

THINKING SKILLS

Paper 8436/01
Multiple Choice

| <i>Question Number</i> | <i>Key</i> | <i>Question Number</i> | <i>Key</i> |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1 | E | 26 | E |
| 2 | B | 27 | C |
| 3 | B | 28 | D |
| 4 | D | 29 | D |
| 5 | C | 30 | A |
| 6 | E | 31 | D |
| 7 | C | 32 | B |
| 8 | B | 33 | D |
| 9 | A | 34 | C |
| 10 | B | 35 | D |
| 11 | D | 36 | D |
| 12 | D | 37 | B |
| 13 | D | 38 | A |
| 14 | D | 39 | B |
| 15 | B | 40 | D |
| 16 | D | 41 | D |
| 17 | E | 42 | C |
| 18 | A | 43 | B |
| 19 | E | 44 | D |
| 20 | A | 45 | A |
| 21 | C | | |
| 22 | B | | |
| 23 | B | | |
| 24 | D | | |
| 25 | B | | |

THINKING SKILLS

Paper 8436/02
Critical Thinking

General comments

This paper has a new format and differs from previous papers in the following ways. First, it has four questions in place of three, and secondly, each question is subdivided into sections, whereas some questions in previous papers required essay-style answers. These new types of question appear to have been very successful in that they allowed candidates to access the whole range of marks, and discriminated well between candidates. Despite the fact that there was one more question than previously, candidates were better able to complete the paper, no doubt because the structure of the questions enabled them to focus on the crucial points and avoid being side-tracked into irrelevant or repetitive detail. Very few candidates failed to attempt all questions.

Most candidates showed evidence of satisfactory reasoning skills, many of very good reasoning skills, and some produced excellent answers. Thus in general the performance of candidates was pleasing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates answered this question satisfactorily, and many scored more than 10 out of 13. It is pleasing that the new way of asking the question resulted in more focused answers and fewer unnecessarily lengthy answers.

- (a) Most candidates could comment appropriately on the reliability of Zamora as a witness, but very few seemed to understand what was meant by 'plausibility', confusing it with 'reliability'. The question about 'reliability' is one about the characteristics of the witness, and how likely it is that he is giving an accurate account. The question about 'plausibility' is one about the nature of the story itself, and how likely it is that such an event could have happened. A few good answers were given, pointing out that the story was not too far-fetched, given that what Zamora claimed to have observed could have had an explanation that did not involve the presence of aliens. Candidates need to be aware of the distinction between these two terms.
- (b) This was generally answered satisfactorily, with better answers commenting on the strength of the support, although some merely listed the pieces of corroborating evidence, without assessing the extent to which they supported Zamora's account.
- (c) Most candidates correctly concluded that the passage did not provide strong evidence for the presence of aliens on earth. Justifications for this conclusion varied in quality, better answers pointing out that there was only one witness, who could have been mistaken about details, given problems concerning his vision and possible panic, and that there was a possible alternative explanation given the 'historical note'.

Question 2

Candidates found this question the most difficult of the four, with few gaining high marks.

- (a) Most could identify the conclusion as the last sentence of the first paragraph, or some appropriate re-phrasing of it.
- (b) One of the reasons requested was easily identified as the first sentence of the fourth paragraph. However, the second reason – the final sentence of the passage – presented more difficulty. The question discriminated well in that it required recognition of the structure of the final paragraph, however, it is unfortunate that so few candidates realised this. It was not enough to say 'there are reasons to be sceptical of the process' or 'those who were specially favoured were less confident and treated with less respect', since more would be required to support the claim that the process was counter-productive, i.e. made the situation worse.
- (c) Most candidates could show that they understood the function of the analogy, and some good candidates were able to identify ways in which it failed to be adequate, e.g. that it may be difficult to find and remedy the root problem in the case of the underprivileged.
- (d) As always, the question asking for an **unstated** assumption was frequently answered by quoting something stated in the text. Candidates could have offered 'there is a limited number of places', 'rejected candidates will know that positive discrimination has been used', 'the feelings of candidates are relevant to the fairness of the situation'. A few did give these answers, but clearly many still are not well skilled in recognising unstated assumptions.
- (e) There were two ways in which many candidates failed to answer this question well. Some clearly interpreted it as a question about the structure of the reasoning in the final paragraph, and listed 'strong reasons' and 'weak reasons' without saying why they were strong or weak in relation to the conclusion. Others interpreted it as a request for reasoning of their own in relation to the topic. Yet the question clearly asked for assessment with respect to the strength or weakness of the reasoning itself. A few were able to do this, commenting for example that the survey may not be representative, that no evidence was presented about the rewards of the job or award, that low levels of confidence may not have been caused by the special treatment. However, in general answers to this question were disappointing.

Question 3

Answers to this question were generally satisfactory, with a range of marks, suggesting that discrimination was good. This is a new type of question using data from which conclusions must be drawn, and there was some evidence that those who did not perform very well at expressing ideas in English could nevertheless score well in drawing conclusions from data.

- (a) Most candidates did not answer (i) correctly, failing to notice that data from one country could not be applied generally. However, most could answer two or three parts of the question correctly.
- (b) This question differentiated well between candidates, some making three relevant points, some two, and a few able only to point out that evidence of the benefits of drinking coffee was offered.
- (c) Most answered this well, and many gained full marks for it.
- (d) As with (b), some answered superficially, and thought they were being asked simply whether caffeine is as addictive as hard drugs, but a good number were able to recognise what was being asked, and related their answer well to the passage, in addition to pointing out reasons unrelated to addictiveness which could explain why nobody steals or commits murder for caffeine.

Question 4

This question is testing the same skills as did **Question 3** in previous papers, but is now explicitly divided into three parts – analysis, evaluation and further argument. There was no evidence that this change made it more difficult for candidates to give good answers, and most candidates did not appear to be short of time when they reached the last question. However, performance in general was not so good on this question as on **Questions 1** and **3**.

- (a) Most scored two marks out of three for this by correctly identifying the main conclusion (i.e. the last sentence of the first paragraph) and listing an adequate number of reasons. Those who offered the main conclusion plus very few reasons, or who briefly summarised the ideas from the passage without identifying the conclusion scored only one mark. The best answers, of which there were few, identified intermediate conclusions, such as ‘positions in the league become entirely predictable, which reduces the interest for fans’.
- (b) Most candidates offered some comments in evaluation, but in general this sub-question was not answered particularly well. Many simply listed assumptions without pointing out what was problematic about these assumptions, and in many cases the comments were not well organised and concise. It was clear that the candidates responded with interest to the subject matter, but they did not all demonstrate clear thinking about it. Some American candidates assumed that the passage was about American football, not soccer, but this did not handicap them in relation to gaining marks, because they were as able as other candidates to make relevant criticisms.
- (c) Using a separate sub-question to ask for further arguments seems to have been successful in prompting candidates to devote more effort to this aspect of **Question 4**. Also the general interest in the subject matter seems to have helped candidates to come up with relevant reasoning. Candidates need to be aware that simply making the same points in this section as they did in section (b) will not gain them marks. Since four marks are available for this part, it is important for candidates to make a good effort to answer this. Answers saying that they would strengthen the argument by adding statistics or by removing flaws and assumptions do not qualify as offering further arguments. In order to get full marks, an answer needs to present two arguments, and not simply two comments that would either support or weaken the conclusion in the passage, i.e. a comment needs to be both relevant and well developed.