candidates had problems placing 'location phrases', 'time phrases' or 'with somebody' in the right place in the sentence. Some candidates were not sure how to use 和 correctly. Some candidates crossed out perfectly good sentences, probably not wanting to exceed the word count.

Examples of incorrect grammar/structures:

你会面学生学习中文; 我想你来这里; 也我们会...; 他会开始六月七日; 开一个活动;  
提出一个表演会; 交老师们, 学生们; 谢谢您看到了。



Examples of good sentences:

尊敬的大使先生：我们学校二月十四日会有一个春节派对；庆祝春节。  
您在饮食方面有没有一些饮食过敏症？你有食物过敏吗？您吃素吗？我们会讨论新的教学方法。我们打算举办各种各样很好玩儿的春节活动，比如：包饺子；给同学红包，等等。

### Section 3

#### Question 4 – Opinion essay

Most candidates wrote thoughtful, well organised essays of an appropriate length. **Question (d)** (Media) was the most popular, followed by **Questions (c)** (Education), **(b)** (Young people), **(e)** (Work and leisure) and **(a)** (Family). **Question (f)** was the least popular. The best essays were those in which ideas and opinions were coherently organised and argued convincingly with well-chosen evidence/examples and language of a high standard.

A small number of candidates did not focus on the question, making their argument somewhat irrelevant. Candidates are advised to pay attention to the consistency, structures and the logic of their arguments when practising essay writing. Mastering the skill of using simple sentences to express opinions clearly and confidently is just as important as being able to use more complex sentences fluently and accurately.

- (a) Candidates considered aspects of the generation gap, the need for grandparents to have someone to talk to and the limited time parents can set aside for their children due to work pressure.
- (b) A wide variety of viewpoints were presented in candidates' answers including restricted freedom and controlling parents for young people living at home; opportunities of choice and decision-making offered by living independently. Becoming independent whilst also living with parents was also argued successfully by some candidates.
- (c) Many candidates chose this topic and had plenty to say. The majority were able to acknowledge contrasting views and provided supporting examples. Arguments included the usefulness of degrees in the job market; the importance of mastering communication skills beside diplomas; the importance of learning to become a responsible adult.
- (d) This topic was chosen by the largest number of candidates and many were able to write comprehensive essays with confidence. Some discussed the convenience smartphones have brought to people's daily life with detailed examples, while others pointed out the harm smartphones also cause in terms of health issues, cyber bullying and unrealistic expectations of the perfect image.
- (e) The quality of writing in response to this title was high. Some candidates used their own family's experience to illustrate successfully how people in work supported their elderly parents, while others argued for the opposite view convincingly, based on the fact that people's health would not be as robust in retirement and they would not be able to do some fun activities as easily as when they were younger.
- (f) Not many candidates chose this topic but those who did wrote very good essays covering many angles such as, by law, men and women are equal; gender does not decide whether or not a person can do a job, but intelligence, qualification and ability do. At the same time, candidates acknowledged that gender inequality and prejudice still exist in today's society.

#### Accuracy of Language

There were many excellent examples of idioms, structures and vocabulary correctly used as well as errors, some of which resulted from misusing the dictionary and/or attempting to use English word order for a Chinese sentence. Whilst a dictionary can be helpful, it can sometimes lead candidates astray if they do not check the meaning of a term in different contexts. Some candidates did not seem familiar with Chinese word order and simply translated word-by-word from English sentences.

Many candidates made an effort to use idioms in their essays with 坐井观天 being the most popular choice, with variable success. Many candidates used the sequence structure 首先, 其次..., 第一, 第二 correctly.



There are still a considerable number of candidates who confused 可以, 可能, 会 and used them incorrectly. There was also evidence of a lack of basic knowledge, such as the difference between 来 and 去.

Examples of incorrectly written characters:

种 with the wrong radical; 且(目); 令(今); 观 (管); 沦 (论); 完(玩); 便(更), 这个问提, 退休以后 – 退休以后; 根剧 for 根据, 雪要 for 需要; 弟一, 等一 instead of 第一.

Examples of incorrect grammar:

....对成人生活准备学生; ...安静得(地)坐着看手机; ...提高他的生活; ...和有很多目的: 和 is used to connect nouns not clauses.

