

FRENCH

<p>Paper 9716/01 Speaking</p>

Key messages

- It is important to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions in the Topic Presentation.
- In order to be eligible for maximum marks under *Seeking Information and Opinions* candidates' questions in each of the conversation sections should relate to the subject(s) under discussion in that section.

General comments

All candidates were aware of the requirements of the examination.

The cohort were awarded a very wide range of marks, from near the upper end to near the lower end of the range. Candidates at the upper end spoke fluently, accurately and idiomatically while some candidates at the lower end of the mark range had great difficulty in understanding the Examiner and in constructing basic responses.

Pronunciation was generally acceptable, but with a number of instances of first-language interference, which, in one or two cases, made comprehension extremely difficult.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: Presentation

Most candidates were able to speak for the required 3 to 3.5 minutes independently, others needed some encouragement to do so and some Topic Presentations remained too short. Many Topic Presentations tended to be factual, but there were a good number that also included ideas or opinions.

A wide variety of appropriate topics was offered. Among the more unusual: *Les Misérables*, *Le français dans le monde*, *Les fêtes du feu du solstice dans les Pyrénées*, *Le sport et le hooliganisme*, *La culture de fast-food en France*. And among the standard ones: *La mode*, *La famille*, *L'éducation en France*, *L'environnement*.

Pronunciation was generally acceptable, with a number of instances of first language interference. A few candidates at the lower end were extremely hard to understand.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

All topics sampled allowed wide-ranging discussion at an appropriate level, even if candidates varied considerably in their ability to answer questions at different levels of difficulty. All candidates made an attempt to develop the ideas of their presentation in the Topic Conversation, although they were not all able to maintain the same level of language in this section.

Nearly all candidates in the sample were able to ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions though in some cases candidates needed to be reminded or prompted. Most candidates seemed to be aware of the requirement to ask more than one question in order to gain maximum marks. However, questions were often poorly formulated, hard to understand and not always relevant to the topic under discussion.

Quality of language varied considerably in terms of accuracy, range and *Feel for the Language*.

Section 3: General Conversation

The General Conversation covered a wide range of interest: sport, languages, travel, sport, the media, leisure, Buddhism, fake news, discrimination, stress, technology, although there was relatively little discussion about contemporary issues in francophone countries.

Most candidates asked questions, although not all focused their question or questions on the subject under discussion. Most candidates seemed aware of the requirement to ask more than one question in order to gain maximum marks though questions were often poorly formulated or formulated without variation.

In order to improve further, candidates still need to widen their vocabulary, develop a firmer grasp of basic constructions, express more ideas and opinions, and have more practice in using the spoken language.

FRENCH

<p>Paper 9716/22 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. Candidates need to find a satisfactory replacement both semantically and grammatically.

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 re-working 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

Legibility in general was sometimes a significant problem, with answers littered with crossings-out and squeezed-in insertions, not to mention poor or minute handwriting.

There were still cases of centres persisting with the very unhelpful practice of submitting the text inserts with the answer booklets, which significantly complicates the scanning and marking process.

Overall, the paper was felt to be an appropriate test and there were plenty of very good scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy. At the other end of the range, there were some whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

Most candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the format of the paper and the required tasks, although some appeared to not read the questions carefully enough.

Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they allowed their personal opinions to dictate their responses, rather than focusing on what the text actually said.

There were very 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. The most successful answers are often the most concisely and simply expressed.

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 significantly from the Quality of Language marks – e.g. *La situation a-t-elle*

changé... **(3(a))**; *Les dopés peuvent-il...* **(3(e))** ; *Les dopés risquent-ils...* **(3(f))**. Answers beginning with *Parce que* or *En* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

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 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. 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-complications. 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.

In **Question 1**, candidates appear aware of the 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. The inclusion of unnecessary additional words (or the exclusion of necessary ones) invalidates the answer.

Candidates can sometimes help themselves considerably by narrowing down the options to words which are at least same parts of speech, or by matching (for example) singulars with singulars or feminine adjectives with feminine adjectives.

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 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: 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 five marks available for their Personal Response.**

The word limit is such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. From the very 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.

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?*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Item **(a)** was correctly identified by the majority, with only a few not including the necessary *ne*.

In **(b)**, those who didn't understand *insensés* sometimes looked around for other words ending in s: *changés, indétectables*. Others didn't observe the 'footprint' principle (see **General comments** above) by writing *les plus fous*.

In item **(c)**, *dès lors* was often correctly offered. Other expressions of time were less successfully pressed into service: *aujourd'hui, maintenant, au cours*.

In item **(d)**, candidates sometimes went in search of vocabulary related to competing/winning – *réussir, victoire, gloire, se battent* – without recognising the need for a past participle to replace *triomphé*.

In item **(e)**, *par n'importe quel moyen* was plausible but a less good match than *à tout prix*. Some lost the mark by the omission of *à* (or its accent) or by the addition of *réussir*.

Question 2

There were some excellent answers to this question, but the task proved quite demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a) The transfer into the passive appeared straightforward enough, but a some did not see the need to make the participle agree. Attempts to use *à cause de, en raison de* and *grâce à* in place of *par* often caused problems.

Item 2(b) *Des signaux sont avertis par le corps* was an example of random word order changes, but the process of transferring passive into the active generally fared better, even if the correct form of a regular *-ir* verb was problematic for many.

Item 2(c) The conjugation of another regular *-ir* verb was again a problem even for those who had done the difficult bit in recognising the need for a subjunctive. *On* occasionally produced a plural verb.

Item 2(d) saw a good number of candidates producing *leur* as a possessive, but fewer managed it as an indirect object pronoun. Many pluralised the verb (*permettent*).

Item 2(e) A significant proportion either didn't see the need for a feminine singular agreement here, or thought the past participle should be *mit*. Others simply omitted any mention of *mettre*.

Question 3

In Item **3(a)**, successful candidates saw the need for a change of tense to denote what used to be the case in the past and what happens nowadays, but many suggested that the appearance of pills and bottles was a cause rather than a consequence of professionalism. Others misinterpreted *cocktails* in this context as *boissons* or *jus*. *En pleine journée* was not a successful way of avoiding lifting *en plein jour*, although rather more avoided *en cachette* with *en secret, clandestinement, discrètement* etc, or pointed to the fact that the substances are undetectable.

In Item **3(b)**, candidates found good ways of expressing *fondateur* and his role in writing well-known quotations on sport. The question *Qu'est-ce que Pierre de Coubertin a fait...* was a clue as to how the question might best be answered with verbs. He would no doubt have been horrified by the not-infrequent suggestion that he advocated doping – *Pour réussir il faut absolument se doper*. He might have been more flattered to read that *Il était bien musclé*.

Item **3(c)** the use of *faire* in the question again suggested the use of a verb to replace *défense*. Many were successful in explaining the desire to defend sporting values/fair competition. Fewer understood that the sanctions were intended as a deterrent to those who might be tempted in the future. The usual misuse of *plusieurs*, when *plusieurs milliers* would be more likely, was common.

In Item **3(d)**, the ability to train for longer and to recover more quickly was generally well handled by those we used the verbs *s'entraîner* and *recupérer*. Fewer found an alternative means to express *le développement rapide de la masse musculaire*.

In Item **3(e)**, candidates who adopted the straightforward tactic of re-working the nouns scored best, but there was much lifting here. Some thought drugs impeded concentration and caused violent behaviour. The fact that *Ils sont invisibles en compétition* presumably puts competitors at an unfair advantage

In Item 3(f), relatively few understood the danger of drugs making the athlete unable to feel the body's warnings that it is time to stop, and thought that stopping taking drugs would cause pain and harm to the body. Candidates who may well have understood the need for cheats to take other drugs to suppress the side-effects of the first often found it difficult to express this sufficiently clearly.

Question 4

Item 4(a) needed candidates to use a change of tense to distinguish between past and future. Both marks were very simply scored by (for example): *Elle n'a pas marché et ne marchera jamais*.

In Item 4(b), candidates often scored both marks, although lifting *en empêcher la détection* proved too tempting for some. It was quite possible to score both marks in one simple sentence: *Ils produisent de nouveaux produits indétectables*.

