

# FRENCH

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<p><b>Paper 9716/01</b> <b>Speaking</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

For Teachers/Examiners:

Keep to the timings prescribed for the examination (see below).

Prompt candidates to ask questions during/at the end of each conversation section, but keep your own answers brief. (A candidate cannot qualify for marks while the Examiner is speaking.)

More than one question per section is required for candidates to qualify for full marks and Examiners should be prepared to prompt candidates for several questions to enable them to have access to the full range of marks.

Candidates' questions should relate to the topic under discussion. Please see the Mark Scheme.

Cover a range of topics (not a single topic) in the General Conversation, some in depth, vary questions and topics from one candidate to another, be prepared to identify and follow the interests and passions of the candidate (not your own), and keep your own contributions to a minimum.

Create as natural a conversation as possible, interact with the candidate and avoid lists of pre-prepared questions, especially those which elicit one-word or purely factual answers.

Ask questions at an appropriate level and avoid IGCSE-type questions except as openers to fuller discussion.

For candidates:

Make sure that the presentation is not just factual, but contains ideas and opinions and also allows further discussion in the Topic Conversation.

Ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections and make every effort to ask more than one question on the topic or topics under discussion in order to qualify for the full range of marks. Make sure your questions are relevant to the topic under discussion.

Remember that the Topic Presentation must make clear reference to a francophone culture or society: *The presentation must demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken.* This must be more than a passing reference, and candidates who live in a francophone country and who speak about an aspect of their own culture must make it clear beyond doubt to which country they are referring. Many topics were borderline in this respect.

## **General comments**

It is important for Examiners to remember that this examination is an opportunity for candidates to show what they have learnt and a chance for them to express and develop their own ideas and opinions. Examiners should see their role as providing and facilitating this opportunity.

The way in which an Examiner asks a question can make a huge difference to how a candidate is able to respond. Examiners need to be aware that:

Very long, complex questions tend to unnerve candidates and rarely facilitate discussion.

Closed questions usually elicit short answers, sometimes just yes or no, and should be avoided unless they are intended to open the way for a deeper discussion.

Open questions such as *Comment?* or *Pourquoi?* are more likely to allow a candidate the freedom to answer at much greater length and in greater depth.

The examination should be a conversation, which can only be achieved by engaging with and responding to what the candidate says, not by asking a series of entirely unrelated questions with no follow-up. Going through a list of pre-prepared questions rarely results in a natural conversation.

Some candidates asked indirect questions in the conversation sections in order to qualify for marks under Seeking Information i.e. *Si vous aviez l'occasion de rencontrer le premier ministre, qu'est-ce que vous lui demanderiez?* This is perfectly acceptable and qualifies for marks, but is much harder for candidates than asking the Examiner direct questions.

Some candidates asked the Examiner direct questions during the Topic Presentation. Please note that this is not best practice as they disrupt the flow of the Presentation and do not count towards Seeking Information in the conversation sections.

A number of candidates asked rhetorical questions in the Topic Presentation. Rhetorical questions are not a requirement of the Test, but they may constitute, if desired, an appropriate part of the Presentation. However, candidates should be aware that they do not count towards Seeking Information in the conversation sections.

Candidates should not ask their Teacher-Examiner for key (or indeed any) vocabulary.

## **Administration**

### *Recordings*

Recordings this year were mainly clear, though there are still examples of faulty recording equipment. Examiners must check the equipment before using it and ensure that the microphone favours the candidate without losing the Examiner's own contribution.

Please choose a room which is quiet and where candidates are not distracted by external noise.

Only the Examiner and the candidate should be present during the Test. If a third person is required to be present, for example a carer, permission must be obtained in advance from Cambridge Assessment.

Centres should keep a copy of the recording(s) in case a second copy is required by the moderator or a broader range of marks is requested.

Where centres use digital recording software, each candidate's file must be saved individually, as .mp3, and finalised correctly, so that each candidate's examination can be accessed for moderation. Files should be identified using precise candidate details (see the paragraph below) rather than just 'number 1, 2' etc.

Please ensure that all recording material (including CD cases) is labelled with details of the centre, syllabus, and candidates, listed with their full names and candidate numbers in the order of recording. Where a centre has candidates at both A & AS level, they should be recorded on separate CDs.

Centres are reminded that the sample of recordings they send should represent candidates throughout the range of the entry, from highest to lowest.

Please also avoid sticky tape or labels coming into contact with the recording side of CDs, as this makes them unplayable and runs the risk of damaging the equipment on which they are played.

## Paperwork

There have been a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transferring them to the MS1. These should be checked carefully before submission and all paperwork enclosed with the recordings. For the size of sample needed, please see the details in the syllabus booklet. Centres are reminded that for moderation, in addition to the recordings, they need to send the Working Mark Sheet, a copy of the MS1 (computer mark sheet or equivalent), and any other relevant paperwork.

## Problems with the application of the Mark Scheme and the test format

Common problems included:

- Centres awarding marks out of 10 for *Providing* and/or *Seeking Opinions*, when the maximum is 5 or awarding marks for *Seeking Opinions*, even when the candidate had not asked any questions.
- Examiners not halving the mark for *Presentation/Content* if the candidate's topic is not demonstrably and unequivocally related to a francophone country.
- Centres not standardising their examiners when there is more than one of them. (If a centre has been given permission in advance by CIE to engage two or more Examiners for the same syllabus, on account of large number of candidates, Examiners should standardise marks before submitting to CIE for moderation.)
- Incorrect format of the Test (e.g. parts missing).
- Pre-prepared questions and answers.
- Scripted Presentations.
- Unexplained suspensions of the recording during the Test.
- Presentation and discussion of a prescribed set text in the Topic Presentation or Topic Conversation.

## Comments on individual tasks

There are 3 distinct parts to the Speaking Test:

- 1 Presentation – (3–3½ minutes).
- 2 Topic Conversation – (7–8 minutes).
- 3 General Conversation – (8–9 minutes).

The Speaking Test should last no more than 20 minutes in total.

In order to be fair to all candidates across the world, these timings should be observed – where examinations are too short, candidates are not given opportunities to show what they can do, and where conversations are over-extended, an element of fatigue creeps in and candidates often struggle to maintain their concentration and level of language.

### **Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)**

In this part of the examination, the candidate gives a **single** presentation on a specific topic of his or her choice, taken from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus booklet. This is the only prepared part of the examination and the only part for which candidates are able to choose what they want to talk about.

The topic list gives candidates a very wide choice – the most popular this year, at both A and AS Levels, remained *L'Internet*, *L'immigration*, *La Technologie*, *L'égalité des sexes*, *Les Médias Sociaux*, *Le Sport*, *La Famille*, *Le Tourisme*, *La Mode*, *La Cuisine Française*, *L'environnement* and *La Pollution*. There were a number of the usual favourites, such as drugs, unemployment, marriage and discrimination, a few dealing with culture or politics in a French-speaking country, as well as personal interests such as art or music. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues.

For the most part, candidates were clearly aware of the need, stated in the syllabus, that the presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for *Content/Presentation* halved (see Speaking Test mark scheme) by the Examiner.

Since the topic is chosen beforehand, candidates have usually researched quite widely, and have to select and structure their material to fit into 3 to 3½ minutes – additional material which cannot be included in the actual presentation because of the time constraint may well prove very useful in the topic conversation section. In general, candidates had no problem speaking for the required time and many were able to give full and interesting presentations.

Candidates are advised to steer clear of very factual subjects e.g. *La famille* and *Le Sport*. The mark scheme criteria for the *Content/Presentation* element makes it clear that in order to score well, the presentation should contain not just factual points, but ideas and opinions. Candidates need to think carefully before making their final choice and consider whether it will be possible to develop and expand their chosen topic. Sport and family, though popular choices, are often the least successful for that reason.

Candidates only present ONE topic and the Topic Conversation which follows will seek to develop that same topic.

### **Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)**

In this section, candidates have the chance to expand on what they have already said and develop ideas and opinions expressed briefly during the presentation. Examiners need to beware of merely asking questions which allow a repetition of the same material already offered – their aim should be to ask more probing questions in order to give candidates opportunities to expand on their original statements and then respond to what the candidate says. There are not necessarily ‘right’ answers either here or in the General Conversation section and it is in the nature of a genuine conversation that those taking part may not agree with opinions expressed. However, differences of opinion can create lively debate (if handled sensitively and purposefully by the Examiner) and can give candidates the opportunity to defend their point of view.

At both A and AS Level, questions should go beyond the sort of questions appropriate at IGCSE Level. Candidates need to be able to show that they are capable of taking part in a mature conversation. In some cases, candidates were not able to offer much development or sustain the level of language used in their presentation, but others were successful in expressing additional ideas and seeking the opinions of the Examiner.

In each conversation section there are 5 marks available for questions the candidates ask of the Examiner: they should ask more than one question in each conversation section and Examiners must prompt them to do so. Examiners should make sure that they do not spend too long on their own answers to candidates’ questions, thereby depriving candidates of valuable time.

Examiners should note that it is helpful both to candidates and moderators to signal the end of the Topic Conversation and the beginning of the General Conversation.

### **General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)**

The General Conversation is the most spontaneous section of the examination. Candidates will have prepared their own choice of topic for the Topic Presentation (to be continued in the Topic Conversation), but here they do not know what the Examiner will choose to discuss (and it is the Examiner who chooses, not the candidate). Clearly the areas of discussion will be those studied during the course, but in a centre with a number of candidates, candidates should not all be asked to talk about the same list of subjects – themes should be varied from candidate to candidate and should on no account return to the original subject of the presentation.

This section is intended to be a conversation between Examiner and candidate, so it is not appropriate for the Examiner to ask a series of unrelated questions, to which the candidate responds with a prepared answer, after which the Examiner moves on to the next question on the list! Examiners should display sensitivity in asking questions about topics of a personal nature i.e. religion and personal relationships and should try to keep their questions general rather than moving inappropriately into personal areas. Examiners should not regard the examination as a platform for imposing their own views on the candidates.

Examiners should aim to discuss a minimum of 2 to 3 areas in **depth**, giving candidates opportunities to offer their own opinions and defend them in discussion. Although the section may begin with straightforward questions about family, interests or future plans, which can, in themselves, be developed beyond the purely factual (questions asking ‘Why?’ or ‘How?’ are useful here), candidates should be prepared for the conversation to move on to current affairs and more abstract topics appropriate to this level of examination.

Candidates should be prompted to ask questions of the Examiner in order to give them the opportunity to score marks for this criterion, though Examiners should once again be wary of answering at too great a length.

# FRENCH

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<p>Paper 9716/21 Reading and Writing</p>
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## Key messages

In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. The inclusion of additional words invalidates the answer.

In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should **not** begin the answer by writing out the question. Answers beginning with (for example) *Parce que* are quite acceptable.

In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the word limit is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.

In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

## General comments

Candidates should be instructed **not** to use an additional booklet unnecessarily for a few extra words which could easily be included in the space provided in original answer booklet. In extreme cases, this involved only two or three words written in an otherwise blank 4- or 8-page additional booklet. Apart from the obvious waste of resources, this practice significantly complicates the scanning and marking process.

Illegibility remains a significant (and growing) problem, partly because of very poor handwriting (notably the letters *r* and *s* appearing identical on the end of words) and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and minute insertions.

Overall, the texts were felt to be of an appropriate level and approachable by the overwhelming majority. The subject matter appeared to be of interest to the candidates.

The paper was largely comparable in overall level of difficulty to previous years, and produced the usual wide range of marks. There were some very good scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled the various tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, but there were many whose level of linguistic competence and knowledge was over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

Candidates usually appeared familiar with the format of the paper and knew how to set about tackling the different types of question. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

There were few signs of undue time pressure, with most candidates managing to attempt all questions, although some answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Most of the questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary.

Many candidates still feel the need to incorporate the words of the question as an unnecessary preamble to the answer, which not only wastes time for both candidate and marker, but also potentially introduces

linguistic errors which can detract from the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **(3b)** *Ceux qui arrivaient au zoo souffraient-ils parce que ...*; **(3e)** *Les jeunes trouvent-ils difficile de ...*; **(4d)** *Certains animaux sauvages risquent-ils de ...*. Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order.

Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished, with more candidates understanding how to ‘work’ the text to avoid ‘lifting’, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply ‘lifting’ items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks at this level. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complication. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3** and **4** below.

The paper ties the questions (and therefore the answers) to specific paragraphs (or occasionally to specific lines) in the texts. Candidates who find themselves writing the same answer for two questions need to pause for thought.

**Question 2**, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement. **Candidates should not attempt to cut corners by omitting the prompt at the start of their answers.**

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90 – 100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40 – 50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that some answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are still unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the subject. To give just one example among very many, the candidate who started with *Les zoos ont beaucoup d'avantages à la société par des aspects mentionnés dans les deux textes. Pourtant, il y a des disadvantages et les arguments sur les zoos, donc les gens ont un conflit sur le sujet. Pour des gens qui sont pour les zoos, ils pensent que les zoos...* simply wasted a third of the number of words allowed, literally pointlessly. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is required in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay or a vehicle for personal opinions.

Other candidates made the same point several times or went into unnecessary detail.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind, but other scripts were littered with crossings-out, which often caused problems with legibility.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

Answers from weaker candidates sometimes appeared to be chosen largely at random and bore no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question. Candidates would be well advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved.

**Item (a)** saw a good number of successful first answers, with candidates recognising two feminine plural past participles in *rassemblées* and *réunies*.