...成功被他们不会来; 手机被人们方更 (便); 很多年轻人不可以 (should be 不能) 做简单活动; ...都学校应该教他们...

Examples of well-constructed sentences:

家庭

...很多父母要承担非常重的经济负担, 要整天工作, 大孩子要帮助养育比较小的孩子, 干家务等。

年轻人

他们不仅有更多自由, 而且可以让自己选择。

...这些人每天工作, 不花父母的钱, 帮助父母付房租, 做饭, 等等。

教育

教育能培养学生们的思维能力。

媒体

我认为现代社会需要处理智能手机的负面影响。

在手机上他们可以看新闻, 做作业, 看电影和学习其它国家的文化等等。

工作与休闲

一般来说, 年轻人比老年人有更多的精力。

成人需要努力工作赚钱养家

机会平等

无论你是男性或是女性, 人们都能做一样的工作。我百分之百支持这个看法。

如果一对夫妇生一个女儿, 那么他们就需要把他们所有的金钱, 事件和精力投入在这个女孩子的教育上。

# MANDARIN CHINESE (PRINCIPAL)

Paper 9778/04  
Chinese Culture

## Key messages

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

- read their chosen questions carefully and think about what they are being asked to do;
- plan each answer and organise their material with close reference to the question;
- include analysis and argument, and avoid simply narrating events or retelling the story;
- ensure essays start with an introduction which outlines how the question is going to be addressed. Listing all the concluding points in the introduction to the essay should be avoided. Subsequent paragraphs should develop a clear argument/line of thinking with specific, relevant examples/evidence to illustrate the argument, which should always link to the question;
- finish their essays with a strong conclusion. The introduction and conclusion of the essay both need to be relevant and convincing.
- avoid writing essays which consist of a descriptive list of facts or the story of what happened in a period of history, a novel or a film. Candidates need to know the relevant facts, but need to be able to use them to demonstrate their deeper understanding and analytical capability in response to the question;
- study a range of commentaries/viewpoints on a particular topic, and take the opportunity to discuss ideas with their teachers and other students to inform their interpretation of events or their interpretation of a book or film. It is only this exposure to a variety of views that will give candidates the ability to handle these essay questions with sufficient analysis.
- remember that evaluation is key. Organisation of material is vital and an appropriate style should be used. In the case of the novels and the film, candidates need to have a good grasp of the Chinese history of the period in which they are set.

## General comments

By far the most popular choice in **Section 1** was **Question 1(b)** with about half of all candidates choosing this question. Very few candidates chose to answer **Question 2(a)**. In **Section 2**, **Question 6(a)** proved popular. Very few candidates chose to answer **Questions 5(a)** and **5(b)**.

There was generally a good standard in terms of essay structure. Most candidates planned well, and this was reflected in logical paragraphing and good or adequate introductions and conclusions. Where candidates evidently had last-minute ideas that they wanted to add, in the well-planned essays these were inserted by using asterisks and so the structure of the essay remained tight. In a minority of cases, afterthoughts were added into the conclusion which meant that they became rambling and so marks for structure were lost. Some good essays were let down by weak introductions or conclusions which were very brief and/or merely repeated the premise of the question.

In terms of content, a key issue was the careful reading of the question. Sometimes the marks of candidates who clearly had a good knowledge of the topic/set work were affected because they had either not read the question closely enough or misunderstood it.

While most candidates had a very good idea of the chronology of China's recent history, some had a muddled understanding of the sequence of events. This had an impact on answers in the culture section as well as the history and economics questions. The two books and the film require a clear understanding of some key events and political campaigns in the second half of the twentieth century in China and some candidates confused the order in which these occurred or misrepresented key facts as to what happened. For example, placing the famine in the time of the Cultural Revolution or the Red Guards in the 1950s.

In **Section 2**, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* and *The Blue Kite* were by far the most popular choices. Many candidates showed thorough knowledge of the text or film, and thoughtful analysis. However, some candidates included details of metaphors or quotations that had no relevance to the question and this had an impact on the number of marks awarded. Such answers read as though candidates were regurgitating revision cards or rewriting essays done in class for different questions and were trying unsuccessfully to use these as responses to the question they had chosen to answer. A handful of candidates answered with a pre-learned essay that barely addressed the question.