In Item 4(c), a good number found *vérifier/analyser/tester* or similar and went on to offer *diffuser/distribuer/mettre en vente* (sometimes confused with *le vent* or *le ventre*). Stronger candidates understood that the authorities are always a step behind and found some nicely idiomatic ways of expressing *devancées*: *Elles ont toujours un train de retard* or *les tricheurs prennent une longueur d'avance*.

In Item 4(d), *Non, la lutte est pourproductive* was an interesting notion, but a good number successfully identified the problem of banning one product simply prompting the creation of another. Some thought that legalizing drugs would increase sales, but others correctly realised that lack of sales would mean that the suppliers would soon lose interest.

In Item 4(e), candidates often scored both marks simply by rephrasing *la provenance* and *la vraie composition* as *d'où elles viennent* and *ce qu'elles contiennent/de quoi elles sont composées*. Again, the simplest answers were often the best.

In Item 4(f), even some of those who understood *déplacements* thought that athletes have to travel to be tested, whilst others suggested they are tested every day for a year.

Question 5

This question asked candidates to summarise the arguments for and against the efforts to eliminate the use of drugs, and then suggest how cheats should be punished.

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. As a fairly modest example, *De prime abord, la lutte pour et contre l'antidopage est un titre assez débatable et vaste, mais cependant il y en a des arguments qui sont pour et contre le débat* simply uses up more than 20 per cent of the words permitted for no benefit.

The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points, of which most candidates managed a good number. Some candidates simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified arguments in favour of *la lutte* included protecting athletes' health, defending the true values of sport and ensuring 'a level playing-field' both in physical and psychological terms, punishing the cheats and deterring potential future ones, and dissuading athletes from buying dubious products on line.

Points against *la lutte* included the failure of the policy in the past and its inevitable failure in the future, the replacement of banned products by other/less detectable ones, the impossibility for the authorities to keep up, and the undesirable impact on athletes' freedom and dignity.

As far as content is concerned, **excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in a reduction of the Quality of Language mark.**

The **Personal Response** elicited plenty of sensible if fairly predictable ideas about punishments: suspensions, bans, (for set periods or for life), fines, being stripped of titles and medals, public disgrace, a sliding scale for repeat offenders. Some of the more interesting answers included opportunities for counselling and rehabilitation after the punishment.

Quality of Language

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, 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) appeared largely random in a large number of scripts.

Not uncommonly, when attempts were made to make verbs agree as plurals, it was simply by putting an *s* on the end of the singular: *les experts verifiés; elles fournits; ils ressentés*. Conversely, adjectives (and sometimes nouns) were made plural by adding *-ent*.

There was a tendency for both *on* and *cela* to be followed by plural verbs: *cela les aideraient ; on(t) ne connaient pas*.

Incorrect verb forms were legion, with some unable to conjugate common irregular verbs such as *pouvoir, vouloir, devoir, venir, (per)mettre, introduire, savoir, connaître*. There were problems with the present tense of regular *-ir* verbs too.

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

Reflexives – *s'entraîner, se concentrer, se sentir* – caused confusion.

The approach to spelling was sometimes phonetic, even with very common words: *mai, peu/peut, s'avoir, biensure, nerport/nirport (n'importe), mal saint, on ne s'est pas, n'y/ni, la lutte est en vin, la santé se mais en péril, il est difficile d'irremédié, ils s'ont fait, il sécerait, fasse (for face), faire fassent à*.

As usual, *leur, leurs* and *ses* appeared interchangeable in a large number of scripts, as did *ce, se,* and *ceux (seux) ; sa* and *ça (sela) ; qui/que* and *ce qui/que ; ces, ses, c'est* and *s'est ; ci* and *si ; on* and *ont ; ou* and *où*.

Incomplete negatives (missing *ne*) caused some confusion (and were worse when omitted before *plus*).

Although most of the above inevitably focuses on weaknesses, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the strongest candidates wrote very impressive, idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

<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

Overall, the texts were felt to be of an appropriate level and approachable by the overwhelming majority. The subject matter appeared to be of some interest and relevance to the candidates. There were some very good scripts from candidates who were well versed in handling the various tasks, but there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence and knowledge was very much 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 questions. 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, but some candidates still neglect the simple answer and offer over-long, complicated ones.

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 significantly from the overall impression for the Quality of Language mark – e.g. *L'éclairage nocturne affecte-t-il le sommeil parce que (3(b)); Les gens peuvent-ils être affectés parce que (3(c)); L'usage des écrans tard dans la soirée empêche-t-il les enfants de s'endormir parce que...(3(d))*. Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

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 in recent series, 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.

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.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the place 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 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 five 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 too many good 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 (no doubt because of different practices in other subjects). To give just one example among many, the candidate who started with *Les dangers de l'utilisation des écrans des nouvelles technologies qui sont présentés dans le premier texte sont les suivants: ... Les dangers de l'utilisation des écrans des nouvelles technologies qui sont présentés dans le deuxième texte sont les suivants...* simply wasted a significant proportion of the words available by effectively writing out the question twice. The word limit is already 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.

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 did little to improve standards of presentation and legibility.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates would be well advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved, or at least making sure that a plural is replaced by a plural, for example.

Item (a) saw most candidates identifying *envahissement* for *invasion*, although the inclusion of a redundant *l'* occasionally lost the mark.

Item (b) produced a number of incorrect *chambres*. One suspected that the fact *dangers* appeared several times was because it shares an ending with *foyers*.

Item (c) was generally well handled apart from by a few who pressed *dérégulée* into service, presumably on the basis that it has a feminine agreement.

In **Item (d)**, *étude* was widely recognised.

Item (e) proved the most problematic, with quite a number not recognising it as a verb in the context, sometimes offering *écrans* or *éclairage*. Others who did recognise it as a verb offered *éteindre* or *éveillées*.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual the task proved demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

In **Item 2(a)**, the straightforward transformation into the passive often went well. However, making the past participle agree wasn't usually as smooth.

In **Item 2(b)**, the reverse process of transforming a passive into an active went equally well, although not all found the correct form *comprend*.

In **Item 2(c)** some saw the task as merely altering the order of the words, with little regard for sense: *Les enfants éveillés des écrans sont tenus par la manipulation*, or *Les enfants éveillés sont tenus par la manipulation des écrans*.

Item 2(d) saw some candidates recognising the need for a subjunctive, but relatively few could produce the correct form of *aille*.

Item 2(e) required a number of changes as a result of the change to indirect speech. Many started well but some stumbled at the final hurdle of *leurs*.

Question 3

In **Item 3(a)**, candidates often successfully identified the required ideas of invasion and the emission of blue light / the slowing down of the secretion of melatonin, whilst avoiding the lifting of the nouns *envahissement*, *émission* or *ralentissement*, although *émisser*, *remitter* and *ralentisser* did not work.

Item 3(b) was best handled by those who found the verbs *perturber* and *s'endormir*, although some missed the distinction between *dormir*, *s'endormir*, *se coucher* and *avoir sommeil*. The final mark required the idea of a decrease in performance while avoiding the lifting of *moins nos performances sont bonnes* or 'performer'.

Item 3(c) proved relatively straightforward, with candidates often opting for *Ils grossissent/prennent du poids*; *Ils sont déprimés* (rather than the common *dépressés*); and *Ils ont mal à la tête*.

In **Item 3(d)**, successful candidates found *interrompre* (rather than *interrupter* or *disrupter*) and *stimuler* (rather than *stimuler*). As in similar cases elsewhere, they needed to be careful not to write *stimuler du cerveau* because of *la stimulation du cerveau* in the text.

In **Item 3(e)**, a good number saw the need to use verbs again (as suggested by the use of *Que font* in the question) although some did not make the verbs *concentrer/appliquer/focaliser* reflexive.

In **Item 3(f)** most expressed the required idea of not allowing a computer or television in children's bedrooms. Some were insufficiently precise in stating that smartphones needed to be switched off when they went to bed/at night, rather than simply not having their smartphone present in the bedroom.

Question 4

Item 4(a) was answered correctly by many, although some suggested that the recommendation was to spend two hours every day in front of a screen rather than this being a maximum. *Plusieurs jeunes* was not strong enough to indicate the scale of the problem.

In **Item 4(b)**, by no means all made the distinction between *se réveiller* and *se lever*, but many scored with *Dès/aussitôt qu'ils se réveillent/ouvrent les yeux* or similar. They also successfully explained why the term *addiction* was used and how some people use their phones at the same time as watching the television.