**Item (b)** prompted some to offer *de nombreuses*, presumably because it looked like *dénombrer*.

**Item (c)** proved the most elusive, with many opting for *approvisionner*, largely, one suspected, because it started with the same three letters as *apparaître*.

In **Item (d)**, stronger candidates were rewarded for recognising two related nouns in *poursuite* and *recherche*.

In **Item (e)**, two infinitives pointed some in the direction of *fournir* and *approvisionner*, although some were careless in copying the latter from the text.

#### Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question, but the task proved quite demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

Weaker candidates appeared to see this as an exercise in simply re-arranging the order of the words of the original, with no regard for sense.

In **Item 2(a)**, many understood the requirement for a transformation into the passive here, but fewer saw the need to make *sensibilisés* agree.

In **Item 2(b)**, most candidates understood the need to conjugate the verb *recevoir*, but not all could do so correctly. Some decided on an unnecessary use of the *passé composé*, whilst others omitted the distinguishing accent on *où*,

In **Item 2(c)**, *nous faisons* proved elusive for some, whilst the consequential need for *notre* and *nos* was not supplied by others.

In **Item 2(d)**, stronger candidates recognised the need for a subjunctive here often but some offered *ai* or *aïlle* instead of *ait*.

**Item 2(e)** suffered from attempts to change the tense. Some managed to find a past participle for *accomplir* (*accomplissé* being very common) but a number omitted the feminine plural agreement.

#### Question 3

There was a tendency among weaker candidates simply to seize on a word in the question and to write out the sentence from the text which contained it or something similar, in the hope of including the answer somewhere along the way. Questions are usually specifically designed to prevent this.

**Item 3(a)** required a past tense as it asked about *le passé*. Some referenced the wrong part of the second paragraph, talking about going off around the world in search of animals and adventure rather than for a Sunday stroll, and thinking that *la recherche* meant research in this context. Others successfully avoided 'lifting' *divertissement* by using a verb – *se divertir/s'amuser/se distraire* – although *leur* appeared not infrequently as the reflexive pronoun. There were occasional similar problems with *se promener*.



**Item 3(b)** saw some confusion between *destin* and *destination*. The answers again required a past tense. A good proportion correctly identified the death of the captured animals, but some thought that those which arrived were in an appalling condition.

**Item 3(c)** asked *Que font les zoos ...*, suggesting the need to replace the nouns of the text with verbs, thereby avoiding 'lifting'. Good candidates who were wary of conjugating *agrandir* sensibly opted for *augmenter la taille*, and similarly avoided *restreindre* by using *limiter* or *réduire*, although some went on to confuse *numéro* with *nombre*. *Imiter* was the simple solution for the third mark.

**In Item 3(d)**, similar tactics paid off for those who offered *conserver/protéger/sauver les espèces menacées/en danger, (se) reproduire* and *réintroduire/réintégrer/réinsérer/libérer/retourner ...*

**In Item 3(e)**, a small number of candidates did not understand the concept of *l'urbanisation* which was easily enough expressed by others as *Ils habitent en ville*. The second and third marks were regularly scored.

**Item 3(f)** was well answered by those candidates who avoided lifting *protecter* or *disparution* or *extinctés*.

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#### Question 4

**Item 4(a)**: candidates often successfully rephrased *entreprises commerciales* with something as simple as *pour gagner de l'argent*. Others jumped too readily at copying *pour notre seul bon plaisir* for the second mark when *divertissement* from *Texte 1* or a verb – *nous amuser/divertir/plaire* – would have done the job.

**In Item 4(b)**, most candidates understood the reduced life-expectancy of animals in captivity and many found ways of avoiding *espérance de vie plus faible* with *ils vivent moins longtemps/meurent plus vite etc. Les médicaux* and *les médecines/médecins* often confused responses for the second mark, but the regular provision of food was generally suggested as a bonus of life in a zoo. Fewer understood the protection against being hunted.

**In Item 4(c)**, some candidates missed the essential element of *s'alimenter*, and wandered into the difference in culture/habitat or the depression and boredom from the next question. Others found good ways of expressing the idea of *on livre des kilos de viande*.

**In Item 4(d)**, *les animaux sont ennuyeux/ennuyant/ennuyés* were offered as ways of avoiding lifting *ennui*, and *dépressés* was common. Other candidates found simple ways of saying that the animals suffer because they do not have enough to do.

**In Item 4(e)**, a significant proportion stood things on their heads by suggesting that the programmes mentioned had been successful, or simply lifted *se comptent sur les doigts (droits) de la main*. Protecting *les milieux/habitats naturels* (rather than the animals themselves) was the essential element for the second mark.

**Item 4(f)** was generally well handled by candidates who identified the danger of children thinking that captivity was the normal state and who found simple ways of urging people not to go to zoos but to watch animal documentaries on TV instead.

#### Question 5

This Question asked candidates to summarise the pros and cons of zoos, and then to discuss whether animals have rights.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points, of which most candidates managed a reasonable number, with the most efficient reaching the maximum of 10. The weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material. A number of others produced general essays without including the required rewardable elements.

The most commonly identified points in favour of zoos included their value for research, for the conservation of endangered species and their reproduction/reintroduction into the wild, and the raising of awareness of the damage inflicted by man on animals and the natural environment.



Arguments against included the suffering inflicted on animals by their captivity, including boredom and depression, a reduction in their life expectancy, and the fact that zoos simply exist to make money for their owners or to entertain visitors.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in the quality of language mark.

The **Personal Response** was designed to broaden the debate away from zoos to animal welfare in general. Some candidates argued that animals have the same rights as man as essential parts of creation and the ecosystem. Others described animals as sentient creatures like us, capable of feelings and emotions.

### Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from very good to very poor. The strongest candidates wrote fluently and accurately, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a commendable control of structure. Others struggled with the rudiments of the language, finding it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) – the nuts and bolts of the language – appeared largely random many scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements whatsoever. Candidates need to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written.

There appears to be a tendency to confuse how to make nouns and adjectives plural with how to make verbs plural: for example the plural of *la cage* becoming *les cagent* and the plural of *il mange* becoming *ils manges*.

Incorrect verb forms were prevalent, even with very common verbs in the present indicative e.g. *mettre*, *prendre*, *recevoir*, *devoir*. Even *aller* (*ils allent*), *être* (*ils sons*) and *faire* (*ils faisent*); *pouvoir* (*ils peuvent*); *mourir* (*ils on morri/mortu*) caused problems.

The use of the infinitive (-er) ending – or indeed anything else that sounded vaguely similar – seemed interchangeable with the past participle (-é) in some scripts.

The approach to spelling was in some cases at best phonetic or idiosyncratic, e.g. *vrait*; *sur un plato*. *On/ont*, *son/sont*, *ces/ses/c'est*, *sa/ça*, *et/est*, *voix/voit/voie* often seemed to be selected at random.

New words or uses were also much in evidence, often heavily influenced by English or occasionally Spanish: *effective*; *une relationship*; *extincte*; *un entertainment*; *le damage*. This was particularly evident in this season's crop of fictional verbs: *périssier*; *restricter*; *agrandisser*; *expandir*; *enlarger*; *extincter*; *destruyer/destruiter*; *promoter*; *reducer*; *displayer*; *disparer*; *reproducer/ir*; *oppresser*; *apprender*; *(ré)introducer/ir*; *conservater*; *introductionner*. The influence of English was all too apparent in some of the structures used: *savoir environ les animaux*; *les programmes ne travaillent pas*; *ne vont pas vivre comme long*; *un beaucoup de viande*; *tout en tout*.

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent.

Personal pronouns and adjectives in general would repay further study.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses, but most candidates were able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, although often flawed, generally communicated effectively enough to be comprehensible to a sympathetic reader and to enable assessment of their answers.

Language difficulties still prevented some candidates from expressing answers which one suspected they may actually have known. At the other end of the scale however, the cohort also included some very strong candidates who displayed an ability to write French which was both robust in its command of grammar and syntax and commendably idiomatic and convincing in its range of vocabulary and expression.

# FRENCH

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<p>Paper 9716/22 Reading and Writing</p>
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## Key messages

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In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should **not** begin the answer by writing out the question. Answers beginning with (for example) *Parce que* are quite acceptable.

In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the word limit is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.

In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

## General comments

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Illegibility remains a significant (and growing) problem, partly because of very poor handwriting (notably the letters *r* and *s* appearing identical on the end of words) and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and minute insertions.

Overall, the texts were felt to be of an appropriate level and approachable by the overwhelming majority. The subject matter appeared to be of interest and relevance to the candidates who were generally able to engage with the texts.

The paper was largely comparable in overall level of difficulty to previous years, and produced the usual wide range of marks. There were some very good scripts from able and well-prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was simply over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

Most candidates appeared familiar with the format of the paper and knew how to set about tackling the different types of question. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

There were few signs of undue time pressure, with most candidates managing to attempt all questions, although quite a lot of answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Most of the questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary.

Many candidates still feel the need to incorporate the words of the question as an unnecessary preamble to the answer, which not only wastes time for both candidate and marker, but also potentially introduces linguistic errors which can detract from the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **4(b)** *M. Bonnard veut-il encourager ses élèves parce que ...* **4(e)** *Mme Hamayed se sentirait-elle hypocrite parce que ...* Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order.

Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished, with more candidates understanding how to ‘work’ the text to avoid ‘lifting’, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply ‘lifting’ items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks at this level. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complication. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3** and **4** below.

The paper ties the questions (and therefore the answers) to specific paragraphs (or occasionally to specific lines) in the texts. Candidates who find themselves writing the same answer for two questions need to pause for thought.

**Question 2**, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement. **Candidates should not attempt to cut corners by omitting the prompt at the start of their answers.**

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90–100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40–50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that some answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are still unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the topic. To give just one example among very many, the candidate who started *with Le téléphone portable est l'outil le plus utilisé en ce 21<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'on ne peut pas s'en passer. Cependant, bien qu'ayant de avantages, les smartphones ou téléphones portables représentent un danger pour l'éducation dans les établissements. Le premier texte s'accroche sur les désavantages du smartphone en classe qui sont ...* simply wasted a third of the available words, literally pointlessly. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the outset, candidates need to make a relevant point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is required in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay or a vehicle for personal opinions.

Other candidates made the same point several times or went into unnecessary detail.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind, but other scripts were littered with crossings-out, which often caused problems with legibility.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

This was a reasonably straightforward first exercise, but answers from weaker candidates sometimes appeared to be chosen largely at random and bore no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question. Candidates would be well advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved.

**Item (a)** was generally well recognised, although some couldn't reproduce the feminine plural of the original.

**Item (b)** saw some candidates jumping at *condamnent* rather than the correct *interdisent*. Others produced some answers whose only resemblance to *défendent* was the fact that they ended in -ent – e.g. *bannissement*.

**Item (c)** produced a large number of correct identifications of *ingérable*.

**Item (d)** saw some candidates going part of the way with *preuve* or *fait preuve*, but didn't respect the 'footprint' principle (see **General comments Question 1** above) by not including the *d'* which was needed to fit in with the sense of the original. *Déclare* was an alternative answer correctly found by some.

In **Item (e)**, *demeurer* was not widely understood as a substitute for *rester*.

#### Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question, but the task proved quite demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

**Item 2(a)** proved problematic for those who could not find the correct form *distracts*, producing *distrayés*, *distraient*, *distrés* etc. or who didn't make a plural agreement.

In **Item 2(b)**, candidates often retained the *à* from the original or the *s* on *faciles*, even when the prompt began *Il est*. Others made simple copying errors in omitting the *s* on *leurs* or *inquiétudes*.

In **Item 2(c)**, some candidates' ability to manipulate pronouns was over-taxed with *ils* or *leur* often appearing instead of *eux*. Others neglected the required conditional tense.

In **Item 2(d)**, the need for the conditional was again not appreciated by some in attempts at forming the passive here. Of those who found *obtenu*, a number forgot to add the *s*.

**Item 2(e)** saw more able candidates identifying the need for a subjunctive following *bien que*, although not all managed the correct form of *fasse*. Some lost the mark by omitting the *de*.

#### Question 3

**Item 3(a)** starts by asking what mobile phones make it difficult for teachers to do, leading successful candidates to produce the necessary verb *gérer* or an acceptable equivalent to indicate the problem of managing or keeping control/order, and scored the second mark by explaining that *les portables dérangent/perturbent/intrompent les cours*. Some lost the third mark by suggesting that there were no rules about phones rather than the school failing to apply them sufficiently strictly.

In **Item 3(b)**, a good number of candidates successfully avoided ‘lifting’ *le bannissement* by using a verb or by finding an acceptable synonym (*interdiction/suppression/prohibition, etc.*). The idea of confiscation was equally well expressed by many.

In **Item 3(c)**, the idea that parents phoned their children was well understood, but not all mentioned the fact that they did so during lessons. *Manque de respect pour le travail des enseignants* was not a difficult idea for candidates to express in their own words for the second mark, but ‘lifting’ was quite common here.

In **Item 3(d)**, the taking of pictures at school was seen as a problem, but there was often no mention of the fact that this was done without the knowledge of permission of those photographed. The use of *photographes* for *photographies* caused some confusion, as did the use of *isolation* for *isolement*. Subsequent on-line humiliation was often correctly identified.

**Item 3(e)** offered a straightforward opportunity to avoid ‘lifting’ by manipulating nouns to verbs, and many did this satisfactorily, although some thought there was a likelihood of theft only during an exam.