Candidates also need to remember that literary characters are not real people, and so their actions and speech are the result of the whim of the author or film director and not their own 'choice'. This will have an impact on their understanding of the novel or film.

## **Section 1**

### **Question 1** *The founding of the PRC*

- (a) The most successful answers to this question showed that candidates had understood the question, given thought to what defines a crisis and paid close attention to the time span indicated in the question (1937–49). Some candidates' marks were affected because they did not address the historical period specified in the question or misread or misunderstood the question, for example, interpreting the question as one about crisis being the result of revolution.
- (b) This was by far the most popular question on this year's paper. There was, in general, a very high standard of responses, with most candidates having a good knowledge of the subject matter. The best answers were those in which the candidates showed a good understanding of the relative importance of the issues facing the CCP and paid attention to the evaluative component in the question by analysing whether or not the CCP were successful in their approach. Some candidates tried to include every single aspect they had learned about this period of history at the expense of detail. Candidates are advised that it is better to be specific and thorough than general and vague.

### **Question 2** *Chinese economic trends since 1978*

- (a) Insufficient candidates chose to answer this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) In general candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of the economic reforms. More successful essays addressed the issue of what is meant by a 'socialist market economy' which showed a good understanding of the political constraints behind the economic policies adopted by China's leaders.

### **Question 3** *Emerging China: population, environment and migration*

- (a) There was a wide range of responses to this question. The most successful essays showed that candidates had a clear idea of what a 'sustainable economy' means and a thorough knowledge of the examples they chose to evaluate. Less successful essays showed a hazy understanding of the ecological issues at stake and tended to describe initiatives but not to evaluate whether or not these initiatives demonstrated a focus on sustainable development. There was a noticeably narrow choice of examples cited by candidates and a tendency to overlook the changes in environment issues in the last 30 years. Wider reading and more individual analysis would help candidates access the higher mark bands.
- (b) Many candidates showed an excellent understanding of the geographical and demographic issues behind the disparities in life expectancy and education attainment and addressed the question of the relative success of policies aimed at resolving them. However, some candidates did not read the question carefully and wrote answers about the problem of the size of China's population and the one-child policy, and did not address the issue of disparity.

## **Section 2**

### **Question 4** *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*

- (a) The most successful candidates showed a thorough knowledge of the chronology of the book and the different members of the family. They were also able to give counterarguments about what actions may have been more influenced by other factors such as 'face' or tradition than the political

environment. Errors in the chronology or the actual events of political campaigns marred some answers.

- (b) This was a popular question and most candidates showed a very good understanding of the tribulations suffered by the protagonist and his evolution over the course of the novel. The most successful essays balanced narrative with analysis and avoided being overly repetitive with the choice of examples of hardship and the ways in which Xu may have become a 'better man'.

**Question 5** *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question by candidates who read the question carefully, gave it thought and planned well. There was a huge amount of scope in this question and the best responses showed a thoughtful engagement with the imagery, the characters and the plot line of the book. In weaker responses candidates seemed to have misunderstood the question or it seemed as if they were responding to a different question.
- (b) The best essays demonstrated a good knowledge of these three characters and their interactions. The responses showed that candidates had engaged thoughtfully with the key issue of the role played by these relationships in the novel.

**Question 6** *The Blue Kite*

- (a) This was a very popular question and it was encouraging to see a clear focus on cinematography as well as content in the better answers. The best essays also showed a thorough knowledge of the film as a whole and a careful consideration of the key terms in the question of 'direct honest account' and 'ordinary people'. Some candidates focused on whether the film was historically accurate and missed subtleties within the cinematography that are used for dramatic effect rather than as a narrative device. Weaker answers were overly narrative or did not show clear links between stylistic techniques or images and the question that needed to be addressed. Some were unsure about the difference between narrative and cinematography, for example, a character crying is a narrative device, a close-up of a tear drop or the film maker showing a character crying but without sound is a cinematographic device.
- (b) This was a less popular question. There were some focused and thoughtful answers. Marks were affected where candidates dwelt on just one or two scenes, which suggested a patchy knowledge of the film, or failed to address the question of the role of Shujian in the film. This may be because the candidate had only watched the film once or twice so did not understand the messages conveyed throughout. Very few candidates compared or contrasted Shu Juan with other female characters in the film such as her zealous sister which would have been useful for analysing her role.