FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/01
Reading

Key Messages

- **Question 1**: Make sure you show full comprehension of the text by using your own words to answer the questions.

- **Question 2**: When listing the differences, make sure you refer to the same idea or concept present in both texts, which is dealt with differently or seen with a different perspective (specific examples will be provided below).

- **Language**: revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General Comments

Most candidates responded extremely well to the theme of sport/running and how it can change young people's lives. The texts were accessible and there was clear evidence that candidates coped well.

In this session, all candidates without exception completed the paper. Where questions were left unanswered, this did not seem to be caused by time management issues. Many candidates managed to write a plan or a rough draft, and it was a positive indication that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination, as well as coached on how to manage their examination time allowance. The word limit recommendation in **Question 2** was more widely respected this year.

A marked improvement was noted in the quality and accuracy of the language used in the answers overall. In **Question 2**, many candidates made excellent use of the language of the source texts and most candidates managed to rephrase and avoid any direct lifting. Some candidates continued failing to score points because they rephrased the question or lifted some sections of the text without providing a clear answer.

It is stressed that the candidates must read the questions from **Question 1** very carefully and make sure that they answer in the format required by the question. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of how many ideas need to be included in order to gain full marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The range of questions provided opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability. The marks for the first question tended to be slightly higher than for the second question, with the vast majority of candidates scoring above 50% of the available marks.

Content

(a) Most candidates could explain that Jamaica had a long running tradition because of the famous athletes, gaining one mark. This point had to be followed with being idols/inspiring young candidates for the second mark, which was less easily found by candidates. Another option was to mention that Jamaica had had running as part of the School syllabus for a long time. It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates had spotted that the question required two pieces of information to gain both marks.

(b) This question provided a good level of differentiation. In order to address the question fully, candidates had to express that Jamaican students actually refused the offer they received from the American campus, which was the first point of surprise. This particular point challenged a lot of candidates and only the stronger ones managed to express it clearly. The rest of the answer was easier and most candidates understood that the poor quality of the training offered in Jamaican universities constituted a surprising choice. Weaker responses expressed that the Jamaican students preferred to train in bad conditions, which was not in the text.

(c) When candidates merely quoted *synergie* from the text without explaining it, they failed to show the Examiner that they actually knew what the word meant. Candidates were required to explain, in their own words, the connection, the link, the strength between the runners and the children in order to be awarded the mark. It was also possible to say that the children could run with their idols.

(d) This question was generally well answered.

(e) This question presented another opportunity for differentiation. A reference to the text was essential and some candidates managed to explain in great detail the contrasts between rich and poor, the rich villas higher up and the slum below, what is visible and invisible and/or the fulfilled dreams versus the broken dreams. Weaker candidates kept closer to the text and simply quoted the sentence, failing to convey the feeling(s) the author created and how the words chosen created this effect. Stronger candidates presented *analyse de texte* at its best, with the use of vocabulary like *métaphores, évocations poétiques* etc.

(f) This question was the most successfully answered.

(g) Stronger candidates read deeper into the text and spotted the idea of imprisonment within the ocean, poverty and violence. The notion of contrast was also present here and candidates needed to make reference to the words used, the images and their effect on the reader to gain the last mark.

(h) This question was successfully answered with most candidates finding at least two ideas directly from the text. The more able candidates expressed the progression from past (gangs/prison/life of violence), to present (no more violence), to future (hope for a better life and a decent future thanks to running).

(i) Because of the strong possibility that candidates would quote the text without further thinking, the question included *à votre avis*. Therefore this question asks candidates to provide a general opinion without explaining the examples in the texts or what happened in Jamaica, unless they said *comme Mario*. Most candidates spotted this and were able to explain that running occupied young people, that they would have no time or energy left to commit crimes, that competing would mean they win prizes and monetary rewards, thus finding a way out of poverty driven crimes. Where candidates failed to score any marks at all, it was because they had limited themselves to recall Mario's story or the Jamaican ways.

Language

See later

Question 2

Content

With regard to the content, this question proved to be challenging for many candidates, more so when candidates expressed the differences between the two texts.

A few candidates found 14 or 15 distinct ideas of similarity/differences. Similarly, very few candidates found fewer that 4 ideas.