In **Item 3(f)**, quite a large proportion of candidates identified the likelihood of inferior results in schools which allow mobile phones, even if the use of *bien* for *bons* and *mal* for *mauvais* sometimes confused the issue – *c’est une très malidé* – as did the very common use of *baisse* as an adjective. Stronger candidates replaced the nouns of the text by verbs, as suggested by the use of *faire* in the question, although many omitted to make the verbs reflexive – *s’appliquer, se concentrer, etc.*

#### Question 4

In **Item 4(a)**, candidates often successfully expressed different schools’ reactions to smartphones for the first two marks, and then went on indicate their use by teachers as aids to their teaching: *ils intègrent/introduisent/utilisent/incorporent ...*, etc.

**Item 4(b)** was generally well understood and offered three fairly straightforward marks to those who avoided the lifting of *autonomie, participation* and (less commonly) *recherches* by rephrasing using either adjectives or verbs.

In **Item 4(c)**, those who attempted to conjugate *acquérir* met with mixed success, but plenty used other simpler verbs such as *développer* or *apprendre*. Some confusion was caused by the use of *l’information* rather than *l’informatique*. Simplicity often fared best in answer to the second part of the question – e.g. *il ne faut pas croire tout ce qu’on lit*.

**Item 4(d)** was often well handled, although some wrongly suggested that the phones had to be in full view on the desk.

In **Item 4(e)**, some did not understand the meaning of *hypocrite*, suggesting that a ban was not sensible because most pupils were using them under the desk anyway, but most made the correct point well. The verb *user* sometimes confused the issue for the second mark, but most identified Mme Hamayed’s aim correctly.

**Item 4(f)** was generally well handled, with large numbers of candidates suggesting that parents would not accept a ban. There was some confusion about whether it was pupils who might need to contact their parents or *vice versa*.

#### Question 5

This Question asked candidates to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of phones in schools and then to suggest other sources of tension in schools.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points, of which most candidates managed a useful number, selecting material carefully and economically in this exercise. The most efficient reached the maximum of 10, whilst the weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified *inconvénients* were the disruption to lessons, disturbed concentration, the potential for theft/cheating and for humiliating people on social media and harm to academic results. Frequently cited benefits included increased independence and participation, ease of researching, the acquisition of IT skills and enabling pupils to contact their parents in case of problems.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in the quality of language mark.

The rubric of the **Personal Response** specifically ruled out mention of phones and asked for other sources of tension. Those who respected the question produced plausible sources, of which by far the most common was excessive homework being given by teachers who seem not to realise that pupils have lives outside school. Other tensions were generated by the dress code, by perceived favouritism, late arrivals, a lack of respect on both sides and teachers unable to control their classes.

### Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. The strongest candidates wrote fluently and accurately, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a robust control of structure. At the other end of the scale some candidates struggled with the rudiments of the language, finding it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) – the nuts and bolts of the language – appeared largely random in a number of scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements whatsoever. Candidates are urged to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written.

There appears to be a tendency to confuse how to make nouns and adjectives plural with how to make verbs plural: *Les élèvent triches ; les inquietudent ; les professeurs sons trop strictent ; les téléphones portablent*.

Incorrect verb forms proliferated, with some unable conjugate even common verbs in the present indicative : *ils sons ; ils font/faisent ; ils pouvent*.

The use of the infinitive (-er) ending - or indeed anything else that sounded vaguely similar - seemed interchangeable with the past participle (-é) in some scripts.

The approach to spelling was in some cases at best phonetic, even with very common words, e.g. *sant* for *sans*. *On/ont, son/sont, ces/ses/c'est, sa/s'a/ça* often seemed to be selected at random. One sometimes had to resort to sounding out what was written in order to understand what was intended: *il ésaille*.

New words or uses were also much in evidence, often heavily influenced by English: *le disrespect ; émergence* (for emergency)/*émergencie ; proprement* (for properly). This was particularly evident in this season's crop of new verbs such as *distracter ; hésitater ; intégrer ; interrupter ; perturber ; confiscater ; acquisiteur ; banniser/banner ; apprentisser ; disturber ; prohibiter ; attempter*. The influence of English was often seen in structures too : *On peut avoir son portable volé*.

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent: *interdiction/interdire ; hésitation/hésiter ; bannissement/bannir ; gestion/gérer ; apprentissage/ apprendre etc*.

Emphatic pronouns, and indeed pronouns in general would repay further study.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses, but the majority of candidates were able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, although sometimes flawed, was nevertheless generally comprehensible to the reader. The cohort also included some very strong candidates who displayed an ability to write French, which was both virtually free from error and commendably idiomatic and convincing.

# FRENCH

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<p>Paper 9716/23 Reading and Writing</p>
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## Key messages

In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. The inclusion of additional words invalidates the answer.

In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should **not** begin the answer by writing out the question. Answers beginning with (for example) *Parce que* are quite acceptable.

In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the word limit is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.

In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

## General comments

Candidates should be instructed **not** to use an additional booklet unnecessarily for a few extra words which could easily be included in the space provided in original answer booklet. In extreme cases, this involved only two or three words written in an otherwise blank 4- or 8-page additional booklet. Apart from the obvious waste of resources, this practice significantly complicates the scanning and marking process.

Illegibility remains a significant (and growing) problem, partly because of very poor handwriting (notably the letters *r* and *s* appearing identical on the end of words) and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and minute insertions.

Overall, the texts were felt to be of an appropriate level and approachable by the overwhelming majority. The subject matter appeared to be of interest to the candidates.

The paper was largely comparable in overall level of difficulty to previous years, and produced the usual wide range of marks. There were some very good scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled the various tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, but there were many whose level of linguistic competence and knowledge was over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

Candidates usually appeared familiar with the format of the paper and knew how to set about tackling the different types of question. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

There were few signs of undue time pressure, with most candidates managing to attempt all questions, although some answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Most of the questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary.

Many candidates still feel the need to incorporate the words of the question as an unnecessary preamble to the answer, which not only wastes time for both candidate and marker, but also potentially introduces



linguistic errors which can detract from the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **(3b)** *Ceux qui arrivaient au zoo souffraient-ils parce que ...*; **(3e)** *Les jeunes trouvent-ils difficile de ...*; **(4d)** *Certains animaux sauvages risquent-ils de ...*. Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order.

Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished, with more candidates understanding how to ‘work’ the text to avoid ‘lifting’, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply ‘lifting’ items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks at this level. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complication. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3** and **4** below.

The paper ties the questions (and therefore the answers) to specific paragraphs (or occasionally to specific lines) in the texts. Candidates who find themselves writing the same answer for two questions need to pause for thought.

**Question 2**, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement. **Candidates should not attempt to cut corners by omitting the prompt at the start of their answers.**

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90 – 100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40 – 50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that some answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are still unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the subject. To give just one example among very many, the candidate who started with *Les zoos ont beaucoup d'avantages à la société par des aspects mentionnés dans les deux textes. Pourtant, il y a des disadvantages et les arguments sur les zoos, donc les gens ont un conflit sur le sujet. Pour des gens qui sont pour les zoos, ils pensent que les zoos...* simply wasted a third of the number of words allowed, literally pointlessly. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is required in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay or a vehicle for personal opinions.

Other candidates made the same point several times or went into unnecessary detail.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind, but other scripts were littered with crossings-out, which often caused problems with legibility.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

Answers from weaker candidates sometimes appeared to be chosen largely at random and bore no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question. Candidates would be well advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved.

**Item (a)** saw a good number of successful first answers, with candidates recognising two feminine plural past participles in *rassemblées* and *réunies*.

**Item (b)** prompted some to offer *de nombreuses*, presumably because it looked like *dénombrer*.

**Item (c)** proved the most elusive, with many opting for *approvisionner*, largely, one suspected, because it started with the same three letters as *apparaître*.

In **Item (d)**, stronger candidates were rewarded for recognising two related nouns in *poursuite* and *recherche*.

In **Item (e)**, two infinitives pointed some in the direction of *fournir* and *approvisionner*, although some were careless in copying the latter from the text.

#### Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question, but the task proved quite demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

Weaker candidates appeared to see this as an exercise in simply re-arranging the order of the words of the original, with no regard for sense.

In **Item 2(a)**, many understood the requirement for a transformation into the passive here, but fewer saw the need to make *sensibilisés* agree.

In **Item 2(b)**, most candidates understood the need to conjugate the verb *recevoir*, but not all could do so correctly. Some decided on an unnecessary use of the *passé composé*, whilst others omitted the distinguishing accent on *où*,

In **Item 2(c)**, *nous faisons* proved elusive for some, whilst the consequential need for *notre* and *nos* was not supplied by others.

In **Item 2(d)**, stronger candidates recognised the need for a subjunctive here often but some offered *ai* or *aïlle* instead of *ait*.

**Item 2(e)** suffered from attempts to change the tense. Some managed to find a past participle for *accomplir* (*accomplissé* being very common) but a number omitted the feminine plural agreement.

#### Question 3

There was a tendency among weaker candidates simply to seize on a word in the question and to write out the sentence from the text which contained it or something similar, in the hope of including the answer somewhere along the way. Questions are usually specifically designed to prevent this.

**Item 3(a)** required a past tense as it asked about *le passé*. Some referenced the wrong part of the second paragraph, talking about going off around the world in search of animals and adventure rather than for a Sunday stroll, and thinking that *la recherche* meant research in this context. Others successfully avoided 'lifting' *divertissement* by using a verb – *se divertir/s'amuser/se distraire* – although *leur* appeared not infrequently as the reflexive pronoun. There were occasional similar problems with *se promener*.



**Item 3(b)** saw some confusion between *destin* and *destination*. The answers again required a past tense. A good proportion correctly identified the death of the captured animals, but some thought that those which arrived were in an appalling condition.

**Item 3(c)** asked *Que font les zoos ...*, suggesting the need to replace the nouns of the text with verbs, thereby avoiding 'lifting'. Good candidates who were wary of conjugating *agrandir* sensibly opted for *augmenter la taille*, and similarly avoided *restreindre* by using *limiter* or *réduire*, although some went on to confuse *numéro* with *nombre*. *Imiter* was the simple solution for the third mark.

**In Item 3(d)**, similar tactics paid off for those who offered *conserver/protéger/sauver les espèces menacées/en danger, (se) reproduire* and *réintroduire/réintégrer/réinsérer/libérer/retourner ...*

**In Item 3(e)**, a small number of candidates did not understand the concept of *l'urbanisation* which was easily enough expressed by others as *Ils habitent en ville*. The second and third marks were regularly scored.

**Item 3(f)** was well answered by those candidates who avoided lifting *protecter* or *disparution* or *extinctés*.

xxx

#### Question 4

**Item 4(a)**: candidates often successfully rephrased *entreprises commerciales* with something as simple as *pour gagner de l'argent*. Others jumped too readily at copying *pour notre seul bon plaisir* for the second mark when *divertissement* from *Texte 1* or a verb – *nous amuser/divertir/plaire* – would have done the job.

**In Item 4(b)**, most candidates understood the reduced life-expectancy of animals in captivity and many found ways of avoiding *espérance de vie plus faible* with *ils vivent moins longtemps/meurent plus vite etc. Les médicaux* and *les médecines/médecins* often confused responses for the second mark, but the regular provision of food was generally suggested as a bonus of life in a zoo. Fewer understood the protection against being hunted.

**In Item 4(c)**, some candidates missed the essential element of *s'alimenter*, and wandered into the difference in culture/habitat or the depression and boredom from the next question. Others found good ways of expressing the idea of *on livre des kilos de viande*.

**In Item 4(d)**, *les animaux sont ennuyeux/ennuyant/ennuyés* were offered as ways of avoiding lifting *ennui*, and *dépressés* was common. Other candidates found simple ways of saying that the animals suffer because they do not have enough to do.

**In Item 4(e)**, a significant proportion stood things on their heads by suggesting that the programmes mentioned had been successful, or simply lifted *se comptent sur les doigts (droits) de la main*. Protecting *les milieux/habitats naturels* (rather than the animals themselves) was the essential element for the second mark.

**Item 4(f)** was generally well handled by candidates who identified the danger of children thinking that captivity was the normal state and who found simple ways of urging people not to go to zoos but to watch animal documentaries on TV instead.

#### Question 5

This Question asked candidates to summarise the pros and cons of zoos, and then to discuss whether animals have rights.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points, of which most candidates managed a reasonable number, with the most efficient reaching the maximum of 10. The weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material. A number of others produced general essays without including the required rewardable elements.

The most commonly identified points in favour of zoos included their value for research, for the conservation of endangered species and their reproduction/reintroduction into the wild, and the raising of awareness of the damage inflicted by man on animals and the natural environment.



Arguments against included the suffering inflicted on animals by their captivity, including boredom and depression, a reduction in their life expectancy, and the fact that zoos simply exist to make money for their owners or to entertain visitors.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in the quality of language mark.

The **Personal Response** was designed to broaden the debate away from zoos to animal welfare in general. Some candidates argued that animals have the same rights as man as essential parts of creation and the ecosystem. Others described animals as sentient creatures like us, capable of feelings and emotions.

### Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from very good to very poor. The strongest candidates wrote fluently and accurately, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a commendable control of structure. Others struggled with the rudiments of the language, finding it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) – the nuts and bolts of the language – appeared largely random many scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements whatsoever. Candidates need to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written.

There appears to be a tendency to confuse how to make nouns and adjectives plural with how to make verbs plural: for example the plural of *la cage* becoming *les cagent* and the plural of *il mange* becoming *ils manges*.

Incorrect verb forms were prevalent, even with very common verbs in the present indicative e.g. *mettre*, *prendre*, *recevoir*, *devoir*. Even *aller* (*ils allent*), *être* (*ils sons*) and *faire* (*ils faisent*); *pouvoir* (*ils peuvent*); *mourir* (*ils on morri/mortu*) caused problems.