In **Item 4(c)**, the fear of missing a message was often well expressed, as was the idea of *marginalisation* (*ils se sentient isolés/exclus/mis à l'écart/oubliés*). Alternatively, candidates pointed to the need to *rester en contact/communiquer*.

In **Item 4(d)**, the anatomical consequences of a poor posture or of overtaxing the neck muscles did not always appear fully understood and the idea that this would *prévenir la formation du dos* also missed the mark.

In **Item 4(e)**, stronger candidates were able to express the need to teach children how to avoid the harmful consequences – *changer régulièrement de posture, faire des exercices pour fortifier le dos*, etc.

In **Item 4(f)**, there was some confusion over the precise recommendation: *il faut pauser pour vingt minutes*. Others struggled to express the idea of *alternance* in a rewardable form – *alterner, alternativement*.

Question 5

This question asked candidates to summarise the dangers presented by smartphones, etc. and then to suggest reasons why they are nevertheless so popular.

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 candidates often managed a good number. The weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified dangers included the impact on the quality, quantity and timing of sleep, on concentration and performance at school and elsewhere, on physical and mental health and development, and of addiction.

The **Personal Response** elicited a large number of very sound explanations for their popularity: ready contact with friends and family, social networking, messaging, access to the Internet, games, sources of information on any subject under the sun, easily portable. Others went on to suggest that they were status symbols, fashion accessories, etc.

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. The very weakest struggled with the basic nuts and bolts of the language.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) appeared to be problematic in a number of scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements whatsoever.

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups would be time well spent. The same would be true of revising the conjugation of common verbs

That said, the linguistic ability of the stronger candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/32
Essay

Key messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read the questions carefully and take sufficient time to plan their essays before starting to write. They then need to create logical, well-illustrated answers on the question set, beginning with a clear introduction to the topic and ending with a conclusion that does not merely state what went before. In order to attain top marks for language they need to have a good range of complex grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions at their disposal.

General comments

Overall, the majority of candidates managed to communicate ideas on their chosen topics and few candidates fell within the very poor category. Some candidates showed an impressive command of the language and produced mature answers. Candidates clearly engaged with their topics. All except the very weakest candidates made a genuine effort to address the question set and construct an argument using clearly defined paragraphs. Most candidates showed a good understanding of the issues, which they were able to convey with varying degrees of success. Many scripts would have benefited from including a wider range of examples to illustrate points made. The best scripts offered a mature response, with a wide range of pertinent points, using examples both from within their local communities and worldwide. They also showed an extensive knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary.

The candidates' work was generally clearly presented although those who did not plan properly wrote essays that were poorly constructed and often full of alterations, making them very difficult to follow. Ideas were often presented in a muddled way with no clear prioritisation or sense of balance. It is clear that those candidates who define the terms of the question in their own mind and organise the material into some kind of order before writing will be more likely to gain higher marks for content. Many candidates, however, did plan their essays carefully, defining their understanding of the question in their introduction and writing a coherent and convincing argument, arriving at a balanced conclusion. They used a range of structures and idioms and argued their case successfully.

It was clear, however, that some candidates had a poorer command of linguistic structures and appropriate vocabulary and register. Their answers were naively expressed in very simple and often inaccurate language and tended to avoid the question set, concentrating instead on the overall topic heading. In some cases exemplification of points was lacking or insufficient. Candidates who did not read the question properly or who did not fully investigate the terms used, inevitably did less well since their answers contained much irrelevant material. In weaker scripts, introductions too often contained an unnecessary and long definition of the subject to be discussed (e.g. the family or religion), and produced rambling openings that wasted words and gained little, if anything, for the Content mark. Other introductions used spurious and sometimes misattributed quotations of little or no relevance followed by an unnecessary repetition of the title, often with misspellings. Paragraphing was, at times, weak with poor or inappropriate links and no clear development shown. Some candidates wrote their whole essay as one paragraph jumping from one idea to another. Candidates often did not have the skill required to present two sides to an argument without appearing to blatantly contradict themselves. Conclusions were, in many cases, disappointing, being merely a short reiteration of the points made previously in the essay rather than a considered judgement on them.

Weaker scripts showed frequent inconsistencies in the use of basic grammar, in particular the use of adjectival and subject-verb agreements, and there was sometimes interference from mother tongue. Many candidates also had difficulty with prepositions, possessive adjectives and pronouns. Most, however, attempted to use an ambitious variety of structures and topic-specific vocabulary with varying levels of success. Most showed an awareness of register, with few examples of informal language or slang. At the top end, scripts showed an impressive command of the language, in terms of grammatical, syntactical precision

and idiom, as well a confident use of complex structures. Spelling errors, or missed agreements were much in evidence however, even in good scripts. There were also a number of scripts where candidates had made, perhaps, last minute changes, but overlooked how those impacted on the rest of the sentence, in particular on adjectival and subject-verb agreements.

Even some of the strongest essays rarely produce the detailed, well informed and tightly argued response that would score a very high mark for content. Some arguments were riddled with clichés couched in very superficial terms and simple language. Apart from **Question 4**, where exemplification was, in general, both clear and appropriate, answers would have benefited from a wider range of examples, which would enable candidates to access higher marks for content.

Among a number of common errors, these were seen:

Common words spelt wrongly or given wrong gender, e.g., *adolence*, *faire fasse*, *pillier*, *millieu*, *certe*, *malgrés*, *développement*, *government*, *compagne*, *resources*, *reigner*, *example*, *manque*

Missing out words e.g. articles and partitives in lists or enumerations, e.g. *il y a beaucoup d' hôtels, restaurants, services et infrastructure*;
ce qui s'applique à l'enfant, adolescents, jeunes adultes et parents.

Random use of paragraph linking words such as *néanmoins*, *toutefois*, *tandis que*, *cependant*

Y and *en* incorrectly used e.g. *il y en a des gens*

Use of *faire* instead of *rendre*

The omission of *ne* in negative constructions

Frequent incorrect use of preposition after common verbs: *préférer de*, *sembler de*, *dépendre sur*, *aider de*

Anglicisms, e.g. *place* for *endroit*, *balancé* for *équilibré*, *consister de*, *en addition*, *définitivement*, *avertissements*, *individuel* for *individu*, *facilités*, *locaux*, *expériencé*

Lapses of register, e.g. *ça*, *truc*, *boulot*

Inappropriate use of *personnes/gens* (e.g. *certains gens*)

Confusion between: *ses/leurs* parents (mixing singular and plural: l'adolescent a besoin de leurs parents)

Use of *qui* in contexts where *ce qui* was required

Using *cela* followed by a plural verb

Incorrect agreement of past participle e.g. *ils ont toujours faits*

Confusion between/misuse of : *ces/ses*, *les/des*, *bon/bien*, *mauvais/mal*, *c'est que/ceux que*, *ceux qui/ce qui*, *ou/où*, *a/à*, *mieux/meilleur*, *leur/leurs*, *près/prêt*, *comme/comment*

Question 1

This was a very popular question. Most essays could offer a number of reasons as to why teenagers still need their parents. Some mentioned that they are increasingly dependent on their parents financially because of their studies or unemployment; even with part-time jobs, they are unable to support themselves. The high cost of rent was also quoted as an obstacle to living more independently, although a number of candidates were under the impression that young people commonly move out of the family home when they turn sixteen in Europe. Adolescence was frequently described as a difficult stage in life which requires careful guidance from parents to avoid the lure of drugs, petty crime, heavy drinking and unsuitable friends. Some closely linked their answer to the question, comparing the needs of adolescents to the needs of young children. It was generally felt that because teenagers are so vulnerable, they actually need their parents more than young children, since mistakes made at that age can impact considerably on their future life e.g. pregnancy, dependence on drugs or alcohol. Candidates pointed out that adolescents need love, support and discipline just like young children but that they are much more capable and thus do not need to be smothered or controlled. Others mentioned that adolescence brings a whole range of new challenges, physical changes, as well as an emotional and sexual awakening, so parents with their experience of life

were thought best placed to support their teenagers and provide understanding, advice, love as well as a firm hand. The best scripts also considered the importance of giving young people enough freedom and space to make their own mistakes so that they learn to become independent. Over-protective or controlling parents were considered an obstacle to becoming a responsible adult. Whilst some candidates were able to offer a good range of ideas and exemplification, many essays were rather limited in scope and included very general explanations about the importance of parenting, education or the difficulties of puberty, without linking them to the parents' roles. There were, at times, some dubious and even patently untrue generalisations, statistics and quotations.