Similarities were generally better found: young people, poverty, running, training, hard conditions, dream of success were the most commonly found answers in many candidates' replies.

In terms of differences, the format of the texts (article/biography), the gender of the protagonists (girl/boys) and the ending of the stories (positive hope/crushed dreams) were the most popular answers.

Some weaker candidates found one or two ideas and then described them at length.

In this question, it is not necessary to provide evidence of the ideas by quoting the text; that is why a limit of 250 words can still give the candidates ample word allowance to include all ideas. In fact, candidates who quoted the text generally scored more poorly. Better candidates had prepared a list of bullet points in their plan, and then worked these points in two comparative paragraphs.

This year very long introductions and conclusions were seen which often repeated the texts or announced that the texts were similar and different. Such introductions and conclusions are not necessary, unless a short introduction already includes some valid points, for example: *Ces deux textes parlent de jeunes (1) dans des pays pauvres (1) qui courent (1) pour réaliser leur rêve de succès (1).* This introduction would already score 4 points but only uses a few words. Importantly, the candidate would then need to avoid repeating any of these ideas in the bulk of his/her essay, since the points have already been made. It is important that candidates aim to include several ideas in the same sentence. For example: *Les textes sont situés dans des pays différents (1), la pauvreté est plus sérieuse dans le deuxième texte (1) et les références à la famille y sont plus présentes aussi (1).*

When preparing to answer **Question 2**, it is advisable that candidates consider the meaning of a 'difference': it is an idea present in both texts but with a different outcome or different view points, even different importance. For example, some candidates wrote that the girl received shopping vouchers. This is written in the second text indeed but without any connection to the first text, therefore it is not a difference in itself.

Language

Generally, the language used in **Question 1** came from the text and this is fine as long as the candidate's understanding is clearly expressed, as explained above.

Consequently candidates tended to make fewer language mistakes in that section. However, there were still quite a number of incidences of badly used past participles and poor adjective agreements (*les jeunes sont poussé à la violence, leur rêve n'est pas réaliser,* etc.), of misspelling of the simplest words *(la cours* instead of *la course)*, incorrect verb endings (*les jeunes prefers).*

The stronger candidates were able to express their answers in fluent and, at times accurate, French.

It is suggested that candidates are encouraged to check their paper more carefully for language errors, particularly when they have managed their time well.

In **Question two**, as well as the language itself, the structure and style of the essay were also rewarded by a further 5 marks. Candidates who wrote much more than the recommended 200 to 250 words or who narrated the texts rather than compare them were unable to score high marks here.

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/02
Writing
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Key message

To do well on this paper, essays should be accurate, use a wide range of vocabulary and structures, be well organised and coherent, with well-developed ideas.

General comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 4 titles for the discussion and argumentative essay and 4 titles for the narrative / descriptive essay. The essays were each marked out of 25, comprising a maximum mark of 12 for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 for task achievement. Most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words used (350-500 words per essay) although there were a few essays which lacked development and where the word count was closer to 300 words. The best essays submitted were fluent and well-structured, and some candidates were at pains to keep the title in their sights throughout, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the material contained in the paragraph advanced their argument. Some less successful essays often had a beginning, a middle and an end but the development lacked direction and ideas, and explanations were limited. There were also essays which had no introduction and left the reader confused as to the logic which needed to be followed. In descending order of popularity, the pattern was as follows: *Section 1:* **Question c, Question a, Question d, Question b;** *Section 2:* **Question c, Question d, Question b, Question a.**

The linguistic quality of the best essays made them a real pleasure to read; mistakes were few and far between and they were characterised by an extensive vocabulary, a good sense of idiom and the confident use of complex sentence patterns. At the other end of the spectrum, expression was characterised by an awkwardness of expression for some candidates, who tended to repeat the same words and phrases in close proximity. Among a number of recurrent weaknesses and errors, the following were seen:

- Omission of accents, e.g. a and à, ou and où
- The injudicious use of the demonstrative adjectives and pronouns: cela - ce - cette - ces
- Imperfect tense of faire: il *fesait*
- Conjugation first person singular past historic: j'*arriva, j'alla*
- Conjugation of irregular verbs in past historic
- Disregard for appropriate register: *truc, chose, machin*
- Overuse of words such as ça, cela, il y a
- Use of the *tu* form instead of the *vous* form
- Confusion between imperfect tense, perfect tense, past historic and present tense
- Inappropriate conjunctions at the beginning of paragraphs: *alors, puis, ensuite, aussi*
- Confusion between the infinitive and the past participle
- Failure to agree past participle of a verb when a direct pronoun is placed before a verb
- Failure to agree past participle with the subject when the auxiliary is *être*
- Use of adjectives instead nouns: *les célèbres*

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Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question a

This was about using games in the learning environment.

