

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/01
Speaking

Key messages

To do well in this examination, candidates need to be given opportunities to practise their presentation skills in advance of the speaking test.

The presentation must include specific reference to the culture of a Portuguese-speaking country.

In order to better support their candidates, Teacher/examiners should familiarise themselves with the Syllabus and Mark Scheme before preparing candidates for the examination and before conducting it.

Teacher/examiners should ensure to use open-ended questions in order to give candidates ample opportunities to expand fully on their answers. The examination should flow as a conversation between examiner and the candidate. Candidates should be encouraged to ask the Teachers/examiners their point of view or knowledge about the topic at hand.

General comments

The standard of performance was very good this year and examinations were, overall, well conducted. Teacher/examiners provided candidates with a friendly atmosphere, asked relevant questions and encouraged candidates to do well. Timings were overall in accordance with the ones specified in the Syllabus.

Centres should make sure the examination is conducted in a quiet room. Centres should also make sure to position the microphone at an equal distance between the teacher/examiner and the candidate, so that both voices can be heard clearly.

Teacher/examiners are reminded to signal the end of each Section of the examination and the beginning of the next.

Centres are reminded that the speaking test must be conducted without interruption and Teacher/examiners are not allowed to correct the candidates during the examination. Words prompted to candidates will not count as the candidates' use of language.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In this Section, candidates must give a presentation on a specific topic from one of the topic areas in Section 3 of the Syllabus. This presentation should be prepared in advance and candidates should be encouraged to practise their presentation skills as much as possible, so their presentation flows naturally. Centres should make sure candidates are not using pre-published texts as their own. Their research should be merely used as a source of information and inspiration.

Centres should also make sure candidates are fully aware of the requirements of this presentation, especially with regards to timings and that the chosen topic is discussed in the context of a Portuguese speaking country or community. Some candidates had their marks halved because they did not make such a reference.

A well-prepared presentation is particularly important as it gives the candidate a range of points to discuss during Section 2. Candidates with the highest marks were particularly knowledgeable on their chosen topic and showed confidence throughout the examination. As a result, their presentations sounded spontaneous and kept the attention of the Teacher/examiner.

This Section should last for no more than 3 and a half minutes and the Examiner should not interrupt the candidates during this time.

Candidates may bring a limited quantity of illustrative material such as maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures or short articles. However, Centres are reminded that a script of the presentation is not allowed.

Section 2

In this section, the Teacher/examiner should invite the candidate to have a discussion about the topic presented in Section 1. Candidates must be encouraged to ask questions to the Examiner as they will lose five marks if they fail to do so.

Some examinations were very well conducted in this part of the test. Skilful Teacher/examiners gave the candidates ample opportunities to provide different opinions and points of view on their chosen topic, creating an interesting discussion about the presentation. They also invited the candidates to ask valuable questions and offered their opinion with ease. In these instances, the presentation and the topic conversation flew naturally, and candidates achieved higher marks.

Teacher/examiners should be reminded that candidates must be asked questions which are relevant to the topic under discussion. Most importantly, the examination is about the candidate's knowledge, and therefore, the candidate must be given all possible opportunities to show what they know and can do.

In consequence, teachers should use a wide range of question forms, especially open-ended ones, and avoid making too long questions without a clear purpose. This is important to guarantee that candidates will have the time to consider the questions and are able to express themselves. In addition, although Examiners are allowed to prompt the candidates to ask questions, they should not award marks for Seeking Information when the candidate does not ask any questions.

This Section should last between 7 and 8 minutes during which time candidates should not continue presenting their topic and the examiner should not use to teach the candidates. Teacher/examiners should avoid asking personal questions that are not relevant to the topic in discussion.

Section 3

In this section, candidates should be invited to discuss at least two or three different topics. They should not be asked questions which force them to repeat material.

The stronger performances discussed contemporary matters such as education, use of technology, future careers, sports, and equality. They were knowledgeable and well versed on a variety of topics, including the latest news around the world.

Teacher/examiners are reminded that candidates can achieve more marks by asking relevant questions to the Examiner during this section. Centres should make sure that candidates are made fully aware of this.

