CHINESE AND CHINESE LITERATURE

<div style="border:1px solid">

Paper 8669/04

Texts

</div>

General comments

All candidates displayed a good or excellent standard of written Chinese, in terms of the level required for a Chinese as a foreign language paper. Overall there was evidence of competent essay planning, but in many cases, an inadequate knowledge of the texts or of the period in which they were set led to candidates not scoring as highly as they might otherwise have done. Many of the general comments below are similar in vein to those made last year, as many of these same comments are still valid.

Many candidates taking this paper did well, writing carefully organised short answers and essays, showing an in-depth knowledge of the text and an awareness of the social, political and historical context in China at the time it was set. Other candidates showed a good knowledge of the text, but were often unable to set the events they read about within the context of the period in mainland China in which the text was set, or seemed only to have a rather hazy knowledge of context. In orders to do themselves justice, candidates must know the context of and background to the texts, as well as the texts themselves.

Some candidates did not do as well in this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed virtually no evidence that they had ever read the text for which they were answering the question. One or two continue to refer only to the first few pages of a text in their answer, which made the Examiners question whether they had read any further. Even if a candidate's written Chinese is of a high standard for a foreign language Chinese examination paper, if they have not read the text for which they are writing an answer, then they cannot score highly. It was surprising that, occasionally, candidates seemed to think that writing a page of competent Chinese which bore no relation to the question or the text would suffice.

It is disappointing to note that a number of candidates are still misreading the rubrics. Candidates should answer **three** questions in total (choosing **either (a) or (b)** in each case). They should answer one question from *Section 1*, one from *Section 2* and one other of their choice. Each answer should be on a different text. It is important that all candidates are aware of this. If a candidate answers two questions on the same text, only one will be marked. If a candidate answers three questions from one section, only two will be marked etc. If a candidate's script ends up being marked out of 50 because only 2 answers could be considered, then this is a very serious handicap to the achievement of a good grade.

The essays of most candidates would have benefited from a judicious use of well-chosen brief quotations from the texts to illustrate the points they were making. The apt use of quotation has improved, but too many candidates still quoted overly long chunks of texts in their essays, sometimes without any quotation marks to indicate that they were actually using the words of the text. Even where there were quotation marks, there was often insufficient reference as to how the quotation was contributing to the argument in the candidate's answer. The purpose of a quotation is to back up or illustrate the argument of a well-planned essay and to show an in-depth knowledge of the text. The examination questions frequently ask the candidate to (literally) 'give examples to explain'. This means that the candidate should first have a point to make (as part of the argument running through the essay) and that to back up this point the candidate should make very close reference to the text or choose a short quote to illustrate it, then go on to explain why the quotation or reference supports the argument/discussion running through the essay. In some cases, candidates appear to go through the text looking for any quotation which might have some bearing on the question, however tenuous the link, and then quote them without any explanation

In many questions on literature, no one answer is right or wrong; the Examiners are looking for a well-argued essay from the candidate, backed up by evidence from the text.

www.xtremepapers.net

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

A large number of candidates answered a question on 《茶馆》. There were some very good answers. Unfortunately, some candidates answered **1(a)** and **1(b)** and as a result only one of their answers could be awarded marks. Candidates must illustrate their answers with brief but apt quotations and concrete references to the text.

(a)   The short questions meant that the answers were better organised, but some answers were mostly based on the part of the play quoted in the question, rather than referring – as was necessary – to other parts of the play. The quoted passage in the question is merely intended to act as a stimulus. There was often insufficient knowledge of the historical and political context of the play, particularly with respect to the whereabouts of Uncle Dali in this question.

(b)   In answering **1(b)**, many candidates simply wrote a little bit about each character, but didn't actually answer the question itself. They seemed to have insufficient knowledge of the overall impact and meaning of the play.

Question 2

Candidates found the questions on poetry quite difficult to answer and in general only those who were struggling to find a third question to answer attempted them. Most candidates were unable to give detailed and thoughtful analysis of imagery, even though the standard of their Chinese appeared to be sufficiently high to cope with such expression. Candidates should not attempt a poem question unless they really know the poems well and have discussed and analysed the imagery with teachers and fellow students in class.

(a)   Despite the fact that the Question Paper stated that there was just one verse of six verses printed, nonetheless most candidates restricted themselves to discussing the single stanza printed. The discussion in **(ii)** on metaphor was generally weak. Many candidates were only able to make some general observations and did not give any in depth analysis of individual metaphors.

(b)   Not many candidates chose to answer this question, reflecting perhaps a lack of in-depth study of Xu Zhimo's poetry.

Question 3

There were some good answers to this question.

(a)   There were some very good answers, but again there was some evidence that the text had not been read in some cases, as candidates restricted themselves to comments on what was printed on the Question Paper. Hardly anyone answered **3(a)(ii)** well.

(b)   There were some very good answers to this question, with well chosen and apt illustrations. However, some candidates just found evidence of difficulties encountered by 阿信 and then quoted significant chunks of text, describing a particular scene or incident, amounting to 7-10 lines of continuous quotation in some cases.

Section 2

Question 4

Not many candidates chose **Question 4**.

(a)   There were some good answers to this question. However, many answers did not show much knowledge of the background of the story or enough understanding of the text. Again, an ability to analyse metaphor and use of language was required, which most did not attempt.

(b)   This question required candidates to take a view and then make an argument for it, with close textual analysis. Candidates found this hard and need practice in answering this kind of question.

Question 5

(a)   Not many candidates chose this question and those who did often needed a more in-depth knowledge of the period about which Mao Dun was writing.

(b)   Some answers to this question were very good, but others were quite often made up of semi copied parts of the texts and had a tendency to be longwinded

Question 6

There were some good answers to both **6(a)** and **6(b)**. However, in their answers many candidates just wrote about 祥林嫂's sufferings and again did not really answer the questions themselves. It is important to make a careful analysis of the demands of the question and to have an essay plan before beginning to write.

www.xtremepapers.net