The use of the infinitive (-er) ending – or indeed anything else that sounded vaguely similar – seemed interchangeable with the past participle (-é) in some scripts.

The approach to spelling was in some cases at best phonetic or idiosyncratic, e.g. *vrait*; *sur un plato*. *On/ont*, *son/sont*, *ces/ses/c'est*, *sa/ça*, *et/est*, *voix/voit/voie* often seemed to be selected at random.

New words or uses were also much in evidence, often heavily influenced by English or occasionally Spanish: *effective*; *une relationship*; *extincte*; *un entertainment*; *le damage*. This was particularly evident in this season's crop of fictional verbs: *périssier*; *restricter*; *agrandisser*; *expandir*; *enlarger*; *extincter*; *destroyer/destructer*; *promoter*; *reducer*; *displayer*; *disparer*; *reproducer/ir*; *oppresser*; *apprender*; *(ré)introducer/ir*; *conservater*; *introductionner*. The influence of English was all too apparent in some of the structures used: *savoir environ les animaux*; *les programmes ne travaillent pas*; *ne vont pas vivre comme long*; *un beaucoup de viande*; *tout en tout*.

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent.

Personal pronouns and adjectives in general would repay further study.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses, but most candidates were able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, although often flawed, generally communicated effectively enough to be comprehensible to a sympathetic reader and to enable assessment of their answers.

Language difficulties still prevented some candidates from expressing answers which one suspected they may actually have known. At the other end of the scale however, the cohort also included some very strong candidates who displayed an ability to write French which was both robust in its command of grammar and syntax and commendably idiomatic and convincing in its range of vocabulary and expression.

# FRENCH

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**Paper 9716/31**  
**Essay**

## **Key Messages**

In this paper, candidates are given a choice of 5 questions and are awarded up to 24 marks for quality of language and up to 16 for content. In order to do well, students should choose a topic about which they can write a clearly relevant and well-structured answer, using a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures. Candidates must plan their essay carefully, using the introduction to demonstrate their understanding of the question set, and develop their argument, showing a clear progression of ideas. Candidates should include a range of well-chosen facts and examples that reflect their study of the topic, and finally bring together the various strands of their argument in the conclusion.

## **General Comments**

There was a wide range of ability in this cohort. The best candidates showed a genuine interest in the question that they had selected and were able to produce an extended piece of writing that was relevant, detailed and showed a solid understanding of the issues raised in the question. Their essays were mature and thoughtful and clearly reflected an in-depth study of the chosen topic. A significant number of scripts, however, did not address the precise wording of the question or misunderstood the task set, leading to generalisations and irrelevant answers. It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general overarching topic area. Candidates need to be reminded that scripts which completely ignore the question will not be awarded any marks for either for content or language. Whilst most candidates wrote essays of approximately the right length, a significant number of scripts were very short, and offered limited content. Planning is an important step in writing a good discursive essay, yet few candidates seemed to write a plan. Candidates who organised the material, even briefly, before writing, tended to gain higher marks for content and were more likely to present their arguments logically, using paragraphs and a range of link words. Candidates need to consider the formal structure of the discursive essay: there were many instances of essays merely starting with *je suis d'accord/ je ne suis pas d'accord avec la question* in lieu of an introduction; others did not break their writing into paragraphs and often the conclusion merely repeated what had been included before in the introduction.

## **Quality of language**

The best essays demonstrated a good level of grammatical accuracy and variety in the choice of vocabulary and structures, including topic-appropriate vocabulary and the judicious use of linking words, which enabled candidates to communicate their ideas effectively. Linguistically, the quality of the essays varied considerably and difficulties were much in evidence in the use of basic grammar, such as adjectival and subject-verb agreements, the use of the infinitive after modal verbs, articles, word order and common irregular verbs. Some candidates showed little grammatical, structural or lexical awareness, which seriously impeded communication. There was at times a considerable degree of interference from English and Spanish, both in terms of sentence structures and lexis (*descanser, promoter, improver*).

## **Common errors included:**

Incorrect spelling of common words, including some mentioned in the essay title: *judiciaire, confort, de nos jours, humain/humaine, beaucoup, pays*. English spellings of *gouvernement, environnement, technologie, activité*.

Incorrect gender of common words : *problème, rôle, exemple*.

Frequent incorrect use of negatives: *les parents font pas ; c'est ne pas, ne bon pas, no existe*.

Frequent incorrect word order: noun/adjective.

Use of *beaucoup des* with plural nouns.

Use of *comment* for *comme*, *faire* for *rendre*.

Use of *parce que/car/grâce à* instead of *à cause de*.



Frequent incorrect use of prepositions after common verbs.  
Nouns used without articles and verbs used without a subject pronoun: *est nécessaire*  
Lack of punctuation.  
Overuse of *choses/choses*.  
Inappropriate use of *personnes/gens (certains gens)*.  
Inappropriate register: use of *tu/tes (si tu prends par exemple...)*  
Confusion between: *ces/ses/c'est; ça/sa; son/sont; ce/ceux*.  
Confusion between *par/pour*.  
Confusion between verb and adjective: *usage/utiliser (les gens n'usage pas)*  
Incorrect use of simple relative pronouns *qui/que*

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1: Les rapports humains**

*De nos jours, ce ne sont plus les parents qui exercent la plus grande influence sur les jeunes et les adolescents. À votre avis, dans quelle mesure est-ce le cas ?*

This was a very popular choice, although some candidates did not grasp the precise wording of the question which required some element of comparison between the present and the past, reasons why changes might have happened and who, if not parents, have the most influence. Many essays tended to be superficial, sometimes focused on whether parents have a positive or negative influence and often didn't answer the question at the end of the argument. The best essays offered a detailed and well-informed response, and considered at length the growing importance of technology. The time devoted to social media was seen as a key element in lessening the time spent as a family, and as a result the influence parents have on their children, whilst increasing their exposure to online friends, stars and celebrities who in turn become key influencers in their lives. Some argued that parents themselves can spend a disproportionate amount of time on their phone or social media and are therefore responsible for losing touch with their children. Many mentioned friends as a major influence in young people's lives, and the negative impact of peer pressure on behaviour, choices and studies. Schools and teachers were sometimes mentioned as important and positive influences in a young person's life. Some candidates went on to consider the importance of communication within the family so that parents retain the key role that they play in their children's lives once they reach adolescence. Many felt that despite outside pressures, it is important that parents remain the most important influence. Whilst the best candidates were able to offer a range of ideas, many essays tended to be limited in scope, and at times anecdotal. In this question, many candidates had difficulties with possessive adjectives (*ses/leurs parents*).

#### **Question 2: L'ordre public**

*Le système judiciaire doit se montrer plus strict en tout ce qui concerne la drogue. Êtes-vous d'accord ?*

This question was not widely chosen. Candidates often did not follow the precise wording of the essay title which asked them to evaluate current practice and argue whether stricter laws should be in place. Those who wrote about the topic tended to hold strong views on the issues. Many argued that young people should not be punished for using drugs recreationally. Others mentioned that many people have become addicted to opioids which were initially prescribed to them, and therefore needed help rather than strict laws. Whilst most agreed that drugs are directly linked to crime and responsible for major problems in society, candidates tended to view addicts as victims who need education and help rather than heavier sentences. A few pointed to the ease with which drugs are available and the failure of current laws to eradicate the problem as evidence that heavy sentencing is not the answer. Overall, it was felt that legislation alone is not enough, and rehabilitation is a more effective way to fight drugs. Although most essays included some relevant ideas, many candidates struggled to include a range of ideas and develop their argument. Few considered different approaches for suppliers and organised crime, as opposed to addicts or casual users. There was much repetition, generalisations, and overall a lack of exemplification. Many candidates had difficulty conveying their ideas and lacked the topic-specific vocabulary they needed to discuss laws, and drugs. *Faire les/la drogue* was frequently used, as were incorrect spellings of *criminals* and *judiciare*. The structure *si + imperfect* proved a challenge for many candidates.

### Question 3: Le travail et les loisirs

*Trop de gens ne font pas bon usage de leur temps de loisir. Discutez de cette affirmation.*

This question was a very popular choice, but answers were often limited in scope, discussing mainly the negative effects of mobile phones and social media on people's leisure time. The best scripts considered the question from different perspectives and offered a more balanced response. Although many felt that too much time is spent watching TV, surfing the net or sleeping, some candidates argued that, after long working hours and pressures at school, people are too tired to get involved in meaningful pursuits. Others considered these valid ways of spending one's free time, if they provide a sense of well being and relaxation. They went on to suggest more rewarding ways of spending one's leisure time through creative activities, learning a new hobby, helping others and getting involved with non-profit organisations. Many highlighted the benefits of sport on a person's physical and mental well being, as well as the importance of maintaining regular contacts with friends and family. Some successfully argued that spending too much time on one's mobile phone or social media is not a good use of leisure time as it can lead to isolation and loneliness. Some essays attempted to define what constitutes using one's free time well or not, and what makes some activities more worthwhile than others, while others argued that once leisure activities become prescriptive, it no longer feels like free time. Even the best answers showed limitations on the language side: *jouer du sport* and *rester for se reposer* were common errors. There was considerable difficulty in particular with *bon/bien, mieux/meilleur, usage/utiliser*, frequent English spellings of basic words (*activities, technology, platform, social media*) and many examples of translatese.

### Question 4: La guerre et la paix

*Comment mieux protéger le monde contre le fléau de la guerre ?*

This question was not widely chosen, but the best scripts offered mature, well-informed answers. Some candidates started by outlining the factors that lead to conflicts, whether between or within nations, and went on to offer a range of solutions. Essays for this question tended to be more successful in terms of paragraphing and many candidates were able to include a number of points, with a good level of exemplification. International organisations such as the United Nations were considered a key factor to encourage discussions between nations, ease tensions and promote peaceful solutions. A few candidates also highlighted its limitations, as, whilst another world-wide conflict has been avoided since its creation, wars have nonetheless broken out in many parts of the world. Many argued in favour of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, as a means to achieve world peace. Overall, many felt that education should play a large part in promoting understanding and tolerance, advocating that everyone must work towards world peace. Religion was viewed ambiguously as a power that can both unite and divide nations.

### Question 5: La pollution

*Lutter contre la pollution, c'est forcément vivre avec moins de confort. Êtes-vous d'accord ?*

This was a fairly popular question. Overall, essays tended to be well structured and candidates displayed a good range of topic-specific vocabulary. There were however a number of largely irrelevant answers. *Lutter* was frequently misunderstood, with candidates discussing why and how pollution leads to a reduction in people's quality of life. Others made a brief reference to the title in their introduction, but went on to discuss more general issues, writing about how pollution affects the environment and people's health. The best candidates pointed out that people are often reluctant and resistant to change. Many included examples where changes in favour of more ecologically friendly products or behaviours have little impact on people's quality of life, yet make a significant difference to the environment: electric cars, recyclable packaging, alternatives to plastic straws and plastic bags, solar-powered appliances, as well as using less water and electricity in one's daily life. Some argued that most changes are relatively easy to implement and the small cost to personal comfort is hugely outweighed by the benefits for the planet and future generations and is well worth paying; others held a more pessimistic view, stating that whatever the cost to personal comfort, unless people make changes to fight pollution, the human race is heading for extinction.

# FRENCH

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<p><b>Paper 9716/32</b> <b>Essay</b></p>
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## Key Messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read the questions carefully and choose one where they have an appropriate level of vocabulary and examples to do it justice. They then need to take sufficient time to plan their essays (preferably in French), before finally starting to write. Logical, structured and well-illustrated answers will gain good marks for Content. Conclusions are important and should not merely reiterate points made previously. In order to gain good marks for Language, candidates should demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions and topic appropriate vocabulary.

## General comments

There was a wide range of ability demonstrated from the very poor to the very good.

Candidates who planned their essays carefully, defined the terms of the question and wrote a logical and persuasive argument, before arriving at a balanced conclusion, were most successful. They used a range of structures and idioms and convinced the reader with the coherence and relevance of their arguments.

In some cases, candidates had a poor command of linguistic structures and did not use appropriate vocabulary and register. Their answers were naively expressed in very simple and often inaccurate language and often avoided the question set, concentrating instead on the overall topic heading. Candidates who did not target their essays on the question set inevitably gained lower content marks since their answers contained much irrelevant material. Some relevant essays were quite superficial in tone and content as well as lacking clear development or exemplification of points. They were unconvincing and therefore unable to access the higher mark ranges.

It is vitally important that candidates read the questions carefully before launching into their essays. Planning is a key element when writing a discursive essay and many candidates appear to bypass this important phase, writing a cursory few words, or nothing at all. Lack of planning often leads to long, rambling essays with poor punctuation and paragraphing.

## **Common errors included:**

Incorrect genders/spellings (sometimes even when the word was in the title): *copains, vrais amis, mortalité, puni, mesure, gouvernement, environnement, monde, phénomène, manque, aspect*

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Use of *le taux* for *le nombre*.

Use of plural verb with a singular subject and vice versa.

Inaccurate and erratic use of double letters in words such as *développer, agressif, ressources*.



Inaccurate use of accents including words used in the questions such as *phénomène* and *chômage*, and examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences.

Use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de*.

Incorrect use of words and phrases to link paragraphs such as *néanmoins* (often wrongly spelled), *pourtant*, *toutefois*.

Overuse of the word *personnes* (for *gens*) and *cela/ça*.

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Phonetic spelling e.g. use of *tous que* instead of *tout ce que*.

Agreement of past participle in phrases such as *elles ont vues*.

