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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned**.

CHINESE

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

| Papers 8681/02 and 9715/02 |
| Reading and Writing |

General comments

Understanding of the texts

On the whole, candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the arguments, ideas and information contained in the two texts, and there were only a few cases where insufficient understanding of the texts caused problems.

Responding to the questions

Generally, candidates' answers were full, clearly-expressed and showed good engagement with the texts. Where there were problems, these were usually due to candidates providing too little detail in their answers or answering questions from personal experience rather than from the information contained in the texts. The majority of candidates now seem to be aware of the need to use their own words, and in many cases produced excellent work. Unfortunately, there were still a few examples of candidates ignoring the rubric and copying answers straight from the texts.

Quality of language

Most candidates were able to organise the required information in their own words. However, although the quality of language was generally good, certain expressions and grammatical structures were sometimes used inappropriately. Punctuation was also poor on some scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Although **(a)-(d)** were answered correctly by most candidates, **(e)** caused some problems.

Question 2

A good performance by the vast majority of candidates. **(a)** proved the most straightforward question. Although **(b)-(d)** were well answered by many candidates, some answers were awkward or contained redundant elements.

Question 3

On the whole candidates coped very well with these questions. Where problems occurred it was usually because candidates gave answers that were incomplete or that did not relate to the text.

Section 2

Question 4

Again, the majority of candidates gave good answers. Some marks were lost where answers were incomplete.

Question 5

Candidates are required to write a directed summary of the two texts and then provide a personal response to a specific issue. The best performances came from candidates who integrated material from the text with their own ideas and showed good control of the language. Unfortunately, some candidates did not refer to the information in the texts as required and/or did not incorporate their own ideas/experiences in the answer. Others did not seem to realise that they needed to focus on the question set and instead wrote about how to stay healthy through exercises etc.

Papers 8681/03 and 9715/03
Essay

General comments

Once again, Examiners were impressed by candidates' mastery of the Chinese language. Almost all the work produced by candidates was fluent and reasonably accurate.

To achieve the highest marks, essays need to be detailed, clearly relevant and well illustrated, as well as coherently argued and structured. In many cases, candidates presented a number of ideas, but did not fully develop any of them. Such essays tended to be rather superficial. Weaker answers often included a lot of irrelevant information, which affected the coherence of the argument.

Essays usually fell within the prescribed word length. Candidates should be reminded to write in dark blue or black ink. It is also helpful if they state clearly which question they are answering.

Papers 8669/04 and 9715/04
Texts

General comments

Many candidates taking this paper did extremely well, writing carefully organised short answers and essays, and showing an in-depth knowledge of the set texts and an awareness of the social, political and historical context in China in which they are set. Other candidates showed a good knowledge of the set texts, but were often unable to set these in context.

Some candidates did not do as well on this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed little or no evidence that they had read the text about which they were writing. Even if a candidate's standard of written Chinese is high, if they have not studied the text about which they are writing, they cannot do themselves justice.

A number of candidates misread the rubric. Candidates should answer three questions (either **(a)** or **(b)**). 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 before entering the examination room to take the examination.

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. Too many candidates quoted overly long chunks of texts in their essays, sometimes without any quotation marks to say that they were actually using the words of the text. Even where there were quotation marks, it was often unclear how the quotation was contributing to the case the candidate was making.

In many questions no set answer was required; the Examiner was looking for a well-argued essay from the candidate, backed up by evidence from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

A large number of candidates answered a question on *Zhufu*. There were some very good answers. Some candidates answered **(a)** and **(b)** and only one other question from *Section 2*. This meant that only two out of three essays could be awarded marks. Candidates must illustrate their answers with brief but apt quotations and concrete references to the text.

(a)   This question was well-answered on the whole. In **(i)**, many candidates were unable to make some general comments about the position of women and widows in society at the time. Instead, they often made some comments to the effect that Xianglin's wife was happy in her job and, therefore, did not want to get married. A more comprehensive answer than this was required to gain the highest marks. In **(ii)** there were arguments for and against the statement that the behaviour of Xianglin's wife was brave. Either was acceptable if convincingly argued. **(iii)** and **(iv)** were both generally well-answered except in cases where candidates had only the haziest notion of the plot.

