

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, candidates had the most difficulty with the first question. The second, in contrast, was managed best. The shortcomings and qualities that appeared in the third question were roughly the same for most candidates.

On the whole, the work was of a good stylistic standard and did not contain many serious shortcomings in grammar. It was clear that the candidates had worked very hard to produce good answers.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question asked candidates to summarise in their own words the issues surrounding football as described in the first two texts.

Text 1 describes how the *Klabzuba* team invite a group of village boys to play a match with them and how this invitation is rejected because, as one of the village boys says, the *Klabzubas* are professional and play for money whilst the village boys play for honour. The text presents the conflict between football as a source of achievement, passion and joy on the one side and as a source of big earnings and commerce on the other.

Text 2 is an article written in response to the performance of the Czech footballers at the European Championship in 2004. It is a reflection on how sport has become a form of show business where spectacle and money matter above all.

Candidates had to analyse and summarise both texts and identify ideas they had in common. They also had to show how the two texts differed from each other. Some candidates found it difficult to interpret the texts impartially, i.e. while ignoring their own views on the issues concerned. Other candidates reached superficial conclusions of the type: "In both texts footballers are only interested in money!" Unfortunately, such statements oversimplified the subtle issues raised in the texts.

Otherwise, candidates managed this task very well and mostly managed to capture the basic points from both texts.

Question 2

In the second part of the test the task was to write to a publication arguing why one would or would not like to be a sportsman or sportswoman. The theme of this task was very close to many of the candidates and they used the opportunity to express their own experience and opinion on sports. Many candidates expressed a deep understanding of the problems connected with top-class sport.

Candidates who managed to go beyond the specific issues raised in the two texts by also drawing on other relevant facts and opinions, gained extra credit.

Question 3

Text 3 is a police report relating to an incident where a car has been broken into. A bag with documents is stolen. Here, students had to write the story of how the incident happened from the car owner's point of view, using information from the report while also drawing on their imagination and creativity.

Many candidates were evidently strongly influenced by the language of the police report; in their own narration they often borrowed its style, used its terminology and even sometimes lifted whole sentences from it. As a result, some accounts were a little mechanical and lacked emotion and tension.

Imaginative use of language, as well as purposeful use of direct speech and idiomatic Czech were rewarded. This made essays livelier and set them apart from the police report on which they were based.

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/03
Continuous Writing

General comments

The topic selected most frequently was number 2 (description of a storm), followed by argumentative topics on lies (number 1), the relationship between parents and children (number 3) and knowledge of foreign languages (number 8). Only a very few candidates selected the remaining topics.

Most candidates wrote good work. Generally, they did not have many problems with grammar and the content of their work was usually original and full of ideas. Problems were, on the whole, more of the stylistic kind. Quite a large number of candidates struggled to find a mature style that would have made their essay more clear and entertaining for the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Topics 1, 3, 8

Work of high quality went into depth, sustained focus and relevance and contained a final paragraph which summarised views and findings.

Conversely, work of average to poor quality was characterised by a lack of thoroughness and neglect of structure. Candidates who wrote such work often appeared to write disjointed comments as they occurred to them in the course of writing. Some candidates jumped from one statement to the next without considering the logic of their argument. Among such candidates were some who repeated the same point several times.

It is strongly recommended that candidates plan a structure for their essay before they start writing. An argumentative essay should contain an introduction, a focussed discussion divided into several paragraphs and a conclusion summarising the main points which may contain the final opinion(s) arrived at by the writer.

A lack of structure is likely to result in unclear work, which causes problems for the reader, as well as the writer; some candidates ended up contradicting themselves, without, perhaps, even realising it. It is therefore also essential that the candidate read through the finished text in order to consider whether it is clear and intelligible to the reader. On a more sophisticated level, some candidates resorted to drawing on fixed opinion expressed in clichés. Candidates should strive to express their own opinion and seek to justify it sufficiently.

Topic 2

Most candidates coped well with this task. However, choice of words and style of expression in a descriptive task are very important. A few candidates strained to express themselves, frequently resorting to hyperbole to produce dramatic effect. These exaggerations tended to detract from the quality of some of the candidates' work.

Topic 4

Candidates were asked to write about bad luck and some used a witty story for illustrative purposes. A few candidates got caught up in the intricacies of their stories and forgot to return to a contemplation on the main issue. However, most candidates did well.

Topics 5, 6, 7 and 9

Only a very small number of candidates chose these topics. General comments can therefore not be made.