Use of *de/des* after *plusieurs*.

Confusion between/misuse of: *ces/ses, ce/c'est, les/des, le/lui, place/endroit, bon/bien, mauvais/mal, c'est que/ceux que, ceux qui/ce qui, ou/où, a/à, sa/ça*, *mieux/meilleur, leur/leurs, ils/eux*.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1: Les rapports humains**

*Il y a une grande différence entre les copains et les vrais amis. À votre avis, dans quelle mesure est-ce le cas ?*

This was by far the most popular subject. Most candidates were able to make a clear differentiation between the characterisation of a *copain* and a *vrai ami*. For them, a *copain* was someone you spent time with in school or at work and with whom you had a good relationship on the whole. However, they were clear to point out that *copains* can be untrustworthy as they can criticise or make fun of you behind your back. *Vrais amis*, on the other hand, are few in number and are people in whom you can trust. They will always be available in times of trouble to listen or advise and in times of success to help celebrate. They will not judge you or compete with you and will always be discreet about any personal details or confessions. On the whole, the question was well answered when addressed in these terms with candidates having plenty to say about their own personal circumstances and experiences. Some candidates understood *copain* to mean *petit copain* and wrote an answer that corresponded to that. Others made a distinction between an *ami* and a *vrai ami* adding a further dimension to the question. In linguistic terms, many candidates copied the term *vrais amis* from the title and did not change it for a singular usage in their answers. Another repeated error was the use of the verb *parler avec* where the *avec* was put at the end of the sentence. There were many different approaches taken to this question, most of which had merit.

#### **Question 2: L'ordre public**

*La mortalité routière baisserait considérablement si le non-respect du code de la route était plus sévèrement puni. Discutez.*

Few candidates chose this subject but it was often well answered. There was discussion of the effectiveness of fines and points on a driving licence for infringements of the highway code. Many candidates believed that fines did not work because there was corruption in the system and police could be bribed. They also felt that there were other more important ways to improve road safety such as improving road maintenance, educating young people about the dangers of driving, and having refresher courses for older drivers. They also made the point that many accidents are caused by young people who are new to driving who maybe have little experience of the road, who like speed and think themselves invulnerable. They also mentioned the problems associated with driving under the influence of drink or drugs for young people. It was clear that in these cases, education and courses about the effects of speeding and dangerous driving on the roads would be more beneficial than fines or prison sentences. Some were quite sanguine and suggested that there would always be accidents and that no amount of fines or penalties would stop them.

### Question 3: Le travail et les loisirs

*Le plein emploi : rêve impossible ou objectif accessible ?*

This was by far the least popular question. Those that understood the full significance of the idea of full employment described the situation in countries where it might be possible. Most candidates recognised that it is hard to achieve full employment as there are always people moving between jobs, sick, or unemployed for some reason. Countries strive to reduce unemployment as it affects the economy but candidates were keen to point out that in some countries in the world this was definitely a *rêve impossible*. Some candidates understood *plein emploi* to be full time work. They talked about the benefits of being able to attend to the needs of the family and to have a good life associated with being in a full-time job as opposed to being unemployed.

### Question 4: La guerre et la paix

*Quelles mesures faudrait-il prendre pour lutter efficacement contre le terrorisme ?*

This was a popular question and there were answers from candidates across the ability range. They were clear in their understanding and condemnation of terrorism and described many of the attacks that have taken place in recent years. The solutions to the problem suggested were many and varied including better border controls, better surveillance of suspects by the police, better policing of the streets and big events. Most of these suggestions were reactive and assumed that terrorism would continue throughout the world. Some candidates felt that political solutions might be of more use and that it was incumbent on countries to talk to one another about their issues and differences. They mentioned the use of sanctions as a starting point followed up by targeted strikes on terrorist camps. It was generally believed that there was little to do about random attacks carried out by suicide bombers who are happy to die for their cause and for their reward in an afterlife. Those candidates who developed ideas about how to counter terrorism rather than just describing attacks were awarded better marks for content.

### Question 5: La pollution

*On ne peut pas réduire la pollution uniquement avec des accords internationaux. Êtes-vous d'accord ?*

This was a very popular question and for those candidates who read the question carefully and considered all elements, it was well answered. Some candidates ignored the idea of *accords internationaux* and therefore gained lower marks for content. Candidates had clearly thought about the effects of pollution on the environment both local and worldwide. They had many ideas about how to reduce pollution but it was important to put this in the context of the global agreements. More able candidates talked about the importance of global agreements as a way of bringing countries together in recognising the dangers for the planet and the need for action. They suggested that these agreements were a necessary starting point in stressing the importance of the problems facing every country in the world from pollution, climate change and environmental distress. The need to work together for the common good was felt to be essential. Candidates did also believe that work should be done on a local and individual level and that governments should be more forceful in insisting on improvements in recycling, the use of renewable energies and the move away from plastics. Those candidates who merely discussed local initiatives to collect litter and ban plastic bags without reference to the wider context did less well. Some candidates just described the different forms of pollution with no reference to the question and their answers were deemed to be irrelevant.

# FRENCH

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**Paper 9716/33**  
**Essay**

## **Key Messages**

In this paper, candidates are given a choice of 5 questions and are awarded up to 24 marks for quality of language and up to 16 for content. In order to do well, students should choose a topic about which they can write a clearly relevant and well-structured answer, using a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures. Candidates must plan their essay carefully, using the introduction to demonstrate their understanding of the question set, and develop their argument, showing a clear progression of ideas. Candidates should include a range of well-chosen facts and examples that reflect their study of the topic, and finally bring together the various strands of their argument in the conclusion.

## **General Comments**

There was a wide range of ability in this cohort. The best candidates showed a genuine interest in the question that they had selected and were able to produce an extended piece of writing that was relevant, detailed and showed a solid understanding of the issues raised in the question. Their essays were mature and thoughtful and clearly reflected an in-depth study of the chosen topic. A significant number of scripts, however, did not address the precise wording of the question or misunderstood the task set, leading to generalisations and irrelevant answers. It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general overarching topic area. Candidates need to be reminded that scripts which completely ignore the question will not be awarded any marks for either for content or language. Whilst most candidates wrote essays of approximately the right length, a significant number of scripts were very short, and offered limited content. Planning is an important step in writing a good discursive essay, yet few candidates seemed to write a plan. Candidates who organised the material, even briefly, before writing, tended to gain higher marks for content and were more likely to present their arguments logically, using paragraphs and a range of link words. Candidates need to consider the formal structure of the discursive essay: there were many instances of essays merely starting with *je suis d'accord/ je ne suis pas d'accord avec la question* in lieu of an introduction; others did not break their writing into paragraphs and often the conclusion merely repeated what had been included before in the introduction.

## **Quality of language**

The best essays demonstrated a good level of grammatical accuracy and variety in the choice of vocabulary and structures, including topic-appropriate vocabulary and the judicious use of linking words, which enabled candidates to communicate their ideas effectively. Linguistically, the quality of the essays varied considerably and difficulties were much in evidence in the use of basic grammar, such as adjectival and subject-verb agreements, the use of the infinitive after modal verbs, articles, word order and common irregular verbs. Some candidates showed little grammatical, structural or lexical awareness, which seriously impeded communication. There was at times a considerable degree of interference from English and Spanish, both in terms of sentence structures and lexis (*descanser, promoter, improver*).

## **Common errors included:**

Incorrect spelling of common words, including some mentioned in the essay title: *judiciaire, confort, de nos jours, humain/humaine, beaucoup, pays*. English spellings of *gouvernement, environnement, technologie, activité*.

Incorrect gender of common words : *problème, rôle, exemple*.

Frequent incorrect use of negatives: *les parents font pas ; c'est ne pas, ne bon pas, no existe*.

Frequent incorrect word order: noun/adjective.

Use of *beaucoup des* with plural nouns.

Use of *comment* for *comme*, *faire* for *rendre*.

Use of *parce que/car/grâce à* instead of *à cause de*.

Frequent incorrect use of prepositions after common verbs.  
Nouns used without articles and verbs used without a subject pronoun: *est nécessaire*  
Lack of punctuation.  
Overuse of *chose/choses*.  
Inappropriate use of *personnes/gens (certains gens)*.  
Inappropriate register: use of *tu/tes (si tu prends par exemple...)*  
Confusion between: *ces/ses/c'est; ça/sa; son/sont; ce/ceux*.  
Confusion between *par/pour*.  
Confusion between verb and adjective: *usage/utiliser (les gens n'usage pas)*  
Incorrect use of simple relative pronouns *qui/que*

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1: Les rapports humains**

*De nos jours, ce ne sont plus les parents qui exercent la plus grande influence sur les jeunes et les adolescents. À votre avis, dans quelle mesure est-ce le cas ?*

This was a very popular choice, although some candidates did not grasp the precise wording of the question which required some element of comparison between the present and the past, reasons why changes might have happened and who, if not parents, have the most influence. Many essays tended to be superficial, sometimes focused on whether parents have a positive or negative influence and often didn't answer the question at the end of the argument. The best essays offered a detailed and well-informed response, and considered at length the growing importance of technology. The time devoted to social media was seen as a key element in lessening the time spent as a family, and as a result the influence parents have on their children, whilst increasing their exposure to online friends, stars and celebrities who in turn become key influencers in their lives. Some argued that parents themselves can spend a disproportionate amount of time on their phone or social media and are therefore responsible for losing touch with their children. Many mentioned friends as a major influence in young people's lives, and the negative impact of peer pressure on behaviour, choices and studies. Schools and teachers were sometimes mentioned as important and positive influences in a young person's life. Some candidates went on to consider the importance of communication within the family so that parents retain the key role that they play in their children's lives once they reach adolescence. Many felt that despite outside pressures, it is important that parents remain the most important influence. Whilst the best candidates were able to offer a range of ideas, many essays tended to be limited in scope, and at times anecdotal. In this question, many candidates had difficulties with possessive adjectives (*ses/leurs parents*).

#### **Question 2: L'ordre public**

*Le système judiciaire doit se montrer plus strict en tout ce qui concerne la drogue. Êtes-vous d'accord ?*

This question was not widely chosen. Candidates often did not follow the precise wording of the essay title which asked them to evaluate current practice and argue whether stricter laws should be in place. Those who wrote about the topic tended to hold strong views on the issues. Many argued that young people should not be punished for using drugs recreationally. Others mentioned that many people have become addicted to opioids which were initially prescribed to them, and therefore needed help rather than strict laws. Whilst most agreed that drugs are directly linked to crime and responsible for major problems in society, candidates tended to view addicts as victims who need education and help rather than heavier sentences. A few pointed to the ease with which drugs are available and the failure of current laws to eradicate the problem as evidence that heavy sentencing is not the answer. Overall, it was felt that legislation alone is not enough, and rehabilitation is a more effective way to fight drugs. Although most essays included some relevant ideas, many candidates struggled to include a range of ideas and develop their argument. Few considered different approaches for suppliers and organised crime, as opposed to addicts or casual users. There was much repetition, generalisations, and overall a lack of exemplification. Many candidates had difficulty conveying their ideas and lacked the topic-specific vocabulary they needed to discuss laws, and drugs. *Faire les/la drogue* was frequently used, as were incorrect spellings of *criminals* and *judiciare*. The structure *si + imperfect* proved a challenge for many candidates.

### Question 3: Le travail et les loisirs

*Trop de gens ne font pas bon usage de leur temps de loisir. Discutez de cette affirmation.*

This question was a very popular choice, but answers were often limited in scope, discussing mainly the negative effects of mobile phones and social media on people's leisure time. The best scripts considered the question from different perspectives and offered a more balanced response. Although many felt that too much time is spent watching TV, surfing the net or sleeping, some candidates argued that, after long working hours and pressures at school, people are too tired to get involved in meaningful pursuits. Others considered these valid ways of spending one's free time, if they provide a sense of well being and relaxation. They went on to suggest more rewarding ways of spending one's leisure time through creative activities, learning a new hobby, helping others and getting involved with non-profit organisations. Many highlighted the benefits of sport on a person's physical and mental well being, as well as the importance of maintaining regular contacts with friends and family. Some successfully argued that spending too much time on one's mobile phone or social media is not a good use of leisure time as it can lead to isolation and loneliness. Some essays attempted to define what constitutes using one's free time well or not, and what makes some activities more worthwhile than others, while others argued that once leisure activities become prescriptive, it no longer feels like free time. Even the best answers showed limitations on the language side: *jouer du sport* and *rester for se reposer* were common errors. There was considerable difficulty in particular with *bon/bien, mieux/meilleur, usage/utiliser*, frequent English spellings of basic words (*activities, technology, platform, social media*) and many examples of translatese.

### Question 4: La guerre et la paix

*Comment mieux protéger le monde contre le fléau de la guerre ?*

This question was not widely chosen, but the best scripts offered mature, well-informed answers. Some candidates started by outlining the factors that lead to conflicts, whether between or within nations, and went on to offer a range of solutions. Essays for this question tended to be more successful in terms of paragraphing and many candidates were able to include a number of points, with a good level of exemplification. International organisations such as the United Nations were considered a key factor to encourage discussions between nations, ease tensions and promote peaceful solutions. A few candidates also highlighted its limitations, as, whilst another world-wide conflict has been avoided since its creation, wars have nonetheless broken out in many parts of the world. Many argued in favour of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, as a means to achieve world peace. Overall, many felt that education should play a large part in promoting understanding and tolerance, advocating that everyone must work towards world peace. Religion was viewed ambiguously as a power that can both unite and divide nations.