This question required candidates to analyse the positive and negative aspects of games in the learning environment. A common problem here was for candidates to focus only on sport or video games and the benefits they might bring to an individual. Consequently, the development became too limited and very little information came out in the conclusion. However, some candidates explained clearly that introducing role-plays and other forms of games in a classroom can motivate and encourage candidates to be more attentive to lessons. There was a common agreement that playing games in younger classes seemed to be far more advantageous than in a class of 16 years old candidates where more rigid and formal lessons needed to be taught in order to prepare candidates for their exams.

Question b

This was about globalisation of films.

Though this generated some good answers, a common shortcoming was to fail to understand what the question really meant. It needed to focus on the effects of globalisation in the film industry and whether or not the candidate thought this was positive. Some essays were successful in developing the implication of this globalisation, demonstrating that everyone had a chance to discover other cultures and countries but on the other hand this globalisation would suffocate small film businesses and large film companies would have the monopoly to produce films. This would therefore restrict the market place and manipulate people's views. Some essays were slightly off topic focusing only on films which had a success in the past or on the importance of the cinema.

Question c

This was about the influence of celebrities.

This was the most popular of the questions. However, many of the essays submitted contained sweeping generalisations and did not attempt to analyse how and to what extent youngsters were influenced by celebrities. Balanced essays often made the point that celebrities influenced youngsters positively and negatively and cited actual celebrities who were mainly in the singing or cinematographic industry. Positive influence described were celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Madonna who involve themselves in charitable work; negative influence described were celebrities such as Amy Winehouse glorifying drugs or bad behaviour in public. A few candidates chose to discuss famous historical people, which was not part of the question.

Question d

This was about using GM food to tackle the problem of starvation.

This question produced some good responses. Some candidates had a very good knowledge of GM food and were able to develop reasoned arguments regarding whether GM products were safe. However, this was not sufficient as the question asked was specifically whether or not GM food could be a solution to starvation in our world. Some essays managed successfully to demonstrate that, although GM food could be one of the solutions, better alternatives could be put in place such as a better distribution of food in our world.

Section 2

Question a

This question gave the opportunity for candidates to describe an ambition and it generated some good answers. In outstanding essays, the author was able to juggle with the past, present and future tenses using sophisticated flashbacks to explain the essence of their ambition, highlighting the importance of their ambition to come true and the consequences it might have. Some essays lacked conviction and tended to be somewhat repetitive throughout. Among chosen ambitions there were: to become a professional sportsman, a singer, a good parent, a doctor, a priest.

Question b

Not many candidates tackled this title successfully; many of the essays submitted were simply lists or enumeration of different aspects of how they imagined their town in 50 years' time without using particular effect i.e. 'this will be the best town in the world', 'there will be big tower blocks', 'there will be flying cars'. Consequently, these essays lacked imagination and excitement. Other essays showed some interesting description which encouraged the reader to read more.

Question c

This attracted the highest number of candidates. There were only a few essays where the sentence was not incorporated or was changed to fit the author's story. It was important not to modify the sentence but adapt the story to the given sentence. Most stories were centred on being in a cave and being trapped. Some essays were too predictable and therefore the climax was not managed effectively. Nevertheless, in some essays, effects were successfully achieved and some stories were most engaging. There were a few essays which consisted of a simple story with everyday happenings ('I woke up at 8, and then I went downstairs to get breakfast, and then went out with some friends. We did this…').

Question d

This title generated a good response where candidates used a jungle type setting with an Indiana Jones explorer type searching for a hidden treasure. Some essays were so impressive that it left the reader hanging on the edge. Most stories were original, full of details and with a good storyline. There were some essays where the beginning was too long and not necessarily relevant to the story.