



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Japanese (9JA0/02)
Paper 2: Translation into Japanese and Written
response to works

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BOTH tasks in this paper (translation and essay writing) are familiar from the previous specification, so there is no added difficulty in terms of knowing 'what to do'. There is now the option to write about film, but choosing two texts from the literature list is allowed. (Candidates must, however, be made aware that there is an 'or' clearly printed between the two alternatives for each work of literature/film: it is NOT permitted to write two essays on the same work.) Of course, the entry for this session was much smaller than normal, but it was still disappointing to note that there were no essays written about two of the films. There is, perhaps, an expectation that essays on film will demand a degree of technical language, but as can hopefully be seen from the essay questions set this autumn, this is not necessarily the case; even where some discussion of the technical aspects of film-making would be helpful, it is not expected that candidate use anything more than basic 'film language'.

TRANSLATION

Generally, this was dealt with very capably by candidates. Where the given translation differed from the MS, credit was of course given for things which overall gave the same meaning, with some allowance given for omission of small details. Where candidates had diverged substantially from the intended translation, this was rewarded again by judging which elements of the passage were present/missing. On the whole there were no misunderstandings of the English, although a few candidates interpreted 'beside the pool' as 'apart from the pool'.

ESSAYS

As noted above, not all the essay questions were attempted. The most 'popular' literature essays were those about Totto-chan; many of the native speaker candidates had possibly read this when younger. In many cases across all the works of literature, there was too much 'story-telling' without sufficient analysis to make the examples explicitly relevant to the writer's argument, which inevitably affected the mark for Critical and Analytical Response.

As far as film was concerned, there were no discussions of 'Nobody Knows' or 'Dear Doctor' which was disappointing. Again, this was perhaps because the native speaker candidates (and the taught) were already familiar with the Studio Ghibli film. Overall, it could be that writing about film for the first time in this level exam was seen (unnecessarily) as challenging; it was notable that even when writing about 'Spirited Away', candidates rarely made reference to the elements that make it such a memorable film: the colour, the camera movement, the moments of stillness, the music.

どんどん読めるいろいろな話

2a Several candidates attempted this question and produced essays of a good standard. In all cases, the more obvious 'bad' characters were mentioned (the priest, the hunters, the boy who steals pencils); more interesting approaches talked about the role of the cat in underlining the faults in human nature. What was missing from all essays was the more subtle displays of 'badness', such as the thief and the husband, whose behaviour changes; the use of humour too, such as in the description of the self-obsessed 美人, was also not commented on.

2b (no essays)

キッチン

3a This essay was answered well in many cases. Students picked up on the themes of death and loneliness surrounding both Mikage and Yuichi, and the fact that both characters are well aware of this link between them. Some went on to mention the dream that they both have, and the use of food as a symbol of the growing bond between them.

3b Many wrote very well on this topic: candidates picked up on the images of light throughout the novel, related most clearly to Eriko, contrasting with the dark sometimes around Mikage/Yuichi. More attention to the frequent references to sources of light, particularly around Eriko, would have been beneficial. There was very little mention also of how 'light' is brought into the novel overall and into the tone of the writing. The work is far from dark/bleak throughout and there are 'lighter', amusing scenes to balance the dark reality of the main couple's situation; humour too is almost always present, often directed by Mikage at herself.

窓際のトットちゃん

4a There were not as many responses to this as to 4b, perhaps because the question demanded a wider knowledge of the book as a whole. However, a very 'deep' analysis of the work was not needed. Points that could have been made include: the short chapters, the variety of scene/character, the humour both in events (falling into the toilet outlet being a good example) and in the author's attitude to her 'characters', the interesting historical details (such as what money could buy), the bleaker references to the harsh reality of the build-up to WWII.

4b Candidates were often very familiar with the details of the first school that she attended, but not all candidates clearly started what the events showed about Totto's character. (Some also related events at Tomoe school, which was not the focus of the essay as was made very clear in the question.) Better answers mentioned Totto's boundless curiosity, her need to be unrestricted (as shown by her drawing going over the edges of the paper) and her potential as a leader. In some cases there was too much story-telling without making connections to the essay question.

千と千尋の神隠し

5a In answer to this question, many candidates made very perceptive points about Chihiro's willingness to keep going for the sake of others and not to worry about consequences for herself (e.g. leading Kaonashi out of the bathhouse, helping Haku rid himself of the curse, setting off on a possibly one-way journey). In many ways she is not the typical 'hero' - her nickname ちび makes this clear - but most argued that her actions through the film (after the first scenes where she is a petulant teenager) set her apart from the other characters.

5b While most candidates referred to the more obvious 'journeys' made in this film by Chihiro, both physically getting on the train through the ocean and spiritually from bad-tempered child to self-sacrificing 'hero', there were few responses that made note of other, smaller journeys within the film. Crossing the bridge into the bathhouse is in itself a meaningful journey; within her new home Chihiro has to journey down the long flight of steps to see Kamaji and also travel up in the lift to see Yubaba to demand work; we frequently see Haku in his guise as a dragon returning from long, tiring journeys; the film is framed at either end by a car journey.

6 a/b, 7 a/b

There were no responses to these.

