

SINHALA

Paper 3205/01

Composition

In general, the performance of the candidates was commendable. Some candidates performed extremely well. A small number of candidates were consistently fluent and accurate, while the writing of others contained a large number of incorrect spellings and neglect of basic grammar rules. As a result of these defects, some candidates could score only moderate marks.

Most of the candidates were well prepared for this paper and closely followed the instructions. However, infringement of the rubric, such as exceeding the recommended length occurred in the case of a small number of candidates. Nevertheless, all candidates selected one topic per section only, in accordance with instructions.

Section A - Letter, Report, Dialogue or Speech.

Candidates were given the option to select one of the 3 topics under **(a)**, **(b)**, and **(c)**.

(a) required writing a letter to a friend stating why the candidate could not attend a party. **(b)** required a dialogue between a candidate and a teacher, and **(c)** a speech in class on the dangers of smoking.

The letter was the most popular topic out of the three. Most candidates produced interesting letters. They correctly understood what was expected of them and, keeping to the recommended length, wrote in clear and simple Sinhala apologies for not being able to attend the friend's birthday party. Preparation for a forthcoming exam, the funeral of a close relative or a mother's sickness were some of the reasons given.

Only a very small number of candidates chose to do the dialogue. The third topic was selected by a slightly larger number of candidates who produced interesting speeches on the dangers of smoking.

Section B - Essay

Only a small number of candidates didn't keep to the required length of the essay. Most candidates attempted option **(a)** ("Describe the scene at a busy market."). **(b)** ("What kind of music are you most interested in and why?") was another popular topic. Only a few candidates chose **(d)** and **(c)**.

Understanding of the content and experience in essay writing were of a high standard. Those who selected **(a)** usually wrote descriptions of a Sunday fair in Sri Lanka they had visited with their parents. The candidates who opted for topic **(b)** did their best to give good reasons for their choice of a certain kind of music such as rock, pop or local folk music.

While writing interesting essays on their selected topics, some candidates forgot to follow important rules of Sinhala grammar such as the agreement of subject and verb. For example, they used the accusative form *maa*, instead of the nominative form *mama* as the subject in sentences ending in verbal forms such as *vemi*, *dakimi* and *sitimi*. This is similar to writing 'me go', 'me see', and 'me think' instead of 'I go, I see, 'and 'I think' in English.

Considering the age of the candidates, the content of the essays were of a high standard. Most used their personal experiences rather than repeating stereotypical essays picked up from textbooks.

It would be beneficial for candidates if they were encouraged to write in a legible, clear hand. Furthermore, they must pay more attention to correct spelling in Sinhala.

SINHALA

Paper 3205/02

Translation and Reading Comprehension.

General Comments.

The overall performance was very good. Most candidates translated the two passages accurately. However, *Section B - Comprehension* proved more challenging for some candidates.

Comments on specific questions:

Section A - Translation

1 Translation from Sinhala into English

Candidates had no major difficulties with this passage and their overall understanding of the passage was more than satisfactory. However, some candidates translated the second sentence starting with the words *me perahera atara...* incorrectly. Instead of translating the sentence as 'There are three important peraheras' or, 'Among these peraheras, three are important', they translated it as 'There are three important things in the perahera'. This confusion arose from the ambiguous meaning of the Sinhala word *perahera*. (This word occurred in the first sentence of the passage, too.) In the context of the sentence in question, however, it should be taken to designate the plural form, i.e. 'pageants/processions', not as 'the pageant or the procession'. Another challenging word was *poojotsavayak*, 'a ritual or ceremony'. Only a few candidates understood it correctly. The last sentence, too, was problematic for some candidates. Although they grasped the meaning accurately, some of them used the word 'god', instead of Buddha. It is assumed that this discrepancy may have been caused by the different religious backgrounds of the candidates, and they were, therefore, not penalised for writing 'god' instead of 'Buddha'.

2 Translation from English into Sinhala.

Most candidates performed well, though candidates appeared to have been more confident in their use of English than Sinhala. About half of the candidates translated 'south-eastern' as *dakunu - negenahira* instead of using the accepted term *ginikona*. However, they coped well with the tricky phrase 'the border of their domain...'. 'Heritage' in the last sentence proved to be a difficult word for a very small number of candidates.

Section B - Comprehension.

Performance, in general, was satisfactory. Some candidates appeared not to have read the passage carefully and failed to grasp the detail of the text, concentrating only on the broad issues instead. Furthermore, candidates appeared not to have correctly understood some questions, and, as a result, gave wholly incorrect or partially incorrect answers. Candidates are therefore reminded that they need to read the text and questions carefully. A large number of candidates who scored well in the translations failed to maintain similar standards in the comprehension exercise.

On the whole, performance of the candidates in both papers was encouraging and of a good standard. Nevertheless, more attention should be paid to spelling, the use of idioms and basic rules of grammar in written Sinhala. Furthermore, it would be to the advantage of candidates if they avoided using words and terms found in dialects, which are not regarded as standard Sinhala. (If, however, they are writing a dialogue, it is possible to use colloquial words here and there to make the conversation more realistic.)