Recurrent language issues included the use of the construction *avoir besoin de*, and misuse of *supporter* instead of *soutenir* or *subvenir*

Question 2

This question was very popular, across the whole range of ability. The question sometimes led to a discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside, with digressions about the lack of pollution, people growing their own vegetables and a quieter, more pleasant life. This question had the greatest number of answers with irrelevant areas. Answers tended to be fairly basic and often repetitive both in terms of language and ideas. Many limited themselves to stating that there are more crimes in towns and cities, with gangs and drug dealers, whereas people in the countryside have a more caring attitude towards their neighbours. Many candidates noted, though, that drugs were now an increasing problem in the countryside, with dealers taking advantage of lower levels of policing. Some candidates highlighted the lack of employment and opportunities in rural areas, leading to high levels of poverty and, therefore, increasing levels of crimes particularly amongst disaffected youths.

Poor roads and isolation were mentioned as factors increasing risks for rural populations in the case of natural disasters, as rescue teams can have difficulty reaching victims. Wild animals were also mentioned as a threat to local people in the countryside. The best essays included material entirely relevant to the notion of security: financial, job, crime, personal protection, health and police. In these essays, these areas were closely linked to outcomes for personal security and that of society. There was mention of security cameras, policing levels, infrastructure, neighbourly spirit. Weaker candidates produced answers that were narrow in scope and often used the same material twice e.g. towns have busy roads, high volumes of traffic and accidents, the countryside has quiet roads, no traffic and few accidents. In many cases essays merely compared life in the town and the country with faint regard for the security issue.

Some candidates concluded that countryside and cities are equally safe or unsafe, and pointed out that the levels of perceived safety are shifting due to the *exode rural* that is now followed by an *exode urbain*. More discerning candidates suggested that safety is not entirely an external given factor but also a question of individual personal behaviours and choices.

A recurrent language issue was the use of *facilités/aménités* for facilities and the use of *drogeurs* for drug addicts.

Question 3

This was not a very popular question. There were some excellent essays containing material on religious versus human values, fundamentalism and other contemporary issues, some lengthy discussion on perceptions of Islam in the modern world, the literal or metaphorical interpretation of classic religious material, including the Ten Commandments, the recent scandals involving Catholic priests, and the contentious issues of contraception, homosexuality and child marriage. Some candidates chose examples where those religious values that the major world religions have in common, were put into action. These were acts of charity and love or peace-keeping either on a personal level, within groups such as churches or charities or on a national and international level through NGOs. More critical approaches mentioned the failings and shortcomings of religion in more general terms and included conflicts and wars, slavery, racism and gender inequalities and terrorism. Candidates often mentioned that religion has become less influential, with the younger generations in particular, and blamed the rise of individualism, the cult of celebrities and money as the reasons for the loss of religious values in society. They often described the positive values that religion can bring to individuals and society including kindness, helping others, forgiveness and they felt that a return to religious values would be a good way to alleviate problems within families and society. Weaker answers to this question were often vague and repetitive, introduced by a definition of religion, which was rarely succinct or successful. Better answers showed a mature approach and described the historical context

as well as the present situation in the world discussing new forms of religion such as nationalism and individualism and their impact.

A recurrent language issue was the confusion between the conditional and future tense.

Question 4

This was a popular question and candidates could draw extensively on their own experience. It produced detailed, well-informed answers which showed that candidates had a thorough knowledge of the issues related to mass tourism in their own countries and were able to look at both sides of the argument. A wide range of ideas were offered both in terms of the benefits and ills of mass tourism. Introductions included definitions of different types of tourism, key statistics and examples illustrating the rapid growth of mass tourism. In general, a good balance of advantages and disadvantages of mass tourism was presented. The advantages of the boost to the local economy, jobs, infrastructure, cultural exchange were well explained, as were the disadvantages of pollution, overcrowding, stretching of the resources, and loss of cultural identity. Also mentioned were lack of respect for ancestral values, globalisation, increase in crime, exploitation, sexual tourism, and inequalities felt by the local population. These essays were often well structured and successful in terms of exemplification. Many quoted France as the top tourist destination, mentioned world famous sites such as Machu Pichu, the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat and included statistics from the *Organisation Mondiale du Tourisme*. Many also mentioned the environmental impact of mass tourism including deforestation, the loss of flora and fauna due to the building of roads and hotels, damage to coral reefs, excessive use of water in hotels at the expense of local people. Candidates generally displayed a pleasing knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary. The best scripts considered the role ecotourism can play in encouraging a more responsible form of tourism and in educating visitors to minimise their impact on host countries.

A recurrent language issue was the use of *les locaux* for *les autochtones* and the use of propositions with countries or islands.

Question 5

Few candidates attempted this question. The best essays defined what they understood by the term *patrimoine culturel* and included material on the constantly evolving nature of cultural heritage, from the Pyramids to modern skyscrapers, or from ancient scripts to modern text-speak. These were presented against the background of identity, a concept which was seen as much more complex and personal than heritage. Some observed that local cultures were being continually eroded, if not now swamped, by contemporary internationalism. Candidates also mentioned the need to preserve historic monuments as well as local language, customs, religion, dress and food. They made it clear, though, that we must not remain anchored in the past and that identity depends on a continuum of history, experience and development both personal and in society.

FRENCH

<p>Paper 9716/33 Essay</p>
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Key messages

In order to perform well on this paper, candidates need to choose an essay title about which they can write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherent. The aim should be to use accurate and idiomatic French which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary. Candidates should plan essays carefully using the introduction to show their understanding of the essay title with all its elements and the conclusion to show their considered final judgement of the issues they have discussed. Paragraphing is also important to show clarity of thought and logical progression through an argument.

General comments

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. It was clear that most candidates understood the rubric for the paper and essays were generally of the correct length, although a small number were very short. Focus on the question set was, however, sometimes poor and the arguments superficial. Most of the candidates wrote a plan but it was often short and sketchy, written in English and very basic in content. Those who did not plan wrote essays that were poorly constructed and often full of alterations, making them very difficult to follow. Ideas were often presented in a muddled way with no clear prioritisation or sense of balance. Candidates often appeared to contradict themselves as they drifted from one point of view to another. It is clear that those candidates who define the terms of the question in their own mind and organise the material into some kind of order before writing will be more likely to gain higher marks for content.

It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general topic area. Essays on the overarching topic area (e.g. *la famille*) will always score poorly on content as much of the material used by candidates will be irrelevant to the precise question. Many candidates' first paragraphs often contained formulaic definitions of the words in the topic heading. These had clearly been learned by heart and added little to the essay as they were not specifically related to the question and served only to waste valuable words. In these instances, there was often a discrepancy between the standard of language in the opening paragraph and the rest of the essay. Quotations were frequently used in introductions but often failed to elucidate the argument. Conclusions often disappointed as they merely restated points made previously without further comment or opinion.

In terms of language, inaccurate use of idiom and a large amount of interference of mother tongue were common, along with examples of phonetic spelling. Pre-learned phrases were often in evidence and served only to highlight the deficiencies in the candidates' own writing. There were some cases where candidates demonstrated so little grammatical, structural or idiomatic awareness that essays were rendered almost incomprehensible. More successful candidates used a range of grammatical structures and topic-specific vocabulary, were not over-ambitious and managed to express their ideas in accurate and succinct language. They wrote logical, clear and coherent arguments focusing tightly on the question set.

Examples of good use of language include:

Appropriate use of words and phrases to link paragraphs and ideas such as *grâce à, pourtant, cependant, de même, puisque, en revanche, en outre, ensuite, en fin de compte, non seulement... mais aussi.*

Range of structures including correct forms of the subjunctive.

Use of a range of verbs and verb forms.

Use of idioms such as *il s'agit de, il convient de, en d'autres mots, étant donné que, tel que*

Range of topic appropriate vocabulary demonstrating that candidates have read a range of media on subjects as diverse as life in the town and country, philosophy and belief, tourism and cultural heritage.