Examiners should avoid making long comments or asking lengthy questions as candidates should be given as much time as possible to consider the question at hand, organise their ideas before speaking and giving their opinions.

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Paper 9718/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

Candidates are strongly advised to practise for this paper by carefully studying past papers and accompanying mark schemes. In this way they can familiarise themselves with the different types of questions on the paper and gain a better understanding of what is expected in their answers to gain maximum marks.

General comments

The two texts concerned human actions towards nature and their consequences. Text 1 talked about Brazil's deforestation and Text 2 talked about the destruction of mangroves in Mozambique.

The questions on the paper gave candidates the opportunity to display a wide range of vocabulary and expressions in their answers while requiring them to paraphrase and summarise ideas.

Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the format of the paper and were able to answers to all questions.

Almost all candidates had a fair to very good level of expression in the language. Successful candidates read the texts carefully and used a range of expression and vocabulary rather than 'lifting' directly from the texts themselves.

Attention to accuracy of grammar and use of accents and correct word endings also attracted higher marks. Overall, most candidates attempted to answer all the questions with very few instances of No Response.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

This question required candidates to find a word or a phrase in Text 1 which had the same meaning as the synonyms or definitions given in (a) to (e). Candidates should write only the word or words from the text that the given word or phrase in the question could replace.

Most candidates performed well in this question, especially in (a), (c), (d) and (e).

Some candidates explained the meaning of the word instead of finding the correct correspondent from the text. For answer (b) few candidates wrote 'de acordo' rather than the correct answer 'de acordo com'.

Question 2

This question required candidates to re-write sentences from the text, beginning with phrases provided in the question.

In this question, candidates were expected to show manipulation of the language by fronting (moving a clause from one position in the sentence to another), changing the verb from the active to passive voice or changing a verb from the indicative to subjunctive and vice versa.

Candidates who had practised exercises of this type tended to do well, with (d) and (e) proving to be the most demanding.

In (d) most candidates did not use 'que' after 'Estima-se' and did not change the indicative to the subjunctive.

In (e) Many candidates did not make reference to the future.

Question 3

This question assessed candidates' ability to paraphrase in Portuguese to answer the comprehension questions.

Candidates who attempted to use their own vocabulary and expressions were rewarded in the 'quality of language' mark, as were candidates who were able to answer clearly and concisely. Candidates did well if they were selective in their wording, avoiding writing overlong answers or relying too heavily on 'lifting' complete phrases from the text.

Other candidates who had correctly identified the points from the text required for the correct answers lost marks by copying long phrases or clauses from the text rather than paraphrasing using their own words.

There was also a marked tendency amongst some candidates to repeat most of the words in the question before supplying their answer. Candidates are invited to study the model answers in the mark scheme to see how questions can be answered concisely and effectively.

- (a) Most candidates explained the reason for the expression but did not justify it.
- (b) Many candidates copied straight from the text, which was considered a lift, as it included more than four words.
- (c) Most candidates answered the second part of the question correctly. However, the first part was often a lift.
- (d) In general, this question was well answered.
- (e) Most candidates answered the first part of the question correctly. However, the second part was often a lift.
- (f) Most candidates answered correctly. However, the first part was often a lift.

Section 2

Question 4

This question assessed candidates' ability to paraphrase in Portuguese in order to describe and explain their answers to the comprehension questions.

The question was answered well by candidates who were well prepared and who recognised that, as for **Question 3**, they should avoid 'lifting' entire phrases and that they should attempt to answer concisely in their own words.

- (a) Overall, this question was well answered. However, often the first part of the answer was considered a lift, and many candidates forgot to include the solution.
- (b) In general, this question was well answered. Most candidates achieved at least 3 marks. Lifting was also an issue.
- (c) This question was very well answered. Weaker responses lifted from the text.
- (d) This question was well answered. Weaker responses lifted from the text.
- (e) Overall, this question was well answered.

Question 5

Candidates were required to write a maximum of 140 words for the summary and the personal response. Almost all candidates kept to the 140-word maximum, with only a small number exceeding this. Similarly, almost all candidates recognised that their response to **part (a)** carried more marks than **part (b)** and divided their words accordingly.

