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Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Japanese (9JA0)

Paper 02: Translation into Japanese and written
response to works

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Introduction

Although this specification was first examined in 2020, it was only this year for the first time that the examination was sat 'properly' by a good number of candidates. It was, therefore, particularly pleasing to find that candidates had been well prepared for this paper; they responded well to both the translation and the essay questions. For the latter, most were able to form an argument, get their point across and use a range of structures and vocabulary. Whilst some of the works of literature and the films were perhaps predictably more 'popular' than others, there was no question which had no takers.

Q1: Translation

Since the translation is marked in 'chunks' (as detailed on the mark scheme), it is possible for all learners at every level to gain marks, and teachers should make this clear to candidates.

Whilst it is close to impossible with many structures in Japanese to make it clear exactly which structure is being tested (の_に, for example), it is, of course, also the case that any equivalent alternative will be accepted as a correct answer. Candidates would be well advised to check the text before starting to identify phrases/key words which give an indication of structures which, it is hoped, will be used: 'the purpose of this' (ため), 'according to' (によると), 'it appears' (ようです), 'despite' (の_に), 'you can see' (ことがわかる), etc.

A few comments on the translation, divided by paragraph:

Paragraph 1

- 'survey': many candidates used 調査 or アンケート to express this. It was hoped that students would have come across this word within their 自由研究、if nowhere else.
- 'purpose': many candidates took the literal approach and started with 'この目的は' but if they did this, they had to finish with a 'balancing' structure such as '調べることです'.

Paragraph 2

- 'data': this word caused considerable problems when written in katakana.
- 'it appears....': this was a long and challenging sentence in parts. Some candidates divided it into two, which is perfectly acceptable, as long as the intended meaning is covered.
- 'sad': this became 'lonely' for quite a few candidates

Paragraph 3

- 'big social problem': with relatively easy words like this, candidates should take care to include all elements of the English. Many omitted 'big' or 'social'.

Paragraph 4

- 'countries like': this was a case where the small word 'like' makes a difference to the meaning and had to be conveyed in some way.
- 'satisfied': it was pleasing to see how many candidates knew the phrase 満足する.

Q2-Q7: responses to literature and films

The most successful candidates made a brief reference to the question in their introduction, made a series of clearly defined points to support their argument, backed up in each case by evidence from the work/film, and then rounded off with a short conclusion. To help the 'flow' of the essay, it is useful to refer back to the question at frequent intervals to show the reader where the argument is going. Equally, phrases such as まず、それから、最後に, combined with effective use of paragraphs, guide the reader through the essay. It did not matter whether the writer was 'wrong' or 'right' in the examiner's view, as long as a cogent argument was made to support the opening declaration. Sometimes candidates seemed to change their opinion halfway through, which meant that a 'persuasive conclusion' was difficult to reach. Too many essays spent too long recounting the story, which, while it gave the candidate a chance to show off the language they had gained during the course, meant that fewer relevant points could be made. Candidates should be trained, perhaps, to summarise a story or an important scene in a concise way which does not hold up the argument.

It may also seem an obvious point, but candidates should know the relevant vocabulary (and kanji, where necessary) for their chosen work. It was disappointing to find that in discussions of 'キッチン' some wrote Yuichi's name in hiragana (despite it being on the question paper!) and referred to his mother as エリカ.

2 どんどん読めるいろいろな話

- (a) The best responses to this question chose appropriate stories and gave clear examples of how characters learnt. In 「一房のぶどう」, for example, 「ぼく」 learns not only how to forgive himself, but also how to accept forgiveness from others. Some candidates discussed the Christian background to the story, which, while interesting, added little more to the argument. Whilst most were clear about what was learnt in this story, candidates were far less clear about the hunters in 「注文の多い料理店」 or the priest Naigu in 「鼻」. As

stated previously, it does not matter what side of the argument is presented, but it needs to be consistent. Some thought the hunters' white faces showed that they had learnt their lesson, while others decided that the purchase of a cheap chicken as a cover story showed the opposite.

- (b) Responses to this question tended to give a lot of unnecessary story detail (especially when using 「鼻」 as an example) which only told us about the characters, rather than the society in which they are portrayed. Discussions about 「一房のぶどう」 could correctly here have talked about the Christian background of the story, but on a simpler level just have shown how the focus on the better quality pencils, brought from abroad, was a sign of how Japan was opening up to the United States in particular at that period in time. (See Indicative Content for further examples.)