Use of a range of verbs such as *pour encourager, reposer sur, promouvoir, justifier, mener à, ne cesser de*.

Correct use of idioms such as *nul ne saurait nier que, il est généralement admis que, il s'agit de, tel que, il convient de, en d'autres mots, on dirait que, en ce qui concerne*

Common errors:

Incorrect genders/spellings (sometimes even when the word is in the title): *ceux, beaucoup, responsable, tendance, manque, travail, monde, gouvernement, environnement, exemple, développement, aspect*

Incorrect use of *en* and *dont* e.g. *il y en a des gens*.

Use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de* and *car* for *pour*.

Overuse of the word *chose/choses* and *cela/ça*. Use of *personnes* for *gens*.

Inconsistency of pronouns (*les personnes* followed by *il/ils, son* etc).

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Frequent use of *beaucoup des* with plural noun.

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

The omission of *ne* in negative constructions.

Frequent incorrect use of prepositions after common verbs: *préférer de, sembler de, dépendre sur, aider de*.

Use of the wrong preposition after common verbs followed by an infinitive structure, e.g. *aider de, préférer de*.

Examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences. Accents used randomly where not appropriate.

Anglicisms, e.g. *place* for *endroit, balancé* for *équilibré, consister de, en addition, définitivement, avertissements, individuel* for *individu, facilités, locaux, expérimenté, capacité*.

Incorrect use of present participle.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular question and candidates had strong views about what constituted successful family life. Many started their essay with a detailed description of the different types of family including nuclear, traditional, single parent, same sex parents, adoptive. They then went on to explain what in their view made for success within the family group. It was clear that whatever the type of family, the most important thing was that there as love, peace and harmony in the home with all members of the family showing each other respect. Candidates pointed out the benefits of good parenting which might include some serious discipline at some stages of a child's life. They considered it important for a family to spend time together, to speak freely about issues affecting members and to provide support in times of trouble. Candidates often quoted examples of where a poor start in life because of a dysfunctional family could have far-reaching effects on a person's life. This question was, on the whole, well answered with candidates having plenty of examples to back up their arguments.

Question 2

Some candidates answering this question rather missed the point that the requirement was to discuss how to improve life for those living in cities. Many explained all the benefits of city life compared to that in the country such as public transport, night life, restaurants, cinemas, health services. They felt that the city was an Eldorado to which everyone flocked and that life there was wonderful. More thoughtful candidates realised that, in fact, life in the city can also be hard. It is there that the rate of crime is highest, it is where people struggle to make a living and to afford housing. They also mentioned the levels of pollution of all kinds, particularly air pollution caused by the number of vehicles on the roads, which also contributes to the number of accidents in cities. It was felt that governments, both local and national, needed to do more to provide a safe environment for city dwellers. Some candidates wrote about initiatives such as the creation of green spaces, concerted efforts to promote public transport, schemes to provide support for the poor and homeless and provision of extra police to control crime levels. Those who took on the question in this way were awarded higher marks for content.

Question 3

Not many candidates answered this question but those who did wrote convincingly on the subject. They felt that people should have a philosophy of life which would provide them with a sensible and constructive path to follow. They were clear that there are many different ways to live one's life and that people will have different internal beliefs and codes of conduct. These begin early in life and it was pointed out that the family was the place where these beliefs would be inculcated. Some candidates disagreed that everyone has a philosophy of life. They felt that some people just live their lives day to day with no deep thoughts or a consistent attitude. Some felt that religion provided the philosophy for many people giving them a set of beliefs to live by and to support them. Others felt that there could be such a thing as a bad philosophy of life where people believe only in themselves and do not concern themselves with others – these people become criminals, dictators, oligarchs. The answers were interesting in their variety and candidates generally handled the question very well.

Question 4

Candidates generally agreed that travelling abroad for holidays was a stressful experience. They felt that preparation for holidays was already stressful enough and that going to another country made it still more so. They pointed out various reasons why a traveller might be concerned about being abroad. These included a different language, currency, and customs. It could be very disconcerting to be unable to ask directions, find a toilet or just speak to local people and the food could be quite challenging depending on the country visited. Many candidates said that they would feel happier holidaying in their own country where everything was familiar and they could really relax. Others felt that travel was essential to broaden the horizons and that stress was part of the experience. A small number did not share the view that travelling overseas would be stressful – they saw it rather as exciting and stimulating and pointed out the opportunities to meet new people and try out new things.

Question 5

Few candidates attempted this question. They wrote about initiatives within their own countries for supporting the maintenance of historic monuments but felt that it was more important to spend money on people rather than things. They spoke of poverty, the environmental effects of climate change, war and famine as being issues which governments should spend their money on. They felt that some aspects of heritage were important such as emblematic buildings such as the Pyramids and the Eiffel Tower. Other aspects of heritage worthy of retention included local customs, dance, music, food and language. These were more likely to be retained by local people and less likely to require large sums of government money that could be spent elsewhere on supporting issues in the world of today.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/42
Texts

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on three separate texts.
- Consider carefully which texts to prepare with their classes: some texts present conceptual problems that are challenging for some candidates.
- Be aware that some candidates do better answering the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1**, which provide a ready-made framework for their answers.

Teachers should train their candidates 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 to the question regularly.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**.
- Remember that it is not necessary to write out the text of the question on the answer paper.
- Avoid referring to the author's background, his/her other works and the audience that he/she is addressing, unless this is specifically asked for by the question.
- Commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with a short 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. Stronger responses were able to deal with the detail required by the questions, while at the same time demonstrating good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text as a whole.

Some candidates still attempt to answer the passage-based questions by quoting often lengthy parts of the extract text, but then fail to explain what the quotation illustrates. Quotations should be employed selectively, and candidates must provide their own interpretations.

The essay questions were generally well structured. Candidates should not waste time by describing the background to the work and its author. Narration irrelevant to the question should be avoided – remember that the Examiner has also read the text – but candidates should aim to demonstrate their knowledge of the work while remaining focused on answering the question.

If the question asks for a personal opinion, candidates should give one, but the opinion should be kept short and precise and should be justified by what appears in the text, not by the candidate's personal predilections. The best opinions are those which view the argument from both sides.

Most candidates now recognise the importance of writing a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how the question is to be addressed, and also a conclusion to summarise the principle findings of the essay.

As always, the better responses were those which were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although these should later be crossed out to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – Molière: *Le Malade imaginaire*

A question on the Molière text was attempted by many candidates. On this occasion, **Question (a)** was about twice as popular as **Question (b)**.

- (a) The question was generally very well answered. Most candidates were able to explain succinctly the context of the extract, although, on some occasions, too much unnecessary background detail was provided.
- (i) Almost all candidates identified that Argan's shock stemmed from his belief that he had killed his daughter, having threatened to whip her in his attempt to prise information from her. (Note that Argan did not in fact beat his daughter, as many candidates suggested). Louison's reluctance to betray her elder sister's trust was well explained, as was the fact that Béline had alerted her husband that a man had been seen in Angélique's chamber. Some candidates remarked, rather astutely, that Argan does not really believe that he has killed Louison: his expressions of grief may well be part of the game that he is playing with his young daughter.
- (ii) It was important to mention by name the characters Angélique, Cléante and Béline in answering this part of the question, since they are not named in the extract. Most candidates explained the background to the scene well and summarised what Louison had seen in her sister's room. Better responses identified that Angélique's distress at finding Cléante in her room was caused by her father's threat to send her to a convent if she failed to agree to marry Thomas Diafoirus. Unfortunately, rather too many candidates quoted Angélique's words ("Sortez, sortez..." etc.), but failed to explain why she was distressed.
- (iii) Almost all responses highlighted the mutual affection that exists between Argan and his young daughter. Some candidates rightly highlighted the stress that Louison is under, not daring to disobey her father and not wanting to betray her big sister. Only a few candidates mentioned the playful nature of this scene or the light-hearted side of Argan's character ("...voilà un petit doigt..."), something that is rarely seen in the play.
- (b) The essay question was also generally well dealt with, although a small number of candidates appeared to have misinterpreted 'domestiques' to mean anyone belonging to or connected with the household and, accordingly, included other family members and Argan's doctors in their responses. Toinette's relationships with Argan, Angélique and Béline were all well covered. Better responses also examined Toinette's relationships with Béralde and Cléante. Unfortunately, a handful of candidates lost direction early on and wrote detailed descriptions of the main characters without describing their relationship with Toinette. Such questions allow candidates to show what they know, but it is important to work to a plan to ensure that each point made is relevant to the title.

