

CHINESE LITERATURE

Paper 8669/04

Texts

General comments

All candidates displayed a good or excellent standard of written Chinese. Overall there was more evidence of competent essay planning than in previous years.

Many candidates taking this paper did extremely 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 in which it was set. Other candidates showed a good knowledge of the text, but were often unable to set the text within the context of the period in mainland China to which it was referring.

Some candidates did not do as well in this paper as they should have done, as some of their answers showed no evidence that they had ever read the text for which they were answering the question. One or two just referred to the first few pages of a text in their answer, which made the Examiner question whether they were reading an unannotated copy of the text for the first time in the examination room. Even if a candidate's standard of written Chinese is high, if they have not read the text for which they are writing an answer, then they will not be able to score highly.

A number of candidates are still misreading the rubrics. 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. If a candidate answers two questions on the same text, only the first will be marked. If a candidate answers three questions from one section, only the first two will be marked etc.

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 over the years, but too many candidates still 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, 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.

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

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

- (a) This question was a relatively straightforward choice and well-answered on the whole. To gain top marks, candidates needed to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the play; a general idea of the plot was not sufficient.

- (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, giving context to and explaining the questions posed and developing a well thought out response.

Question 2

Candidates found the questions on poetry the most difficult to answer. 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 these questions unless they really know the poems well and have been taught how to approach poetry.

- (a) There were some good and imaginative answers to (ii) and (iv) here, although many candidates did not give the impression of knowing much about Xu Zhimo's poetry and life in general. The discussion in (i) on metaphor was generally weak, especially as many candidates did not seem to realise that there are more verses in the poem than those printed. Candidates were only able to make some general observations and did not give any in depth analysis of individual metaphors. Few were able to make any relevant comment for instance on the use of repetition in the poem in response to (iii).
- (b) Not enough candidates answered this question for a comment to be made. This perhaps reflects the lack of in-depth knowledge of Xu Zhimo's poems set on this syllabus.

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.
- (b) Those candidates choosing this question answered well. Candidates must choose specific examples from the text to illustrate their answers.

Section 2

Question 4

- (a) There were some excellent answers to this question. However, a few candidates chose to base their entire answer on Han Shaogong's views on rural life on the quote given in the question, which meant that they did not score highly.
- (b) Too few candidates answered this question to make any general comment.

Question 5

Both essays for **Question 5** were answered well. However, all candidates would have benefited from a better use of well-chosen quotations to illustrate their points, although the tendency to copy out large chunks of unacknowledged text was much improved in comparison to previous years. A few candidates had insufficient background knowledge of China at the time, which was necessary to add depth to their answers.

Question 6

- (a) This question was answered well on the whole, but some candidates showed very little knowledge of China at the time or of Lu Xun's intentions in writing the story.
- (b) Some candidates managed to analyse the roles of Fourth Uncle and Auntie in the story. However, a significant number just wrote a narrative of their appearances as the story unfolded without any attempt to explain their role.