



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In AS Level Russian (8RU0/02)

Advanced Subsidiary
Paper 2: Written response to works and
translation:

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Examiners' Report 8RU0/02

Purpose of the paper

The unit is designed to test candidates' ability to write accurately in Russian, structure their responses and demonstrate their knowledge of the target-language culture and/or society through the study and critical response to a literary text or film.

This was the second year of the AS Level specification, which will be withdrawn after the Summer 2020 series. There were around 90 entries, and the majority of these scored highly. Candidates who had been comprehensively prepared for the demands of the examination were able to perform well, particularly learner candidates who had been taught how to structure the answer to the question on their chosen text or film.

Structure of the examination

The paper requires candidates to complete a translation into Russian and then write one essay on one of the texts or films that they have studied. The translation (section A) is worth 20 of the available 60 marks, and the essay (section B for texts and section C for films) is worth the remaining 40 marks, split between 20 marks for Content and Critical Response and 20 marks for Accuracy and Range of Language. An appropriate division of time in the examination would be for candidates to spend about 25 minutes on the translation and the remaining hour and 15 minutes on the essay, including spending time planning their response carefully.

Advice to centres

In contrast with the legacy AS and A Level specification essays, there is no longer any penalty applied for essays that are overlong, although teachers and candidates are encouraged to produce essays that fall within the suggested 215-word limit for AS Level. Part of the skill at this level is to marshal material appropriately and be selective about what to include and what not to include. Quotations from texts or films are not counted as part of any word count, as previously.

Based on their performance in this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Ensure that you prepare thoroughly for the translation task by studying the prescribed grammar list on page 45 of the specification;
- Divide your time carefully and do not spend too much time on the translation task;
- Check that you have not omitted any word from the translation task;
- Learn your grammatical endings carefully, focusing particularly on the cases required after prepositions and some common verbs;
- Ensure you know a range of essay phrases that will help you to write a critical response to the work you have studied;
- Seek to use more complex grammatical structures in your essay, such as passives or conditionals;
- Ensure that you know your text or film well and have a good range of quotations to back up your points;

- Plan your essay carefully, thinking about what your conclusion will be;
- Use a 'Point, Evidence, Explain, Link' approach to writing your essay, ensuring that you make a critical point and then back it up using evidence, explain your point in more depth and then link it to your overall argument;
- Write your essay in paragraphs so that the examiner can follow your points;
- Keep to the suggested word limit and select your material carefully;
- Ensure that your handwriting is legible.

The examining team would like to take this opportunity to thank those teachers of Russian who present excellent candidates and have prepared them thoroughly for the second year of this examination, many taking careful note of the advice from last year's report.

Section A: Translation

Section A of this paper required candidates to translate a short passage of English into Russian. The passage will always be based on one of the sub-themes from Theme 1 or Theme 2 from page 8 of the specification. The translation is split into 20 'assessable elements' (see the mark scheme) and one mark is awarded for each correct element. For an element to be considered correct it must have all the details contained in the English original (i.e. no word omitted) and the grammatical endings must all be correct (including noun, verb and adjective endings). Spelling errors are tolerated, provided they are not part of the grammatical ending. Having said, one-letter errors in adjective endings were tolerated as spelling errors. Overall, the majority of candidates performed well in this task. As they had studied the topic of the translation, they knew the relevant vocabulary and were able to deploy their knowledge of grammar. Many learner candidates were able to score around 12-16 marks out of 20, although the number of learner candidates scoring above this was very low. Some native speaker candidates lost marks due to omission of elements, e.g. they failed to translate 'nowadays'. As with the legacy A Level specification, those with little ability to manipulate the grammar of the language scored very low marks in this task, even when they knew every word of the required vocabulary.

Candidates faced the most difficulty with the following elements:

- 'there is less freedom of expression– 'freedom of expression' was often rendered incorrectly or not known by learner candidates
- 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand' where not known by a surprisingly high number of native speaker and learner candidates
- 'when there are financial problems' – 'financial' was occasionally translated as 'финансиальный' by learner candidates
- 'support the media' – native speaker candidates often translated 'the media' as 'медия' and this was not accepted
- 'popular Russian television channels and newspapers' was often wrong due to the sequence of genitive plural endings required after 'много' from the previous element

- 'with different political ideas' was often translated as 'с другими политическими идеями'

Sections B and C: Written Response to Works or Films

In section, B or C candidates were required to write an essay on one of the texts of films that they have studied that presented a critical response. A critical response is defined in the specification as the presentation and justification of points of view, the development of arguments and the drawing of conclusions based on understanding. Accordingly, essays that simply re-presented the story from the text or film scored very low marks. A critical response always involves the candidate using the essay to make points about the question being asked and using evidence to back up these points.