Question 2 – Émile Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*

Questions on the Zola work were attempted by about one third of candidates, with **Question 2(a)** being significantly more popular.

- (a) (i) The question was efficiently dealt with. It was important to answer the question 'Est-ce vrai que...' and most candidates rightly concluded that Thérèse had never hurt anyone before meeting Laurent, though some went on to describe her part in Camille's murder, which was not what the

question was looking for. There were some very good descriptions of Thérèse's early life and the fact that, although she had learned to curb her natural instincts, she nevertheless harboured real resentment against the sickly Camille.

- (ii) **Part (ii)** was less successfully answered. Although many candidates were able to describe and give reasons for the atmosphere of hatred and fear, and the threat of violence portrayed in the extract, many focused on what they saw as an air of gloom and depression.
- (iii) In her attempt to exonerate herself from responsibility for the murder, Thérèse claims that Laurent is tormented far more than she is by the spectre of Camille. Although Laurent's portrait of Camille had sparked his nightmares, the truth is that both he and Thérèse are equally haunted by Camille since they had each played a role in his death. They are both tormented by guilt and unable to sleep.
- (b) **Question 2(b)** was attempted by only a handful of candidates and not all were able to do full justice to the small, but significant roles that Suzanne, Olivier and Michaud play in the novel. It is Michaud, the former Commissioner of Police, who plants in the lovers' minds the idea that murders can go unsolved. Immediately after the murder of Camille, Laurent reports his embroidered version of 'the boating accident' to Michaud and Olivier and thus uses them to corroborate his tale. Few candidates got further than this in their responses, suggesting a lack of thorough knowledge of the text. It is Michaud and Olivier, along with Suzanne, who break the tragic news to Mme Raquin. The presence of Olivier, chief clerk at the *préfecture de police*, at the riverside restaurant renders the police investigation a mere formality. The Thursday evening domino games, which Michaud, Olivier and Suzanne attend, once a torment for Thérèse, come to represent a source of release for the lovers, the sole opportunity that they have to be together without having to face the horror of Camille. Thérèse comes to pity and befriend Suzanne, whom she sees as the embodiment of a woman who can live with a detestable man without resorting to murder. In a final irony, Michaud (and his friend, Grivet) misinterpret Mme Raquin's desperate attempt to reveal the lovers' guilt (by writing on the table top) as an expression of her love and gratitude.

Question 3 – Jean Anouilh: *L'Alouette*

About a fifth of candidates addressed **Question 3(a)**. **3(b)** was significantly less popular.

- (a) (i) Jeanne's meeting with Charles was well described: most candidates identified the Dauphin's initial reluctance to see the young girl, the game he plays by placing a royal page on the throne, the 'trick' that Jeanne teaches Charles to give him courage and the new-found self-confidence that Charles demonstrates by standing up to the Archbishop and La Tremouille and giving control of the army to Jeanne.
- (ii) Jeanne's response is fairly nuanced and many candidates had difficulties deciding whether Jeanne believes in miracles or not. In essence, she does accept the existence of miracles ("Si, Messire.") – they are, after all, mentioned in the Bible, in which she has implicit faith – but she believes that God uses his miracles sparingly and that true miracles do not have to resemble the tricks of fairground hucksters.
- (iii) Some candidates attempted a blanket answer, explaining how the Church had treated Jeanne unfairly, fearing that its authority was threatened by the young girl who claimed to hear the voices of the angels. Better responses to this question dealt with the specific attitudes of each of the Church's representatives in turn: the Promoter sees Jeanne as a representative of the devil and wants to see her condemned; Père Ladvenu believes in Jeanne's innocence and wants to save her from the stake; the Inquisitor believes that Jeanne is motivated by pride and demands her excommunication and death; Bishop Cauchon treats Jeanne more humanely: as chairman of the tribunal, he is motivated by the need to treat Jeanne justly; he wants her to confess so that she might be welcomed back into the Church. Warwick is not a representative of the Church, though he was included in many responses.
- (b) There were relatively few successful attempts to address **Question 3 (b)** which was dependent upon an ability to interpret the adjective 'politique'. There were many angles from which this question could have been addressed, including:
- The role of the Church and its control over the state and the people.

- The recovery of France from English domination at the end of the Hundred Years' War and the resulting rise in military confidence and national pride.
- The political nature of Jeanne's trial: the English want Jeanne out of the way and having her condemned as a heretic is the best way of undermining her popularity.
- The relevance of the play in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when France was recovering from another threat to her national identity.

Some responses were not well planned and focused almost exclusively on the themes of feminism and the threat that Jeanne posed to the Church's authority.

Question 4 – Jean Anouilh: *La Cantatrice chauve*

Few candidates chose to address **Questions 4(a) and 4(b)**.

- (a) (i) Not many candidates were able summarise the anecdotes told by the Fire Chief, M. and Mme Smith.
- (ii) Candidates correctly identified that Mary had thrown her arms around the Fire Chief's neck because she recognised him as her former lover. Interpretations of what the others thought about Mary's actions were less clear. The Smiths and Mme Martin are offended by Mary's actions. They believe that she is acting above her status and that she is not sufficiently 'educated' to intervene in their social gathering. Mme Smith sees the actions of her maid as being rather loud and inappropriate. By contrast, M. Martin believes that the maid's actions are honourable (and therefore acceptable). The Fire Chief believes that the Smiths are too prejudiced in their views.
- (iii) This part was fairly well answered: the British are made to appear rather ridiculous. They are depicted as class-conscious, prejudiced snobs and prudes (though the author is parodying middle class values in general, not necessarily only those of the British!)
- (b) In general, candidates had some difficulty in getting to grips with this question. Answers were often inadequately planned, brief and lacking in detail. What was required was an analysis of the absurdity of the comments of M. and Mme Smith in relation to the role that the Fire Chief plays. The Fire Chief arrives looking for a fire to extinguish and is persuaded to stay and tell anecdotes. However, his stories make little sense and are told with scant enthusiasm. The Smiths and the Martins are not remotely amused by his tales; their responses are formulaic and show their indifference and lack of understanding ("C'est intéressant...C'est pas mal"). The Martins' parting comment to the Fire Chief is that their quarter-of-an-hour together has been 'cartésien' – rational, logical perhaps, but certainly not entertaining. The remarks of M. and Mme Smith perhaps underline the overall message of the play: that language cannot be relied upon to convey any proper meaning.

Section 2

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

About a third of candidates attempted **Question 5**, with responses equally divided between **5(a)** and **5(b)**.

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe the background to frère Théodule's role and dealt with maturity with the difficult themes that the author represents in her novel. Although most candidates identified the murderer and the utter villain in Frère Théodule, few went on to identify the implied criticism of the Catholic church.
- (b) This question was dealt with competently, most responses focussing on the differences of opinion between Grandmère Antoinette, who is a strong supporter of education for her grandchildren, and the illiterate father, who cannot see the point of sending his children to school. The better responses also described Jean Le Maigre's educational experiences, the joy that he discovers in writing and the feeling of superiority that his education gives him.

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

Question 6 was also attempted by a third of candidates. Once again, responses were equally divided between **6(a)** and **6(b)**.

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer a satisfactory portrait of Ouma, identifying her Manaf background, the influence of her European education, her close ties to the wild nature of Rodrigues and the role that she plays as a guide for Alexis, mirroring the role that Denis had played previously. The physical relationship that develops between Ouma and Alexis was also mentioned, as were the differences in class and race that exist between the two. Relatively few responses went on to point out that Ouma represents the antithesis to Alexis' desire for treasure: her carefree attitude and lack of concern for material wealth eventually bring Alexis to understand the folly of his search. Her final departure causes Alexis to realise that the treasure that he has sought for so long has been in his possession all the time: the love of life and nature.
- (b) This question was less well answered. Many candidates chose to discuss in rather general terms Alexis' love for nature, as represented by the flora and fauna of his childhood on Boucan Bay. Some responses covered the importance of the sea for Alexis, both as a source of comfort, and as a beacon of hope and adventure. However, too many responses ignored the emphasis of the question: the lives of Alexis and his family are radically affected by nature. The cyclone that ravages the island and destroys his father's generator results in the family's impoverishment and their move to Forest Side. In an attempt to recover what has been lost, Alexis leaves to search for treasure. The stars seem to offer him hope, but nature, in the form of the rugged landscape of Rodrigues, almost kills him. The storm on Rodrigues, which wrecks the Zeta and kills Captain Bradmer and his crew, and the shooting stars which appear after Mam's death, signify the final dénouement for Alexis. As he looks out over the sea near Boucan Bay, the only thing he has left is the sound of the sea.

