

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/01

Reading

General comments

Most candidates responded very positively to the themes of aggression and violence in buses, and tension between students in schools. Most candidates could relate to these topics and showed some degree of enthusiasm in their responses in **Question 2**. The vast majority of candidates understood the two texts very clearly, but a small number thought the buses in the first text were school buses, maybe because the second text dealt with a problem within a school. Apart from this small misreading, it was very encouraging to see that the overall understanding of the two texts was generally high for almost all of the candidates.

It was particularly pleasing to see that all candidates, with no exceptions, completed the paper. Many candidates had time to write a plan or a rough draft, and it was a positive indication that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination, as well as coached on how to manage their time allowance. The word limit recommendation was also better respected than in previous years, and very few candidates ignored the guidelines.

The quality and accuracy of the language used in the answers overall varied greatly from a mistake-free paper to some scripts containing an abundance of basic errors such as the repeated confusion between *se* and *ce*, *ces/ses/c'est*, *on/ont*, *peu/peut*, *leur/ leurs*, *les/leur*, *a/à* and a lack of distinction between *leur vie* and *leurs vies* for example. Because of the subject matter, there was some interference from English in the spelling of certain words and use of certain phrases, for example *sur les bus*, *les buses*, *agresser* and *abord* instead of *à bord*. Generally speaking, however, the accuracy of the language has improved in comparison with last year's paper.

It must be stressed that the candidates must read the questions from **Question 1** very carefully and make sure that they answer in the format required by the question. The number of marks allocated by the side of the each question serves as a clear indicator of how many ideas need to be included in order to gain full marks.

The general neatness of the answers and the quality of the handwriting were quite high, and it was pleasing to see that many candidates had taken pride in their work during the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Content:

- (a) Candidates needed to list two different problems, as the question was worded in the plural, in order to gain full marks, i.e. the aggression/violence towards bus drivers and the material damage to the buses.
- (b) Most candidates responded successfully.
- (c) Candidates had to explain how the previous situation had failed, as well as why the hostesses had been opted for: two ideas for two marks.
- (d) This was the most successful answer of the whole question. Better candidates went beyond the requirements and explained the metaphor and the effect of the chosen words on the reader. Well done!

- (e) Some candidates replied in a manner too vague to deserve marks. *ça ne marchera pas*, for example, was not precise enough. Better candidates, however, wrote about the feelings of threatened drivers who could see the hope of better working conditions thanks to the hostesses.
- (f) Like **Question (d)**, practically all candidates replied well.
- (g) Because the answer to this question was not factual, or found specifically in the text, candidates could provide a wide range of interpretations/wordings and receive marks, but many found it challenging. However, although the accepted answers covered the director's psychology, courage, attitude to society, women and young people, candidates still had to link their responses to the text. Consequently, the description of him being old, tall and with blond hair, was not the intended answer. Whenever the candidates are asked to provide an answer which involves some degree of interpretation, they must remember to use the text to support their answer.
- (h) Excellent and methodical answers.
- (i) Similarly to (g), the answer required supporting reference from the text. Weaker candidates used the *prévention dans les écoles*, which was not related to the music festival.
- (j) This was the most challenging question and only a handful of students gained full marks. All candidates could explain the meaning of the expressions, but a vast quantity did not explain why the author chose these words: *pourquoi l'auteur utilise ces expressions*. Better candidates, however, provided technical explanations of metaphors and the fact that the readers are likely to be young people and understand those words better.
- (k) Most candidates explained their feelings about the title accurately, but some overlooked the second part of the question and did not provide their own suggestion. It was entertaining to witness the poetic and humorous skills of some candidates.

Language

There was much evidence of the candidates' better use of French in this question, as good candidates were often successful in re-wording the ideas from the texts. There were many opportunities to build in relative clauses (*Il me semble que.....*), subjunctives (*bien que les chauffeurs soient agressés.....*) and show the use of the passive voice (*les adolescents sont mal compris par la société.....*). The main source of language mistakes remains the fact that some candidates cannot copy accurately words they use from the text (*les bus* with English plural, *chauffeurs* with only one f, *gardien* with a u, etc.). Candidates also need to learn and practise the rules of the agreement of the past participle with *avoir/être*.

Question 2

Content

With regard to the content, this question was completed successfully by most candidates. Many candidates could really identify the points of similarity and difference between Sabrina and the hostesses in the buses.

The best candidates began their writing with a small introduction, wrote two paragraphs, one for the common ideas and one for the diverging ideas, and then finished with a clear conclusion.

The next range of candidates, with average marks, wrote one paragraph about the buses and one about the school, but still described what made the two situations similar or different. However, because their 'listing' was not so systematic, they missed some important ideas.

The weaker candidates misread or misunderstood the rubric completely and either wrote a summary of the text without any comparison at all or, in a handful of cases, they wrote a debate about violence in buses and in schools.

Language

Most candidates found it easy to write the comparative résumé, using the vocabulary from the source texts as well as their own, but only the better candidates used suitable words and appropriate sentences to indicate a clear comparison (*par contre, ainsi que, en ce qui concerne Sabrina* etc.). Generally, the lexical

knowledge of school and adolescent violence was well used by the candidates. From the language point of view, the mistakes were identical to those listed for **Question 1**.

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Paper 0501/02

Writing

General comments

Style and accuracy:

Candidates' scripts generally displayed a certain level of fluency, with a range of structures and a use of conjunctions reflecting a first language level. Good scripts showed use of elaborate structures and a variety of tenses.

Candidates generally used varied and appropriate vocabulary and coped well with the range of topics (environmental issues in **Section 1, Question d**, in particular).

Punctuation was mostly correct. The overall meaning of the essays was not often in doubt, but the weaker scripts were often characterised by a lack of paragraph division, errors within sentences (lack of commas) and by an overuse of dialogue form without correct punctuation.

A certain number of scripts displayed accurate spelling and read very well, but overall, the level of fluency did not tend to be matched by accuracy of spelling. Words provided by the questions' text, such as 'environnement' and 'éducation' were quite often spelt in English.

Errors of verb tenses and verb endings (past historic and past participles) in narrative tasks were quite frequent. There were agreement errors too.

Argumentative/Discursive tasks:

Most arguments showed signs of structure, and there was often a series of relevant points with developments.

Descriptive/Narrative tasks:

Candidates often managed to create effective ideas and atmosphere in their essays.

Comment on specific questions

Section 1: Questions b and **d** were popular (chosen by 30% and 25% of candidates) and **Question a** was very popular (42%). **Question c** was only chosen by a few candidates but was generally well discussed.

Section 2: Questions b and **c** were popular (**b** chosen by 32% and **c** by 44% of candidates). They were often handled as a mixture of descriptive and narrative tasks. In **Question b**, scripts sometimes lacked atmosphere. In **Question c**, candidates often provided imaginative and interesting storylines which engaged the reader in events and atmosphere. **Questions a** and **d** were less popular (**a** chosen by 10% and **d** by 14% of candidates).

New examination format

Candidates coped well with the new examination format. Only one candidate did not attempt **Section 2**, and the large majority of candidates followed the guidance on word limits.