(b)   Candidates answering this question often struggled to organise their material. This was disappointing considering the ability of most of the candidates to write so fluently in Chinese. Candidates should plan their essay carefully before starting to write. There were too many instances of copying large chunks from the text rather than the judicious use of brief quotation to back up an argument/illustrate a point. Very few candidates seemed to have formed a view of how their answer was going to progress before they started writing; many answers therefore consisted of a collection of comments on the individual descriptions of the appearance of Xiang Lin's wife and made no attempt to set these descriptions within the framework of the overall development of the story. This question was an opportunity for the best candidates to make some detailed comments on Lu Xun's use of language. However, this was rare.

Question 2

(a)   There were some very good detailed answers here, but there were also a significant number which failed to set the passage within the wider context of Act IV and the play as a whole, giving the reader some doubt as to how familiar these candidates were with the play.

(b)   This question was not chosen by as many candidates, but those who did, answered well with a good discussion of the relationship between mother and daughter. This was a question which allowed for some individual views about the relationship and well-argued essays, carefully illustrated by quotations, scored highly.

Question 3

Many of the answers to this question were disappointing. Responses to the printed excerpt were excellent, showing a good use of language and an ability to write in Chinese about poetry, but it was apparent that many candidates had not read the whole poem.

(a)   There were some very good answers, but too many candidates had obviously not read the whole of the poem. Their answers were therefore incomplete. Too few candidates knew about the period in China during which the poem was written and the allusions which the poet was making. This meant that they did not score as highly as they otherwise might have done.

(b)   The relatively small number of candidates answering this question scored well. They should have been comparing two poems on the syllabus rather than any two of Ai Qing's poems.

Question 4

(a)   There were some excellent answers to this question, but also some candidates who had not read the text.

(b)   Too few candidates answered this question to make any general comment.

Section 2

Question 5

Both options were answered well. However, all candidates would have benefited from a better use of well-chosen quotations to illustrate their points. Too many resorted to copying out large chunks of text, which they then did not acknowledge. Many candidates had insufficient background knowledge of China at the time, which was necessary to add depth to their answers. Many would have benefited from better organisation of their material.

Question 6

Too few candidates answered these questions to be able to make any general comments.

Question 7

(a) There were some competent answers and candidates answering this question often illustrated answers well with references to, and quotations from, the text. However, candidates often had insufficient background knowledge about this period in China; this prevented their answers from being complete.

(b) There were some very good explanations of Miss Lin's words. However, answers about her role in the story often lacked analysis and concrete examples.

Question 8

(a) This text was well-known by the candidates and there were some very good essays written.

(b) This question was answered well. The second half was designed to encourage candidates to talk in more detail about Ba Jin's use of language. Candidates who did not quite manage to do this still scored well, but the few who did scored very high marks indeed.

Paper 9715/05

Prose

General comments

Candidates taking this prose paper, in general, did very well. The best provided accurate and careful translations of the English in very well-expressed Chinese. In some cases, however, candidates lost marks by providing rather loose translations of the general meaning of a sentence, as for instance in a phrase like 'one watching the other reading' which can and should be more accurately translated than 'he watched her read a magazine'. Candidates were generally successful in providing an intelligent alternative for words or phrases they did not know, rather than leaving gaps and thereby influencing adversely the flow of their translation.

Some candidates had a few problems understanding the English text. A number of candidates had difficulties with the following words and phrases: 'bunk', 'what did she do for a living?', 'journalist', 'slightly'. Where candidates did not know the word for 'bunk', some failed to translate/ignored the words 'opposite' and 'bottom', which they probably knew and could have used more successfully to help them infer what 'bunk' might be. 'Slow trains always drag out the time' caused some difficulties. Here, a range of answers which conveyed the meaning of the image was accepted. Candidates coped admirably with the last sentence of the prose which was quite difficult and, therefore, allocated six marks in the mark scheme.

Having finished the prose, candidates should always leave time to check their work and also to read through the translation to polish/improve their language where possible.