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

Almost 40% of candidates attempted **Question 7(a)**. **7 (b)** was attempted by a small handful of candidates.

- (a) There were some excellent responses to this question. Most candidates decided that the title was indeed appropriate for a novel that deals with unfulfilled relationships and the inability to communicate, and illustrated their responses with very competent analyses of the 'déserts' that exist between the main characters. Maria came in for some harsh criticism, which is not altogether supported by the text.
- (b) Responses to this question were less satisfactory. Many candidates chose merely to narrate the story. Better responses identified that the lack of affection that Raymond experienced as a child had led directly to his misinterpretation of Maria's feelings for him. His humiliating rejection by Maria sends Raymond on a downward spiral, leading to his lifelong desire for revenge and his unsatisfactory relationships with a string of different women. Very few candidates mentioned that Raymond is humiliated by Maria once again towards the end of the novel, but that, by this time, his desire for revenge has almost entirely dissipated.

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

Question 8 (a) was attempted by few candidates, while a little under 15% attempted **8(b)**.

- (a) Langelet is an aesthete who has no regard for the suffering of those around him. Indeed, people have no value for him when set against his beloved porcelain. A similar lack of humanity is shown by Mme Péricand, Gabriel Corte, M. Corbin and, to some extent, by Arlette Corail, each of whom is driven by their own personal needs and priorities. The only characters to be portrayed in a kindly light are the poor and downtrodden – such as the Michauds, who share the suffering of their fellow refugees.
- (b) Better answers to this question were those that were carefully planned, since a comprehensive answer was dependent on addressing each of the novel's characters in turn. Unfortunately, some candidates didn't leave adequate time to plan their responses properly. A small minority of candidates recounted the storyline of *Dolce*, the second instalment in Némirovsky's *Suite Française*.

In essence, the rich and influential characters respond to the difficulties that they encounter by using their wealth and influence to avoid hardship: Mme Péricand, for example, abandons her Christian principles and stops her children distributing sweets when she realises that hunger might threaten the lives of her own family; she has no compunction about commandeering a cart to take her and her family to a railway station and back in Paris she is happy to avoid the food queues by brandishing her priority ration card. Similarly selfish responses to hardship come from M. Corbin, Charles Langelet and Gabriel Corte. Not even Philippe Péricand escapes the author's criticism; although he claims to want to bring God's grace to his young protégés, his natural reaction is to despise them. Like Langelet, he meets a suitably violent end. By contrast, the ordinary people react to the hardships that they face with dignity and caring for their fellow sufferers. The only exceptions to this rather black and white approach are Hubert Péricand and Jean-Marie Michaud, who are admired for their patriotic fervour, and Arlette Corail, who always seems to land on her feet without doing harm to others.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/43
Texts

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on three separate texts.
- Consider carefully which texts to prepare with their classes: some texts present conceptual problems that are challenging for some candidates.
- Be aware that some candidates do better answering the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1**, which provide a ready-made framework for their answers.

Teachers should train their candidates 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 to the question regularly.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**.
- Remember that it is not necessary to write out the text of the question on the answer paper.
- Avoid referring to the author's background, his/her other works and the audience that he/she is addressing, unless this is specifically asked for by the question.
- Commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with a short 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. Stronger responses were able to deal with the detail required by the questions, while at the same time demonstrating good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text as a whole.

Some candidates still attempt to answer the passage-based questions by quoting often lengthy parts of the extract text, but then fail to explain what the quotation illustrates. Quotations should be employed selectively, and candidates must provide their own interpretations.

The essay questions were generally well structured. Candidates should not waste time by describing the background to the work and its author. Narration irrelevant to the question should be avoided – remember that the Examiner has also read the text – but candidates should aim to demonstrate their knowledge of the work while remaining focused on answering the question.

If the question asks for a personal opinion, candidates should give one, but the opinion should be kept short and precise and should be justified by what appears in the text, not by the candidate's personal predilections. The best opinions are those which view the argument from both sides.

Most candidates now recognise the importance of writing a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how the question is to be addressed, and also a conclusion to summarise the principle findings of the essay.

As always, the better responses were those which were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although these should later be crossed out to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – Molière: *Le Malade imaginaire*

A question on the Molière text was attempted by many candidates. On this occasion, **Question (a)** was about twice as popular as **Question (b)**.

- (a) The question was generally very well answered. Most candidates were able to explain succinctly the context of the extract, although, on some occasions, too much unnecessary background detail was provided.
- (i) Almost all candidates identified that Argan's shock stemmed from his belief that he had killed his daughter, having threatened to whip her in his attempt to prise information from her. (Note that Argan did not in fact beat his daughter, as many candidates suggested). Louison's reluctance to betray her elder sister's trust was well explained, as was the fact that Béline had alerted her husband that a man had been seen in Angélique's chamber. Some candidates remarked, rather astutely, that Argan does not really believe that he has killed Louison: his expressions of grief may well be part of the game that he is playing with his young daughter.
- (ii) It was important to mention by name the characters Angélique, Cléante and Béline in answering this part of the question, since they are not named in the extract. Most candidates explained the background to the scene well and summarised what Louison had seen in her sister's room. Better responses identified that Angélique's distress at finding Cléante in her room was caused by her father's threat to send her to a convent if she failed to agree to marry Thomas Diafoirus. Unfortunately, rather too many candidates quoted Angélique's words ("Sortez, sortez..." etc.), but failed to explain why she was distressed.
- (iii) Almost all responses highlighted the mutual affection that exists between Argan and his young daughter. Some candidates rightly highlighted the stress that Louison is under, not daring to disobey her father and not wanting to betray her big sister. Only a few candidates mentioned the playful nature of this scene or the light-hearted side of Argan's character ("...voilà un petit doigt..."), something that is rarely seen in the play.
- (b) The essay question was also generally well dealt with, although a small number of candidates appeared to have misinterpreted 'domestiques' to mean anyone belonging to or connected with the household and, accordingly, included other family members and Argan's doctors in their responses. Toinette's relationships with Argan, Angélique and Béline were all well covered. Better responses also examined Toinette's relationships with Béralde and Cléante. Unfortunately, a handful of candidates lost direction early on and wrote detailed descriptions of the main characters without describing their relationship with Toinette. Such questions allow candidates to show what they know, but it is important to work to a plan to ensure that each point made is relevant to the title.

Question 2 – Émile Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*

Questions on the Zola work were attempted by about one third of candidates, with **Question 2(a)** being significantly more popular.

- (a) (i) The question was efficiently dealt with. It was important to answer the question 'Est-ce vrai que...' and most candidates rightly concluded that Thérèse had never hurt anyone before meeting Laurent, though some went on to describe her part in Camille's murder, which was not what the

question was looking for. There were some very good descriptions of Thérèse's early life and the fact that, although she had learned to curb her natural instincts, she nevertheless harboured real resentment against the sickly Camille.