### Question 5: La pollution

*Lutter contre la pollution, c'est forcément vivre avec moins de confort. Êtes-vous d'accord ?*

This was a fairly popular question. Overall, essays tended to be well structured and candidates displayed a good range of topic-specific vocabulary. There were however a number of largely irrelevant answers. *Lutter* was frequently misunderstood, with candidates discussing why and how pollution leads to a reduction in people's quality of life. Others made a brief reference to the title in their introduction, but went on to discuss more general issues, writing about how pollution affects the environment and people's health. The best candidates pointed out that people are often reluctant and resistant to change. Many included examples where changes in favour of more ecologically friendly products or behaviours have little impact on people's quality of life, yet make a significant difference to the environment: electric cars, recyclable packaging, alternatives to plastic straws and plastic bags, solar-powered appliances, as well as using less water and electricity in one's daily life. Some argued that most changes are relatively easy to implement and the small cost to personal comfort is hugely outweighed by the benefits for the planet and future generations and is well worth paying; others held a more pessimistic view, stating that whatever the cost to personal comfort, unless people make changes to fight pollution, the human race is heading for extinction.

# FRENCH

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<p>Paper 9716/41 Texts</p>
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## Key messages

Teachers should:

- ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on **three separate texts**.
- choose carefully which texts to prepare with their classes, considering the interests of their candidates.
- remember that the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** provide a ready-made structure for answers and therefore might be better suited for some candidates than the freer option **(b)** alternatives.

Teachers should train their students to:

- manage their time in the examination room, ensuring that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.
- ensure that they do not answer two questions on the same text, remembering that 'soit... soit' means 'either... or'.
- think carefully about what the question is asking of them and plan their responses before they start to write.
- stay on track as they write their responses by referring regularly to the question.

Candidates should:

- label their answers with the question number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If passage-based questions are not properly labelled, it can look as though parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** have not been attempted.
- commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with a brief introduction, locating the extract within the text and briefly explaining what events have preceded the extract.
- ensure that answers to the option **(b)** questions in **Section 1** and all questions in **Section 2** include;
  - an opening paragraph, acknowledging the question and giving a brief indication of how it is to be addressed.
  - a closing paragraph, which should summarise the points made in the essay.

## General comments

The passage-based questions were efficiently addressed, for the most part. The best responses dealt with the detail required by the question but also demonstrated good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text. However, many candidates still attempt to answer these questions by quoting over-lengthy parts of the extract text without explaining what the quotations illustrate. Candidates should always explain the significance of any quotation used.

The essay questions were generally well structured but, once again, candidates should be advised to stay focused on answering the question by referring to the title at regular intervals as they compose their response. Storytelling that is irrelevant to the question should be avoided – the Examiner has also read the text and does not need to be reminded of the plot. In the same vein, candidates should avoid wasting time at the start of their essay by describing the background to the work, the author's life and literary output. Similarly, it is not necessary to begin the response by writing out the question.

If a premise is provided in the question, candidates should not be afraid to disagree with it. Far more important is that the candidate should give an opinion and that this opinion should be validated with relevant evidence from the text.

It is encouraging to note that most candidates start their essay with a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how they intend to address it, and a conclusion to summarise the key findings of the essay.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1 – Beaumarchais: *Le Barbier de Séville***

Questions on Beaumarchais were attempted by a good number of candidates, with the extract question (**Question (a)**) being twice as popular as **Question (b)**.

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the text.
- (i) Bartholo is made to appear rather ridiculous (and unworthy of Rosine's hand) by criticising, without justification, all innovation in science and the arts. He rails against modern theatre, expressing his belief that the critics will soon condemn this new comedy, *La Précaution Inutile*. In mocking a play about which he knows nothing, Bartholo conveys the author's condemnation of the literary critics (la cabale) who had censured his own play.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to explain that Rosine had added a note to the sheet of music asking the unknown man below her balcony to identify himself in song after her teacher had left the house. The only 'problem' was that if the unknown suitor failed to retrieve the music promptly, Bartholo could discover Rosine's note.
- (iii) The sequence of events that followed the extract was summarised well: Rosine sends Bartholo into the street to retrieve the song and, while he is on his way, she tells the unknown man below to retrieve the note quickly and hide himself. Bartholo is unable to find the music and returns to the apartment, suspecting that he has been taken for a fool. As he returns, Rosine loudly declaims her unhappiness and desire to escape her 'prison'. Arriving back on the balcony, Bartholo leads Rosine back into the apartment and locks the 'jalousie' behind him.
- (b) Most of the responses to this question dealt competently with Figaro's character. Like the typical hero of the 'roman picaresque', he is the roguish member of the lower classes who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. He is loyal to his former master but is unique as a literary valet, since he is quick-witted, more intelligent than Count Almaviva and is not afraid to speak his mind to social superiors. Better responses also dealt with the variety of roles that Figaro fulfils in the play (holder of information, planner of action and the director of events) and the fact that he probably represents the author in his support for the philosophy of the Enlightenment through his independent spirit and focus on finding happiness in this life (rather than in the next).

#### **Question 2 – Gustave Flaubert: *Madame Bovary***

This text was the most popular on the paper and many candidates attempted either the extract or the essay question.

- (a) (i) There were no problems with this question and the differing attitudes towards education of Charles' mother and father were satisfactorily described.
- (ii) Most candidates identified that Charles' education was lacking, but few were able to identify every stage of his educational career: his spasmodic lessons with the village curate; the fact that he does not attend formal school until he is nearly 14; his withdrawal from classes in his third year; his inability to focus on his medical studies, leading initially to failure at his exams and eventually to a poor standard of medical qualification.
- (iii) The carefree activities preferred by Charles (chasing crows, playing in the woods, drinking in bars and playing dominoes) reflect the man that he becomes in later life. He is indolent, rather dull and too trusting of others. He has little ambition and is dominated by others – particularly by women – throughout his life.

- (b) **Question 2(b)** was slightly more popular than the extract question and most candidates dealt with it well. Many responses focused on just one, or a small number of events which were felt to indicate the impending failure of Charles' and Emma's marriage. The very best responses identified that the couple were in fact wholly incompatible before their marriage, and went on to describe a sequence of confirmatory events as the marriage turned sour, including: the boredom of life in Tostes, the ball at the mansion of the Marquis d'Andervilliers, Emma's growing hatred of Charles and the banality of petit bourgeois life in Yonville; the meeting with Léon; the affair with Rodolphe; the involvement of L'Heureux, the moneylender; Rodolphe's refusal to help Emma with her debts.

### Question 3 – André Gide: *La Porte étroite*

There were too few responses to make comment possible.

### Question 4 – Eugène Ionesco: *La Cantatrice chauve*

The question was attempted by a fair number of candidates, slightly more than half of whom attempted the passage-based question.

- (a) (i) Candidates dealt with this question efficiently. Mary is, of course a very untypical maid: she is rude to her employers and her behaviour is rather bizarre. Why does she address the audience to announce that she is the maid? Why does she laugh, cry, smile and then announce that she has bought a chamber pot? Yet she also represents a stock comic character – the pushy maid, who is not afraid to speak her mind.
- (ii) M. and Mme Smith are shallow, one-dimensional characters (like most of the other characters in Ionesco's play). They speak in clichés and non sequiturs, live empty, repetitive lives and are parodies of bland, stuffy, middle-class characteristics. The pair often fail to hear/understand (or intentionally ignore) what the other party has said, and their relationship seems to be based on little more than the pleasure they each derive from disagreeing with/bickering with the other.
- (iii) This part was a bigger challenge for candidates. The mock formality of Mary's address to the audience is incongruously funny, particularly when it is contrasted with her inexplicable announcements, her impudence and the surprising introduction of the chamber pot theme. The fact that the Smiths complain that they are hungry and were about to eat without their guests, when they have just eaten, is also humorously absurd.
- (b) The essay question required some careful planning to bring focus to the answer, but most candidates coped well and provided sundry examples of different types of 'word play' in the text: from repetition and irrelevance, to clichés and non sequiturs, to the tortuous anecdotes of the Fire Chief. Even the stage directions occasionally join in the bizarre 'jeux de mots'. The overall effect, of course, is to highlight the unreliability of language as a medium of communication.

## Section 2

### Question 5 – Marie-Claire Blais: *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*

Few candidates attempted **Question 5**, all opting for **Question 5(a)**.

- (a) Though all candidates agreed that Emmanuel was not the principal character in the novel, some encountered difficulty in explaining just what role he plays. The novel starts with his birth and is the story of the family during Emmanuel's early life. It is through his eyes and from his viewpoint that the house, *grand-mère* and the other members of the family are described. Indeed, it could be argued that Emmanuel is the third-party commentator for much of the novel. Though he plays very little part in the plot, Emmanuel represents hope for the family, surviving as he does until the arrival of spring, though this optimism may be misplaced in view of Jean Le Maigre's prediction that Emmanuel will also go to the novitiate, where he will succumb to the same disease that kills his brother.
- (b) There were no responses to **Question 5(b)**.

### Question 6 – Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

There were very few attempts at **Question 6**.



- (a) There were too few responses to **Question 6(a)** to allow for meaningful comment.
- (b) Candidates struggled to construct a comprehensive reply to the question. The stars represent hope and optimism for Alexis. They twinkle over the family home in Mananava, they are nostalgic reminders of evenings that Alexis spent with his father, learning about the constellations, and they appear to be looking down benevolently on him as he sets out on the Zeta to start his quest for treasure. But the stars are also portents of change and disaster: they mock as Alexis almost dies of thirst on Rodrigues, unknown constellations shine over the horror of the trenches on the Western Front and, towards the end of the novel, shooting stars above Mananava signify that Alexis' time with Ouma will soon end.

**Question 7 – François Mauriac: *Le Désert de l'amour***

Many candidates attempted **Question 7**, with numbers equally spread between **7(a)** and **7(b)**.

- (a) There were some very strong responses to this question. Maria Cross has, of course, a profound effect on the young Raymond Courrèges. Son of a loveless family, unable to express his feelings, Raymond has developed into a surly and difficult teenager. He is disliked by his masters and peers at school, he believes himself to be the butt of other people's jokes and, in his despair, he hides himself away and attempts suicide. Raymond's chance meeting with Maria saves him. He rediscovers his self-respect and starts to take more care over his appearance. However, his desire for sexual gratification is not shared by Maria and her rejection of his clumsy advances leaves him humiliated. Thereafter, he is driven by a desire for vengeance and lives a friendless, debauched existence in Paris. When the opportunity arises, far from taking his vengeance, Raymond can only apologise to Maria for his boorish behaviour 17 years earlier.
- (b) Responses to **7(b)** focused primarily on the humiliation suffered by Paul Courrèges and his son at the hands of Maria Cross. Paul's adoration of Maria is neither understood nor reciprocated by her, and he is obliged to suppress his feelings and walk away from the relationship for fear of doing irreparable damage to his marriage and professional standing. See **7(a)** for a description of Raymond's humiliation. Stronger responses also examined the humiliation experienced by Lucille Courrèges, a faithful wife who realises that her husband is drifting away from her towards a younger woman with whom she feels unable to compete, not least of all because of her inability to communicate with her husband.

**Question 8 – Irène Némirovsky: *Tempête en juin (from Suite Française)***

A good number of candidates attempted **Question 8**, with **8(b)** being slightly more popular than **8(a)**.

- (a) Most candidates were impressed with the character of Arlette Corail, as indeed the author intended readers to be. Arlette is not at all typical of the other characters and is treated sympathetically by Némirovsky because she is not from the moneyed classes and she lives by her wits. We learn that while others have been suffering horribly during their flight from Paris, Arlette has been living in comparative luxury in a small village hotel where, in spite of the chaos happening around here, she has remained cool and calm under pressure, her hair and makeup at all times immaculate. Arlette always knows that her looks will guarantee that she gets what she wants from men. She is financially secure and the only hardship she suffers is upon realising that the war will mean that some of life's luxuries (like her American face powder) will in future be difficult to obtain. In a final ironic touch, Arlette knocks over and kills Charles Langelet back in Paris. Not to worry, however – she knows a man who can sort out this little inconvenience for her.
- (b) Candidates were divided over whether Philippe Péricand is an admirable or a despicable character, but most gave a good analysis of his role in the novel. As a curate in the Catholic church (a low-ranking position which his mother considers below the dignity of the family) Philippe feels strongly that it is his duty to bring God's grace to the feral young orphans who are entrusted to his care. In reality, he fears the boys and wants to be rid of them as soon as he is able. He is undeniably a rather weak character and his inability to defend himself physically, allied to the rather gruesome manner of his death, was interpreted by some candidates to represent a comment by the author on the ineffectual response to Nazi aggression by the Catholic church.

# FRENCH

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<p>Paper 9716/42 Texts</p>
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## Key messages

Teachers should:

ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on **three separate texts**.  
choose carefully which texts to prepare with their classes, considering the interests of their candidates.  
remember that the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** provide a ready-made structure for answers and therefore might be better suited for some candidates than the freer option **(b)** alternatives.

Teachers should train their students to:

manage their time in the examination room, ensuring that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.  
ensure that they do not answer two questions on the same text, remembering that 'soit... soit' means 'either... or'.  
think carefully about what the question is asking of them and plan their responses before they start to write.  
stay on track as they write their responses by referring regularly to the question.

Candidates should:

label their answers with the question number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If passage-based questions are not properly labelled, it can look as though parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** have not been attempted.  
commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with a brief introduction, locating the extract within the text and briefly explaining what events have preceded the extract.  
ensure that answers to the option **(b)** questions in **Section 1** and all questions in **Section 2** include;  
    an opening paragraph, acknowledging the question and giving a brief indication of how it is to be addressed.  
    a closing paragraph, which should summarise the points made in the essay.