3 キッチン

- (a) This essay was attempted by a good many candidates and provided some interesting interpretations of the work. The best candidates examined the evidence from both sides and came to a conclusion, giving proof from the text of what they were saying. Most decided it was **not** a love story: it was not the time for either of them to be falling in love, their relationship was more that of very close friends, they were like a close family, Eriko was a more important character. Relatively few candidates included the evidence of the dream they share or the comments that Mikage makes about falling in love with Yuichi. Too many candidates seemed unable to decide, which meant that their essay suffered overall in terms of 'convincing interpretations'.
- (b) Not many candidates attempted this question and those who did often focused on the 暗い element, ignoring the word ユーモア. Of course, a short paragraph about the 'dark' aspects of the story was expected, but the main focus was intended to be humour in the story, mainly in the tone of Mikage's narration. (See Indicative Content for examples.) For some, ユーモア was taken to mean 明るい (as an antithesis to 暗い) and an interesting (but largely irrelevant) discussion about the imagery of 'light' throughout the work followed.

4 窓際のトットちゃん

- (a) Of the two トットちゃん essays, this was the more challenging as it needed an analysis of why the author presents herself in the third person in the book. The more perceptive writers commented that it allowed comment/explanation from the adult Tetsuko on Totto-chan's behaviour, but some candidates struggled to get this idea across clearly. (Again, see Indicative Content for further ideas.)

- (b) This essay was a popular choice and was often answered very well. The best responses took an aspect of the headteacher's educational philosophy and gave good examples of that philosophy at work in the school. The scenes most commonly referred to were: the unconventional timetable and class layout showed the freedom given to children and the desire to build on their individual strengths; the swimming pool and sports day scenes showed the headteacher's desire to eradicate difference between the children and to build confidence in those with physical disabilities; Totto's search for her lost purse showed the granting of responsibility to a child for his/her own actions.
- Less successful essays described the educational approach and the headteacher's experiences of living abroad without tying them to events in the book. Some omitted brief detail where it would have been useful, such as a description of the games that the headteacher had developed to allow the disabled children to win.
- One language-related problem with this essay is how to translate '(educational) philosophy': 哲学 is clearly not the correct word in this context. The word used in the question (考え方) would seem to be suitable.

5 千と千尋の神隠し

- (a) Of the two essays about this film, this option was, perhaps not surprisingly, the less popular, but many candidates wrote convincingly of the role played by water in the film. Many wrote about water as a barrier between the two worlds, water's function as a source of work in the bath house, water as a character in the shape of Haku. (See Indicative Content for further details.) Some wrote about pollution of the environment, and while this theme is undoubtedly present within the film, answers tended to dwell too long on this aspect and thus lost focus.
- (b) This was the most popular essay choice of the whole paper and gave rise to some very impressive responses. The best chose a few key aspects (becoming strong as an individual, standing up to authority, learning to be polite, helping others) and showed incidents where growth in her character can be clearly observed. Candidates were well prepared to write about Chihiro's development, especially in the excellent vocabulary used to describe her at the beginning: 泣き虫、お母さんの腕にしがみつく、怖がっている、すねる. A few candidates were brave enough to point out indications that Chihiro has **not** really changed that much, but they were very much in the minority.

6 ディア・ドクター

Only a handful of candidates answered either of the essays concerning this film. For possible material to include in an answer, please refer to the Indicative Content in the mark scheme.

7 誰も知らない

- (a) The best answers to this question about the world outside the apartment where the children live, largely without an adult in charge, spoke of the freedom that the local area afforded initially just Akira, and then later all four of them as the park becomes their bathroom and laundry. At the same time the area is also a place of danger, where the adults could report them at any moment (but repeatedly fail to do so) . The gradual movement of the younger boy towards the 'forbidden' outside space of the balcony also shows how the initial 'rules' are gradually being eroded as money runs out. Only a few candidates mentioned the use of shots outside the apartment to show the passing of the seasons.
- (b) This essay also asked candidates to make a choice about which of the two older siblings was the most しっかりしている. Most candidates sensibly discussed both Akira and Kyoko and the role(s) within the sibling group that each of them plays. Whilst it was generally agreed that there is a period in which Akira understandably starts to shirk his responsibility and seek out the 'fun' that a boy of his age should be having, most candidates found him to be the one who bears the most responsibility overall.

General comments

- candidates should make sure that in the case of verbs that they know they may well use frequently (eg 表す), they know which おくりがな are required.
- when discussing the thoughts of characters, candidates should try to make clear when saying と思っている whether it is the character who is thinking or the candidate. There were occasions when it was difficult to accurately identify the subject of the verb. Perhaps either adding a subject to clarify (と私が思っている) or using ようだ would help.
- there should be enough 原稿用紙 in the question paper for candidates to present a satisfying argument, and certainly in terms of time management as well, writing too much for one essay will probably be

disadvantageous to the candidate. However, if there is a genuine need for extra paper, it is fine to continue writing **across** the page from left to right, perhaps writing on alternate lines to aid readability. For technical reasons, candidates are asked **not** to rotate extra sheets.

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