A few candidates seemed to think that the 140 words applied to **part (a)** alone, and this sometimes meant that some, or even all, of their response to **part (b)** could not be considered.

- (a) This question was well answered. Weaker responses included why the 'mata costeira' and 'mangais' were good for the environment instead of summarising the consequences of deforestation. Others gave their opinion on the damage caused by human beings and what should be done to minimise the problem.
- (b) This question was well answered. Most candidates gave very interesting and creative ideas on what could be done to preserve the environment.

The quality of language was varied. Some candidates struggled with vocabulary trying to avoid lifting from the text. Weaker responses included too many instances of lifting.

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Paper 9718/03
Essay

Key messages

To score full marks for Language, candidates need to use:

- correct grammar, punctuation and spelling
- a wide variety of synonyms to avoid repetition of words
- complex sentence patterns with different conjunctions, adverbs and a wide variety of verb tenses.

To score full marks for Content, candidates are required to:

- answer the question that is being asked and pay attention to the keywords in the questions.
- organise their ideas in clear paragraphs. An essay consists of an introduction, development of ideas and a conclusion. It is very important to brainstorm main ideas before writing so that these are coherently organised, argued and structured.
- write a detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated essay.

General comments

Good responses were detailed, clearly relevant to the question and coherently argued and structured in clear paragraphs. They were also very well illustrated. They showed a confident use of complex sentences with extensive vocabulary and a good sense of idiom.

It is important that candidates study or revise grammar rules before taking this examination. Essays should show a good grasp of grammar to convey the message clearly.

Weaker responses deviated from the question and lost marks for content. Candidates should highlight the key words in each question and answer it fully with detailed and relevant examples and opinions.

The use of signpost words is very important to structure the essay. Stronger responses used phrases such as 'firstly', 'in addition', 'in conclusion' and so on.

Candidates are reminded that legibility is also important to convey the message clearly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a very popular question. Candidates had to write about whether they agreed or disagreed on the fact that people learn more from family than from friends. Good responses included ideas and opinions about socialisation, moral compass, values and culture. They also used a wide variety of vocabulary.

Most candidates developed their answers based on the main concept of family, types of family and personal experience. School life was also included as an important part of socialisation and development as individuals.

Weaker responses deviated from the original question and only made reference to personal experiences with family and friends or commented on types of family without referring to the question.

Question 2

This question was the least chosen by candidates. Candidates had to express their opinion on whether leaders can always make their own decisions on behalf of their country or organisation.

Weaker responses included long essays with irrelevant content about democracy and authoritarianism. Some mentioned former leaders such as Adolf Hitler and others contained lots of repetition.

Question 3

This question was chosen by most candidates, and it was about what makes a country have more or less tourism. Stronger responses were well developed with insight, creativity and clear points of view.

Most candidates used a wide variety of vocabulary and a high and consistent level of complex sentence structures.

Question 4

This was not a very popular question. Candidates had to write about whether the creation of drones has been successful.

Weaker responses included irrelevant content focusing on technology in general and contained lots of repetition.

Question 5

This question was also popular. Candidates had to write about ocean pollution as one of the major current environmental problems.

Most candidates addressed the question very well with clear points of view and examples. They showed an understanding of sea life and provided recommendations to make oceans cleaner and to reduce pollution. They were well structured and used a variety of complex structures and vocabulary.

Weaker responses deviated from the question and commented on pollution in general without addressing the question.

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Paper 9718/04

Texts

Key messages

To do well in this paper, candidates need to:

- answer **three** questions on **three different** texts: they need to answer one question from **section 1**, one question from **section 2** and one other as long as it is not from the same text as the previous questions.
- plan their answers and try not to write everything they know about the book in one question.
- refer to the question using quotes where possible (without page numbers).
- finish with a concluding paragraph without repeating what has been said previously.

General comments

Candidates are expected to use their own language, show their ability to organise material, demonstrate close attention to detail of passages, have a good insight when discussing characters and be sensitive to the language and to the author's intentions.