## General comments

The passage-based questions were efficiently addressed, for the most part. The best responses dealt with the detail required by the question but also demonstrated good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text. However, many candidates still attempt to answer these questions by quoting over-lengthy parts of the extract text without explaining what the quotations illustrate. Candidates should always explain the significance of any quotation used.

The essay questions were generally well structured but, once again, candidates should be advised to stay focused on answering the question by referring to the title at regular intervals as they compose their response. Storytelling that is irrelevant to the question should be avoided – the Examiner has also read the text and does not need to be reminded of the plot. In the same vein, candidates should avoid wasting time at the start of their essay by describing the background to the work, the author's life and literary output. Similarly, it is not necessary to begin the response by writing out the question.

If a premise is provided in the question, candidates should not be afraid to disagree with it. Far more important is that the candidate should give an opinion and that this opinion should be validated with relevant evidence from the text.

It is encouraging to note that most candidates start their essay with a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how they intend to address it, and end with a conclusion to summarise the key findings of the essay.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1 – Beaumarchais : *Le Barbier de Séville***

Questions on the Beaumarchais text were attempted by a large number of candidates, with the passage-based question being slightly more popular than the essay.

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the text.
- (i) Figaro has just met his former employer, Count Almaviva, who is waiting under a balcony for his bien-aimée to appear. Rosine, who does not know the man waiting below her balcony, drops a sheet of music on which she has written a note, encouraging him to identify himself (in song) when her tutor has left the house. Rosine encourages Bartholo to go down to the street to retrieve the music and, while he descends, tells her unknown suitor to retrieve the note and hide himself. Unable to find the music, Bartholo returns to the first floor, suspecting that he has been taken for a fool. As her tutor returns, Rosine loudly declaims (so that the Count can hear) her unhappiness and her desire to escape her 'prison'. Arriving back on the balcony, Bartholo leads Rosine back into the apartment and locks the 'jalousie' behind him.
- (ii) Figaro's character was well described by most candidates. He is not a typical valet in that, although loyal and respectful to his former master, he is not afraid to criticise and speak his mind to his superiors. He is prepared to mock (in this case, the fickleness of women) and he shows an intelligence that is at least the equal of that of the Count. He is quick-witted and his observations often add to the comedy of the scene.
- (ii) All candidates identified that the Count was mistaken in his belief that Rosine was already married. When he learns this is not the case, but that Rosine is to wed the following day, Almaviva determines to win her heart and foil the plans of Bartholo. Some candidates went a little too far with part (iii), describing in unnecessary detail the remaining plot of the comedy.
- (b) Bartholo's character was well described by most candidates: he is a mistrustful, jealous old man with a spiteful streak; he is perpetually grumpy and miserable; he cares more for money than his patients; he is an extreme reactionary, despising without justification all innovations of the Enlightenment. However, the stronger responses also identified that Bartholo is more than the typical, shallow 'baddie'. He does appear to have genuine affection for his young protégée; he is at pains to protect Rosine's virtue and advises her to lock herself in her room when violence appears a real possibility. Moreover, he is not a typical old man, in that age does not seem to have dimmed his wits: he constantly suspects that he is being duped by Rosine (and others); he puts in place a variety of 'précautions' to prevent her from straying; he retains Rosine's letter, realising that it could be useful to him; he realises that Don Bazile's venality make him an unreliable employee. Ultimately, however, he has to accept that he has been bested by the Count.

### Question 2 – Gustave Flaubert: *Madame Bovary*

The Flaubert work was very popular and many candidates attempted either the extract or the essay question.

- (a) Parts (i) and (ii) were well answered, but candidates had difficulty in relating Charles' experiences at school to the man that he was to become in later life.
- (i) There were no problems with part (i), and candidates accounted well for Charles' description as an awkward country bumpkin, with unfashionable haircut and ill-fitting, inappropriate clothes.
  - (ii) Part (ii) was equally well addressed. Charles is incapable of fitting in with his new schoolmates: he finds it difficult to conform to their habits (which he does not understand) and is the butt of their humour. His treatment by his new form master does not help his standing with the other boys.
  - (iii) The best responses to part (iii) identified that Charles' character had been formed well before school by his over-protective, smothering mother, and by his father's more spartan notions of education. School merely failed to address his character failings. In later life, he is timid, unambitious, lacking in intelligence and far too trusting of others. He remains, nevertheless, blindly loyal and trustworthy.
- (b) **Question 2(b)** was very well answered by all candidates (although it was rather surprising to see many candidates diagnose Emma's problem as 'Bovaryism!'). Emma's character has, of course, been formed by her motherless childhood and the time that she spent at convent school. Her addiction to romantic fiction has given her unrealistic notions of what life and happiness should be. Accordingly, she becomes quickly bored with Charles' dullness and the monotony of provincial life. The glamour of the ball increases her yearning for excitement, leading her firstly to a platonic relationship with Leon and then to a full-blown affair with Rodolphe. She borrows increasing amounts of money to refurbish her home and buy gifts for her lovers. She is neglectful of her young daughter and, although she has occasional episodes of guilt, such fits of conscience are short-lived. Even in her extra-marital affairs she is unable to find satisfaction: Rodolphe eventually finds her over-demanding and she gradually tires of Leon. She sees her suicide as a 'romantic means of escape' but, in reality, she has to endure the protracted horror of death through poisoning.

### Question 3 – André Gide: *La Porte étroite*

A good number of candidates attempted **Question 3**, though the essay question was a lot more popular than the passage-based question.

- (a) (i) The circumstances under which Jérôme had received Alissa's diaries were well explained. After the final meeting with Alissa, Jérôme had written to Juliette to express his concern about her sister's health. A month later, Juliette had written to say that her sister had died in a nursing home in Paris. In her will, Alissa had asked that her journals be sent to Jérôme and it is through these that, for the first time, Jérôme learns why Alissa had rejected his love.
- (ii) Not all candidates were able to identify the full significance of why Alissa's father had spoken to her about her mother, Lucile, that evening. Alissa's father is dying, and, having just re-entered the lounge and seen just how like her mother Alissa looks, he feels the need to talk to his daughter on a matter of importance. Despite his wife's unfaithfulness, he tells his daughter that his marriage had meant a great deal to him and that he is concerned that Alissa is wasting her life by refusing to commit to Jérôme.
- (iii) Alissa is amazed at her father's words because she had just been thinking about her mother. She sleeps badly that night, feeling guilt at her treatment of Jérôme, and she admits to herself that she had often been on the point of yielding to him. Nevertheless, she re-commits herself to her path of virtue and refuses to be tempted to give in to her desire for Jérôme.

- (b) The question was very well dealt with by most candidates and a variety of cogent reasons were presented: the pair are excessively mature for their age and unwilling to entertain joy and frivolity in their lives; the pair are devoted to each other and have no need to marry to prove their love; having been brought up by two 'gentle and sad' women, Jérôme has been left as a rather effeminate, indecisive individual who is incapable of boldness in love; Alissa wants to see her sister happily married before she commits herself (particularly after she learns that Juliette is keen on Jérôme); Alissa is reluctant to abandon her ailing father and fears that by giving in to Jérôme she will resemble her adulterous mother; Jérôme's extended absences (at school, in the military and in Italy) extend their time apart and serve to deepen the gulf between the pair. The reason mentioned by all candidates was Alissa's devotion to the pursuit of virtue – a life of religious asceticism and self-denial which does not admit of physical love. For Alissa, the denial of Jérôme is the 'hair shirt' by which she pursues her drive towards virtue. Candidates were rewarded for saying which reason was in their opinion the most important.

**Question 4 – Eugène Ionesco: *La Cantatrice chauve***

**Question 4** was quite popular, with the vast majority of candidates answering **Question 4(a)**.

- (a) (i) Part (i) was efficiently addressed by most candidates. The Martins, having arrived for dinner at the Smiths and having been chastised by Mary for arriving late, seem not to know each other. In the conversation that follows they learn that they are both from Manchester and left the city 5 weeks ago, travelling on the same train in the same carriage. The amazing coincidences continue as they learn that they live in the same house in the same street and that they share the same bed. The telling factor is that they each have a blonde, two-year-old daughter called Alice, who has one red eye and one white eye. They must of course be married, but their delight at finding one another is short-lived as they immediately fall asleep.
- (ii) Part (ii) presented more of a problem for some candidates. The essence of the comedy lies in Mary's astonishing assertion that, despite the long list of coincidences that the Martins have just relived, they are in fact not who they think they are. More astonishing still is that Mary should base her claim on the small detail of whether Alice's left eye is red or white. The comedy is heightened by the way Mary reveals these details to the audience as a secret that only she and they should be party to. Absurdly, she claims to be a reliable witness, a Sherlock Holmes, whereas she is simply a maid who barely knows her employers' guests.
- (iii) The effect of posing and answering questions is to add comedy by mimicking the way in which a real detective might ponder a mystery. The questions add spurious credence to Mary's claims to be a detective and they also involve the audience by drawing them into the mystery that Mary has created. After all, these are probably the questions that the audience/reader wants to ask, having experienced the absurdity of the previous two scenes.
- (b) The essay question required some careful planning, to bring focus to the answer, and was reliant on some detailed knowledge of the text. Rather than indicating 'the opposite of actual time', the clock is simply random. Its bizarre behaviour becomes even more haywire as the play progresses. The clock develops a character of its own, becoming excited, for example, as the Martins finally recognise each other at the end of scene IV, or moulding itself to the other characters (viz. the stage direction in scene XI: 'On sent qu'il y a un certain énervement. Les coups que frappe la pendule sont plus nerveux aussi'). Yet the clock's absurd behaviour has no effect whatsoever on the characters, for whom time is meaningless.

## Section 2

### Question 5 – Marie-Claire Blais: *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*

A fair number of candidates attempted **Question 5**, all opting for **Question 5(a)**.

- (a) Candidates coped admirably with this question. *La mère* barely appears in the novel, but almost every candidate encapsulated her role and her relationship with the other characters. She is characterised by her absence, her passivity and her eternal weariness. In the opening chapter, she is shown returning, tired and bent, from her work in the fields. She suckles Emmanuel but is so weary that she appears incapable of showing him any love. She has abandoned the care and upbringing of her other offspring to *grand-mère*, who rules the roost at home. She is almost always silent: the only time she speaks is to object to her husband's sexual demands. Many candidates felt, with some justification, that her lack of involvement with her family was at least partly responsible for Héloïse's downfall, but she does care: she 'howls pitifully' the names of her dead children, showing that she loves and feels the loss of each one.
- (b) There were no responses to **Question 5(b)**.

### Question 6 – Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

This was one of the least popular texts. **Question 6(a)** was opted for twice as much as **Question 6(b)**.

- (a) The key to **Question 6(a)** lay in recognising that the 'period of life spent in Mananava in 1922' referred to the very end of the novel, when Alexis finally returns to Mauritius. Unfortunately, some candidates assumed that the question referred to the beginning of the novel and wrote about Alexis' idyllic childhood on l'Enfoncement du Boucan. After the war and having finally abandoned his search for treasure on Rodrigues, Alexis returns to Mananava where he is employed as an overseer in the cane fields. It is a time of nostalgia and loss for Alexis and the optimism of his early days on le Boucan and on Rodrigues is long gone. He finds Ouma, who has been waiting for him since he left for war, and for a short while they recommence their relationship and live an idyllic life together. But the denouement for Alexis comes quickly: Ouma is transported back to Rodrigues by the British, following riots in the cane fields; Mam dies; Laure goes to live in a convent; the remains of the old house are dug up and destroyed by Ferdinand and his workers. Alexis is left with nothing but his memories and the sound of the sea.
- (b) This question relied on detailed knowledge and a comprehensive overview of the text: the majority of candidates wrote about nature in the novel in general terms. However, sounds were the key to a competent response. The sound of the sea starts the novel. Alexis explores the coastline with Denis to the sound of waves breaking on the coral reef. His childhood is accompanied by the comforting sound of birdsong, while the roar of the approaching hurricane signifies the advent of change and impending disaster. The lack of sound in Forest side highlights the family's straitened circumstances, while the comforting sound of water slapping against the bow of the Zeta heralds Alexis' newfound optimism as he leaves to search for treasure. The sound of the wind and the cracking of rocks contracting in the heat of the sun accompany Alexis' isolation on Rodrigues. His time in the trenches is filled with the roar of guns, exploding shells and shouting voices. The sound of the hurricane that hits Rodrigues announces the end of Alexis' dreams of finding lost treasure and at the end of the novel he is left with nothing but the sound of the sea.

### Question 7 – François Mauriac: *Le Désert de l'amour*

A good number of candidates attempted **Question 7**, with numbers equally spread between **7(a)** and **7(b)**.

- (a) There were some strong responses to this question. Son of a loveless family, unable to express his feelings, Raymond has developed into a surly and difficult teenager. He is disliked by his masters and peers at school, he believes himself to be the butt of other people's jokes and, in his despair, he hides himself away and attempts suicide. His chance meeting with Maria changes him profoundly, but his desire for sexual gratification is not shared by Maria and her rejection of his clumsy attempts leaves him humiliated. As a result, he returns to type, leading a friendless, debauched existence in Paris, focused on the pursuit of fleeting pleasures and dominated by the desire for vengeance. The stronger responses suggested that not everything about Raymond was dominated by his need for immediate gratification: when he first meets Maria he rediscovers his self-respect, taking more care over his appearance and thinking about how he is seen by others;

when he eventually gets the opportunity, far from taking his vengeance, Raymond can only apologise to Maria for his boorish behaviour seventeen years earlier; at the end of the novel Raymond is able to show a modicum of affection for his father for the first time, even though he realises that this partial reconciliation will be short-lived.