- (ii) **Part (ii)** was less successfully answered. Although many candidates were able to describe and give reasons for the atmosphere of hatred and fear, and the threat of violence portrayed in the extract, many focused on what they saw as an air of gloom and depression.
- (iii) In her attempt to exonerate herself from responsibility for the murder, Thérèse claims that Laurent is tormented far more than she is by the spectre of Camille. Although Laurent's portrait of Camille had sparked his nightmares, the truth is that both he and Thérèse are equally haunted by Camille since they had each played a role in his death. They are both tormented by guilt and unable to sleep.
- (b) **Question 2(b)** was attempted by only a handful of candidates and not all were able to do full justice to the small, but significant roles that Suzanne, Olivier and Michaud play in the novel. It is Michaud, the former Commissioner of Police, who plants in the lovers' minds the idea that murders can go unsolved. Immediately after the murder of Camille, Laurent reports his embroidered version of 'the boating accident' to Michaud and Olivier and thus uses them to corroborate his tale. Few candidates got further than this in their responses, suggesting a lack of thorough knowledge of the text. It is Michaud and Olivier, along with Suzanne, who break the tragic news to Mme Raquin. The presence of Olivier, chief clerk at the *préfecture de police*, at the riverside restaurant renders the police investigation a mere formality. The Thursday evening domino games, which Michaud, Olivier and Suzanne attend, once a torment for Thérèse, come to represent a source of release for the lovers, the sole opportunity that they have to be together without having to face the horror of Camille. Thérèse comes to pity and befriend Suzanne, whom she sees as the embodiment of a woman who can live with a detestable man without resorting to murder. In a final irony, Michaud (and his friend, Grivet) misinterpret Mme Raquin's desperate attempt to reveal the lovers' guilt (by writing on the table top) as an expression of her love and gratitude.

Question 3 – Jean Anouilh: *L'Alouette*

About a fifth of candidates addressed **Question 3(a)**. **3(b)** was significantly less popular.

- (a) (i) Jeanne's meeting with Charles was well described: most candidates identified the Dauphin's initial reluctance to see the young girl, the game he plays by placing a royal page on the throne, the 'trick' that Jeanne teaches Charles to give him courage and the new-found self-confidence that Charles demonstrates by standing up to the Archbishop and La Tremouille and giving control of the army to Jeanne.
- (ii) Jeanne's response is fairly nuanced and many candidates had difficulties deciding whether Jeanne believes in miracles or not. In essence, she does accept the existence of miracles ("Si, Messire.") – they are, after all, mentioned in the Bible, in which she has implicit faith – but she believes that God uses his miracles sparingly and that true miracles do not have to resemble the tricks of fairground hucksters.
- (iii) Some candidates attempted a blanket answer, explaining how the Church had treated Jeanne unfairly, fearing that its authority was threatened by the young girl who claimed to hear the voices of the angels. Better responses to this question dealt with the specific attitudes of each of the Church's representatives in turn: the Promoter sees Jeanne as a representative of the devil and wants to see her condemned; Père Ladvenu believes in Jeanne's innocence and wants to save her from the stake; the Inquisitor believes that Jeanne is motivated by pride and demands her excommunication and death; Bishop Cauchon treats Jeanne more humanely: as chairman of the tribunal, he is motivated by the need to treat Jeanne justly; he wants her to confess so that she might be welcomed back into the Church. Warwick is not a representative of the Church, though he was included in many responses.
- (b) There were relatively few successful attempts to address **Question 3 (b)** which was dependent upon an ability to interpret the adjective 'politique'. There were many angles from which this question could have been addressed, including:
- The role of the Church and its control over the state and the people.

- The recovery of France from English domination at the end of the Hundred Years' War and the resulting rise in military confidence and national pride.
- The political nature of Jeanne's trial: the English want Jeanne out of the way and having her condemned as a heretic is the best way of undermining her popularity.
- The relevance of the play in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when France was recovering from another threat to her national identity.

Some responses were not well planned and focused almost exclusively on the themes of feminism and the threat that Jeanne posed to the Church's authority.

Question 4 – Jean Anouilh: *La Cantatrice chauve*

Few candidates chose to address **Questions 4(a) and 4(b)**.

- (a) (i) Not many candidates were able summarise the anecdotes told by the Fire Chief, M. and Mme Smith.
- (ii) Candidates correctly identified that Mary had thrown her arms around the Fire Chief's neck because she recognised him as her former lover. Interpretations of what the others thought about Mary's actions were less clear. The Smiths and Mme Martin are offended by Mary's actions. They believe that she is acting above her status and that she is not sufficiently 'educated' to intervene in their social gathering. Mme Smith sees the actions of her maid as being rather loud and inappropriate. By contrast, M. Martin believes that the maid's actions are honourable (and therefore acceptable). The Fire Chief believes that the Smiths are too prejudiced in their views.
- (iii) This part was fairly well answered: the British are made to appear rather ridiculous. They are depicted as class-conscious, prejudiced snobs and prudes (though the author is parodying middle class values in general, not necessarily only those of the British!)
- (b) In general, candidates had some difficulty in getting to grips with this question. Answers were often inadequately planned, brief and lacking in detail. What was required was an analysis of the absurdity of the comments of M. and Mme Smith in relation to the role that the Fire Chief plays. The Fire Chief arrives looking for a fire to extinguish and is persuaded to stay and tell anecdotes. However, his stories make little sense and are told with scant enthusiasm. The Smiths and the Martins are not remotely amused by his tales; their responses are formulaic and show their indifference and lack of understanding ("C'est intéressant...C'est pas mal"). The Martins' parting comment to the Fire Chief is that their quarter-of-an-hour together has been 'cartésien' – rational, logical perhaps, but certainly not entertaining. The remarks of M. and Mme Smith perhaps underline the overall message of the play: that language cannot be relied upon to convey any proper meaning.

Section 2

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

About a third of candidates attempted **Question 5**, with responses equally divided between **5(a)** and **5(b)**.

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe the background to frère Théodule's role and dealt with maturity with the difficult themes that the author represents in her novel. Although most candidates identified the murderer and the utter villain in Frère Théodule, few went on to identify the implied criticism of the Catholic church.
- (b) This question was dealt with competently, most responses focussing on the differences of opinion between Grandmère Antoinette, who is a strong supporter of education for her grandchildren, and the illiterate father, who cannot see the point of sending his children to school. The better responses also described Jean Le Maigre's educational experiences, the joy that he discovers in writing and the feeling of superiority that his education gives him.

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

Question 6 was also attempted by a third of candidates. Once again, responses were equally divided between **6(a)** and **6(b)**.

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer a satisfactory portrait of Ouma, identifying her Manaf background, the influence of her European education, her close ties to the wild nature of Rodrigues and the role that she plays as a guide for Alexis, mirroring the role that Denis had played previously. The physical relationship that develops between Ouma and Alexis was also mentioned, as were the differences in class and race that exist between the two. Relatively few responses went on to point out that Ouma represents the antithesis to Alexis' desire for treasure: her carefree attitude and lack of concern for material wealth eventually bring Alexis to understand the folly of his search. Her final departure causes Alexis to realise that the treasure that he has sought for so long has been in his possession all the time: the love of life and nature.
- (b) This question was less well answered. Many candidates chose to discuss in rather general terms Alexis' love for nature, as represented by the flora and fauna of his childhood on Boucan Bay. Some responses covered the importance of the sea for Alexis, both as a source of comfort, and as a beacon of hope and adventure. However, too many responses ignored the emphasis of the question: the lives of Alexis and his family are radically affected by nature. The cyclone that ravages the island and destroys his father's generator results in the family's impoverishment and their move to Forest Side. In an attempt to recover what has been lost, Alexis leaves to search for treasure. The stars seem to offer him hope, but nature, in the form of the rugged landscape of Rodrigues, almost kills him. The storm on Rodrigues, which wrecks the Zeta and kills Captain Bradmer and his crew, and the shooting stars which appear after Mam's death, signify the final dénouement for Alexis. As he looks out over the sea near Boucan Bay, the only thing he has left is the sound of the sea.

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In essence, the rich and influential characters respond to the difficulties that they encounter by using their wealth and influence to avoid hardship: Mme Péricand, for example, abandons her Christian principles and stops her children distributing sweets when she realises that hunger might threaten the lives of her own family; she has no compunction about commandeering a cart to take her and her family to a railway station and back in Paris she is happy to avoid the food queues by brandishing her priority ration card. Similarly selfish responses to hardship come from M. Corbin, Charles Langelet and Gabriel Corte. Not even Philippe Péricand escapes the author's criticism; although he claims to want to bring God's grace to his young protégés, his natural reaction is to despise them. Like Langelet, he meets a suitably violent end. By contrast, the ordinary people react to the hardships that they face with dignity and caring for their fellow sufferers. The only exceptions to this rather black and white approach are Hubert Péricand and Jean-Marie Michaud, who are admired for their patriotic fervour, and Arlette Corail, who always seems to land on her feet without doing harm to others.