Candidates should also display a good command of the language by spelling words correctly, varying the way they start their sentences and showing a good grasp of grammatical structures. To be able to show some literary techniques would also be a bonus.

This year the most popular questions were **Question 2 (a)** and **Question 5 (a)** followed by **Question 4 (b)**.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had read the books. Others could not address the questions fully and gave superficial answers. For example, some candidates attempted questions such as **1a (i)** (differences between marriage in the city and in the sugar plantation), **1b** (relevance of women), **2b** (contrast of living in the city or in the countryside), **3b** (explain the title), and **6b** (a book about disappointment), and wrote general statements about the topics that were not relevant to the questions.

It is important to understand the question and think of a few items that are relevant to that specific question before writing the answers. Some candidates summarised the stories without addressing the questions. Others cited many passages from the books without attempting to analyse or reflect their considerations on those extracts.

Candidates are reminded to read the instructions carefully. Weaker candidates did not read the set texts, answered two questions on the same text or wrote short paragraphs for every single question.

Some responses were difficult to read. Candidates should always make an effort to write legibly and make sure their handwriting is clear.

In terms of quality of language, some candidates were translating words or expressions from other languages into Portuguese, and most of them were not correct. There were less grammar mistakes this year, but candidates could improve on the use of verb tenses and connectives when studying the texts in class. Candidates should also write on a variety of topics so that they get used to different structures in Portuguese.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

José Lins do Rego: *O Moleque Ricardo*

- (a) Candidates who answered this question were able to describe the differences between getting married in Recife and in the sugar plantations as well as the role of men and women in society. Many candidates illustrated their statements and were also able to summarise Ricardo's worries when he had to face marriage.
- (b) Stronger responses mentioned more than three female characters in this question. Candidates could improve on writing about D. Isabel's role and including more details on how different women were seen and treated depending on where they lived or the colour of their skin.

Question 2

Agustina Bessa Luís: *A Sibila*

- (a) This was the most popular question. The most successful candidates not only retold the story, but also gave good examples on how differently Maria treated Estina and Quina and the consequences of this. Weaker candidates were very brief on explaining the impact of Maria's death on the other characters. There was some attempt to analyse the extract, but the responses were a bit simple and general.
- (b) Candidates who answered this question were able to point out Quina's love for the countryside and how different she was from the ones who lived in the city. Some candidates also mentioned Abel's lifestyle and Quina's visit to Porto.

Question 3

Nélida Piñon: *Livro das Horas*

- (a) Very few attempts. Some candidates were able to infer and explain the meaning of the sentence, offering a good insight about the story and the author and providing relevant illustration. Weaker responses were about Clarice Lispector and how important she was for the author. They had a very basic and general approach to the question. Not many candidates knew who Gravetinho was.
- (b) The very small number of candidates who answered this question did not seem to have read the book and for that reason they could not justify or illustrate their answers. They just tried to explain the meaning of the title.

Question 4

Ariano Suassuna: *O Auto da Compadecida*

- (a) In general candidates who answered this question were not able to link the passages to the topic: they mentioned how important religion was but did not explain why. Some successful candidates were able to establish the links between carefully selected passages and their relevance to the question, discussing their meaning in detail.
- (b) This was a popular question. Some candidates who chose this question were able to retell the story. Many addressed the question fully and gave different examples on how João Grilo and Chicó represented the people, offering a very good understanding of the context of this story.

Question 5

Manuel Lopes: *Os Flagelados do Vento Leste*

- (a) This was also a very popular question. Stronger responses explained in detail the relationship between Leandro, José da Cruz and Zepa before and after the struggles they faced due to the

weather conditions. Weaker responses focused on a general overview of the story, without providing relevant details.

- (b) This question was chosen by some candidates. Weaker responses described Leandro and what he was doing in the shops in a very general and simple way without providing relevant details.

Question 6

Pepele: *A Geração da Utopia*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.
- (b) Good answers included relevant remarks on what might have influenced and changed the main characters and their behaviour throughout their lives. Weaker responses disagreed with the statement and were unable to explain why: their reasons were most of the times contradictory making it clear that they did not understand the question. Many candidates mentioned the different parts of the book and explained very briefly the meaning of these for each character.