Essays that scored the highest marks (17-20) in the 'Critical Response' (AO4) mark grid were relevant, succinct, carefully planned and focused on giving a critical response throughout. Examples (usually in the form of targeted quotations or short descriptions of events or actions) were used consistently to back up the points being made, and the points were linked to an overall argument. Structure was fully coherent and the examiner could follow the sophisticated points being made throughout. There was no retelling of the story or lack of focus on the specific question being asked, although it was not necessary to answer the specific bullet points given, as these are only a guide as to how an answer might be structured. There was invariably a very detailed knowledge of the text amongst those candidates scoring the highest marks.

Essays that scored the highest marks (17-20) in the 'Accuracy and range of grammatical structures and vocabulary' (AO3) mark grid had a range of complex structures (such as passives, relative pronouns, extended sentences expressing sophisticated points etc.). There was regular use of terminology and structures appropriate for critical response in a literature or film essay, with a good command of specialist vocabulary such as 'director', 'character', 'plot', and also frequent structures allowing for appropriate critical response (such as 'the reader can see that...', 'from this it can be concluded that...' or 'this quotation shows that...'). To score the highest marks, writing does not have to be error free, but the general impression does have to be of accurate language with errors likely to be in more unusual or irregular forms.

Question 2 - *Пиковая дама* (Pushkin)

As last year, question 2 on Pushkin's *Пиковая дама* was the most popular of the essay options, with more answers to question 2(a) on the theme of madness and obsession than on 2(b), the role of Lizaveta Ivanovna. Candidates offering this text invariably knew the text well, and usually very well, being able to offer quotations and detailed descriptions. Despite this, there were, unfortunately, very many answers to question 2(a) which simply retold the story chronologically, some only occasionally mentioning madness or greed where they thought they came up in the story. The weakest answers to question 2(b) also did this, as they simply retold Lizaveta's Ivanovna's story rather than making critical points about what we learn about her character using evidence to support them. There was large number of non-learner candidates who wrote answers to question 2, many of whom have seemingly been given no guidance on structuring an essay of this type, even though they knew the text well. The best answers, usually from learner candidates, had adopted the advice given in last year's report to plan the essay to answer the question, and use a 'point-evidence-explain-link' structure for paragraphs.

Question 3 - *Вишнёвый сад* (Chekhov)

There were very few answers to question 3 on Chekhov's *Вишнёвый сад*. Those that were presented usually showed a good knowledge of the play, although in some examples (as last year) candidates referred to the play as a 'story'. Candidates are reminded that they should have a good technical vocabulary for discussing literature, and in the case of plays, should refer to the 'play', 'audience' etc., rather than the 'book' or 'reader'. The most successful answers were to question 3b, discussing the theme of liberation. This was also the most popular choice. Candidates who knew the text well were able to relate this theme to all the characters, and draw careful conclusions about the extent to which those who are supposed to be 'free' actually are. Answers to 3(a) occasionally failed to refer to all of the servants in the play, or focused on simply retelling their stories or recounting their actions, rather than making critical points based in evidence.

Question 4 - Неделя как неделя (Baranskaya)

There were very few answers to question 4 on Baranskaya's *Неделя как неделя*, and as last year, some of those presented did not show sufficient knowledge of the text to score more than 1-4 for Critical response. In answer to question 4(b), some candidates offered a very generally description of the difficulties of life in the Soviet Union, clearly not having been prepared for this examination in any way and having not read any of the texts or seen any of the films, and so seeing this question as their best chance of having something to say, as it did not refer to any specific character.

Question 5 - Крылья (Shepitko)

There were also very few answers to question 5 on Shepitko's *Крылья*. Most of the answers were to question 5(a) on the theme of nostalgia in the film. The most successful answers used examples from the film to illustrate the points being made, for example made careful reference to the flashback scenes and the use of devices such as music and whimsical scenes of fighter planes to evoke Nadezhda Stepanovna's past.

Question 6 - Утомлённые солнцем (Mikhalkov)

Mikhalkov's film was the second most popular of the essay options, with most of the answers coming from learner candidates. These candidates had been very well prepared for the demands of this question. They were able to plan their answer, structure it to make different points in each paragraph, use evidence from the film to support their points, and come to a conclusion within the 215-word limit. The average mark for Critical response (AO4) was therefore much higher than for question 2. The essays offered were an even split between 6(a) and 6(b). Successful answers to 6(a) focused on the conflict exemplified by Mitya in the film, his role in the love triangle with Kotov and Marusia, his role in the Civil War and his lack of freedom as an NKVD operative. Candidates usually had a very good understanding of the social and historical context, and were able to make interesting points about Mitya's role and what he could represent if the film is taken as an allegory of wider Soviet society. Successful answers to 6(b) were able to draw out similarities and differences between the characters' attitudes towards Soviet power and to Stalin himself. Many candidates understood the idea of 'blind belief' and were able to use examples from the film to show how this has happened, its impact on the individual characters, and then on Soviet society. Weaker answers often focused on treating the separate bullet points in the question in turn, but not on creating a wider overall argument. These candidates were unlikely to be able to score in the top band (17-20) for Critical response (AO4).

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found on the website at:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

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