- (b) The responses to **7(b)** were less strong, perhaps because candidates had some difficulty in interpreting Paul Courrèges' statement. Paul is a respected physician and has a professional reputation to defend. His social standing is threatened by his relationship with Maria Cross. But is it the case that his family responsibilities save him from disgracing himself, or does his relationship with Maria fail to develop because she does not reciprocate his feelings for her? It is true that, when he is called to attend to Maria after her fall from a window, he thinks of the misery his jealous wife must be suffering. He re-devotes himself to his family and tries to forget Maria, but the suppression of his feelings causes him to fall ill. It is only at the end of the novel that Raymond comes to understand the pain of unrequited love that his father has suffered for so many years.

**Question 8 – Irène Némirovsky: *Tempête en juin* (from *Suite Française*)**

Not many candidates attempted **Question 8**, with **8(a)** being significantly more popular than **8(b)**.

- (a) The question was quite well answered, with most candidates choosing to focus on Mme Péricand, whose arrogance and lack of true Christian charity was compared with the humility of Jeanne Michaud. Other responses focused on Charles Langelet, Hubert Péricand, Philippe Péricand, M. Corbin and Arlette Corail.
- (b) Though attempted by relatively few candidates, the question was well addressed. The Michauds represent the poor, downtrodden refugees whose admirable humility is contrasted with the lack of humanity of the wealthy, moneyed classes. The Michauds respond in a noble manner, and without complaint, to the difficulties that they face on the road, sharing the hardships of their fellow refugees, wishing only to help their fellow man. Their only concern is for the fate of their son, Jean-Marie, who has been fighting for his country and is missing in action. They are harshly treated right to the end of the novel: failing to make it to Tours they return on foot to Paris, where they are summarily dismissed by M. Corbin. They eventually get a small amount of compensation but must use up all of their savings to survive, and still they have no news of their missing son. Mme Michaud rails against the unfairness of their treatment, but her husband argues that they are merely sharing the fate of the common people, a natural phenomenon.

# FRENCH

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Paper 9716/43  
Texts

## Key messages

Teachers should:

ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on **three separate texts**.  
choose carefully which texts to prepare with their classes, considering the interests of their candidates.  
remember that the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** provide a ready-made structure for answers and therefore might be better suited for some candidates than the freer option **(b)** alternatives.

Teachers should train their students to:

manage their time in the examination room, ensuring that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.  
ensure that they do not answer two questions on the same text, remembering that 'soit... soit' means 'either... or'.  
think carefully about what the question is asking of them and plan their responses before they start to write.  
stay on track as they write their responses by referring regularly to the question.

Candidates should:

label their answers with the question number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If passage-based questions are not properly labelled, it can look as though parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** have not been attempted.  
commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with a brief introduction, locating the extract within the text and briefly explaining what events have preceded the extract.  
ensure that answers to the option **(b)** questions in **Section 1** and all questions in **Section 2** include;

- an opening paragraph, acknowledging the question and giving a brief indication of how it is to be addressed.
- a closing paragraph, which should summarise the points made in the essay.

## General comments

The passage-based questions were efficiently addressed, for the most part. The best responses dealt with the detail required by the question but also demonstrated good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text. However, many candidates still attempt to answer these questions by quoting over-lengthy parts of the extract text without explaining what the quotations illustrate. Candidates should always explain the significance of any quotation used.

The essay questions were generally well structured but, once again, candidates should be advised to stay focused on answering the question by referring to the title at regular intervals as they compose their response. Storytelling that is irrelevant to the question should be avoided – the Examiner has also read the text and does not need to be reminded of the plot. In the same vein, candidates should avoid wasting time at the start of their essay by describing the background to the work, the author's life and literary output. Similarly, it is not necessary to begin the response by writing out the question.

If a premise is provided in the question, candidates should not be afraid to disagree with it. Far more important is that the candidate should give an opinion and that this opinion should be validated with relevant evidence from the text.



It is encouraging to note that most candidates start their essay with a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how they intend to address it, and a conclusion to summarise the key findings of the essay.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1 – Beaumarchais: *Le Barbier de Séville***

Questions on Beaumarchais were attempted by a good number of candidates, with the extract question (**Question (a)**) being twice as popular as **Question (b)**.

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the text.
- (i) Bartholo is made to appear rather ridiculous (and unworthy of Rosine's hand) by criticising, without justification, all innovation in science and the arts. He rails against modern theatre, expressing his belief that the critics will soon condemn this new comedy, *La Précaution Inutile*. In mocking a play about which he knows nothing, Bartholo conveys the author's condemnation of the literary critics (la cabale) who had censured his own play.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to explain that Rosine had added a note to the sheet of music asking the unknown man below her balcony to identify himself in song after her teacher had left the house. The only 'problem' was that if the unknown suitor failed to retrieve the music promptly, Bartholo could discover Rosine's note.
- (iii) The sequence of events that followed the extract was summarised well: Rosine sends Bartholo into the street to retrieve the song and, while he is on his way, she tells the unknown man below to retrieve the note quickly and hide himself. Bartholo is unable to find the music and returns to the apartment, suspecting that he has been taken for a fool. As he returns, Rosine loudly declaims her unhappiness and desire to escape her 'prison'. Arriving back on the balcony, Bartholo leads Rosine back into the apartment and locks the 'jalousie' behind him.
- (b) Most of the responses to this question dealt competently with Figaro's character. Like the typical hero of the 'roman picaresque', he is the roguish member of the lower classes who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. He is loyal to his former master but is unique as a literary valet, since he is quick-witted, more intelligent than Count Almaviva and is not afraid to speak his mind to social superiors. Better responses also dealt with the variety of roles that Figaro fulfils in the play (holder of information, planner of action and the director of events) and the fact that he probably represents the author in his support for the philosophy of the Enlightenment through his independent spirit and focus on finding happiness in this life (rather than in the next).

#### **Question 2 – Gustave Flaubert: *Madame Bovary***

This text was the most popular on the paper and many candidates attempted either the extract or the essay question.

- (a) (i) There were no problems with this question and the differing attitudes towards education of Charles' mother and father were satisfactorily described.
- (ii) Most candidates identified that Charles' education was lacking, but few were able to identify every stage of his educational career: his spasmodic lessons with the village curate; the fact that he does not attend formal school until he is nearly 14; his withdrawal from classes in his third year; his inability to focus on his medical studies, leading initially to failure at his exams and eventually to a poor standard of medical qualification.
- (iii) The carefree activities preferred by Charles (chasing crows, playing in the woods, drinking in bars and playing dominoes) reflect the man that he becomes in later life. He is indolent, rather dull and too trusting of others. He has little ambition and is dominated by others – particularly by women – throughout his life.

- (b) **Question 2(b)** was slightly more popular than the extract question and most candidates dealt with it well. Many responses focused on just one, or a small number of events which were felt to indicate the impending failure of Charles' and Emma's marriage. The very best responses identified that the couple were in fact wholly incompatible before their marriage, and went on to describe a sequence of confirmatory events as the marriage turned sour, including: the boredom of life in Tostes, the ball at the mansion of the Marquis d'Andervilliers, Emma's growing hatred of Charles and the banality of petit bourgeois life in Yonville; the meeting with Léon; the affair with Rodolphe; the involvement of L'Heureux, the moneylender; Rodolphe's refusal to help Emma with her debts.

### Question 3 – André Gide: *La Porte étroite*

There were too few responses to make comment possible.

### Question 4 – Eugène Ionesco: *La Cantatrice chauve*

The question was attempted by a fair number of candidates, slightly more than half of whom attempted the passage-based question.

- (a) (i) Candidates dealt with this question efficiently. Mary is, of course a very untypical maid: she is rude to her employers and her behaviour is rather bizarre. Why does she address the audience to announce that she is the maid? Why does she laugh, cry, smile and then announce that she has bought a chamber pot? Yet she also represents a stock comic character – the pushy maid, who is not afraid to speak her mind.
- (ii) M. and Mme Smith are shallow, one-dimensional characters (like most of the other characters in Ionesco's play). They speak in clichés and non sequiturs, live empty, repetitive lives and are parodies of bland, stuffy, middle-class characteristics. The pair often fail to hear/understand (or intentionally ignore) what the other party has said, and their relationship seems to be based on little more than the pleasure they each derive from disagreeing with/bickering with the other.
- (iii) This part was a bigger challenge for candidates. The mock formality of Mary's address to the audience is incongruously funny, particularly when it is contrasted with her inexplicable announcements, her impudence and the surprising introduction of the chamber pot theme. The fact that the Smiths complain that they are hungry and were about to eat without their guests, when they have just eaten, is also humorously absurd.
- (b) The essay question required some careful planning to bring focus to the answer, but most candidates coped well and provided sundry examples of different types of 'word play' in the text: from repetition and irrelevance, to clichés and non sequiturs, to the tortuous anecdotes of the Fire Chief. Even the stage directions occasionally join in the bizarre 'jeux de mots'. The overall effect, of course, is to highlight the unreliability of language as a medium of communication.

## Section 2

### Question 5 – Marie-Claire Blais: *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*

Few candidates attempted **Question 5**, all opting for **Question 5(a)**.

- (a) Though all candidates agreed that Emmanuel was not the principal character in the novel, some encountered difficulty in explaining just what role he plays. The novel starts with his birth and is the story of the family during Emmanuel's early life. It is through his eyes and from his viewpoint that the house, *grand-mère* and the other members of the family are described. Indeed, it could be argued that Emmanuel is the third-party commentator for much of the novel. Though he plays very little part in the plot, Emmanuel represents hope for the family, surviving as he does until the arrival of spring, though this optimism may be misplaced in view of Jean Le Maigre's prediction that Emmanuel will also go to the novitiate, where he will succumb to the same disease that kills his brother.
- (b) There were no responses to **Question 5(b)**.

### Question 6 – Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

There were very few attempts at **Question 6**.

- (a) There were too few responses to **Question 6(a)** to allow for meaningful comment.
- (b) Candidates struggled to construct a comprehensive reply to the question. The stars represent hope and optimism for Alexis. They twinkle over the family home in Mananava, they are nostalgic reminders of evenings that Alexis spent with his father, learning about the constellations, and they appear to be looking down benevolently on him as he sets out on the Zeta to start his quest for treasure. But the stars are also portents of change and disaster: they mock as Alexis almost dies of thirst on Rodrigues, unknown constellations shine over the horror of the trenches on the Western Front and, towards the end of the novel, shooting stars above Mananava signify that Alexis' time with Ouma will soon end.

**Question 7 – François Mauriac: *Le Désert de l'amour***

Many candidates attempted **Question 7**, with numbers equally spread between **7(a)** and **7(b)**.

- (a) There were some very strong responses to this question. Maria Cross has, of course, a profound effect on the young Raymond Courrèges. Son of a loveless family, unable to express his feelings, Raymond has developed into a surly and difficult teenager. He is disliked by his masters and peers at school, he believes himself to be the butt of other people's jokes and, in his despair, he hides himself away and attempts suicide. Raymond's chance meeting with Maria saves him. He rediscovers his self-respect and starts to take more care over his appearance. However, his desire for sexual gratification is not shared by Maria and her rejection of his clumsy advances leaves him humiliated. Thereafter, he is driven by a desire for vengeance and lives a friendless, debauched existence in Paris. When the opportunity arises, far from taking his vengeance, Raymond can only apologise to Maria for his boorish behaviour 17 years earlier.
- (b) Responses to **7(b)** focused primarily on the humiliation suffered by Paul Courrèges and his son at the hands of Maria Cross. Paul's adoration of Maria is neither understood nor reciprocated by her, and he is obliged to suppress his feelings and walk away from the relationship for fear of doing irreparable damage to his marriage and professional standing. See **7(a)** for a description of Raymond's humiliation. Stronger responses also examined the humiliation experienced by Lucille Courrèges, a faithful wife who realises that her husband is drifting away from her towards a younger woman with whom she feels unable to compete, not least of all because of her inability to communicate with her husband.

**Question 8 – Irène Némirovsky: *Tempête en juin (from Suite Française)***

A good number of candidates attempted **Question 8**, with **8(b)** being slightly more popular than **8(a)**.

- (a) Most candidates were impressed with the character of Arlette Corail, as indeed the author intended readers to be. Arlette is not at all typical of the other characters and is treated sympathetically by Némirovsky because she is not from the moneyed classes and she lives by her wits. We learn that while others have been suffering horribly during their flight from Paris, Arlette has been living in comparative luxury in a small village hotel where, in spite of the chaos happening around here, she has remained cool and calm under pressure, her hair and makeup at all times immaculate. Arlette always knows that her looks will guarantee that she gets what she wants from men. She is financially secure and the only hardship she suffers is upon realising that the war will mean that some of life's luxuries (like her American face powder) will in future be difficult to obtain. In a final ironic touch, Arlette knocks over and kills Charles Langelet back in Paris. Not to worry, however – she knows a man who can sort out this little inconvenience for her.
- (b) Candidates were divided over whether Philippe Péricand is an admirable or a despicable character, but most gave a good analysis of his role in the novel. As a curate in the Catholic church (a low-ranking position which his mother considers below the dignity of the family) Philippe feels strongly that it is his duty to bring God's grace to the feral young orphans who are entrusted to his care. In reality, he fears the boys and wants to be rid of them as soon as he is able. He is undeniably a rather weak character and his inability to defend himself physically, allied to the rather gruesome manner of his death, was interpreted by some candidates to represent a comment by the author on the ineffectual response to Nazi aggression by the Catholic church.