



Pearson
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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In French (9FR0)

Paper 02: Written response to works and
translation

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Examiners had the impression that, overall, the standard of attainment was similar to previous years. It was reported that the work seemed polarised. A pleasing number of excellent scripts were found but equally there was a disappointing set of weak responses. Very few incomplete scripts were seen, an indication that candidates had used the time available wisely, although the presence of careless errors suggests that a little more time could have been profitably devoted to a thorough final check. A further deterioration in the quality of handwriting was noted. Increasing the size of what is written and perhaps using alternate lines might help but candidates are reminded that credit cannot be given for an item which is not clearly legible.

Question 1: Translation into French

Question 1, the translation into French, again proved challenging for many candidates. As in previous sessions, it was observed that often, after producing a very mediocre response to this question, some candidates proceeded to write in perfectly acceptable French in their essays. One can only conclude that many candidates do not respond readily to the discipline of being told what to write. Many mistakes could have been avoided with a little more care. It is particularly frustrating when candidates have a correct version of what might be perceived as a difficult snippet only to spoil it with, for example, a misplaced agreement or a lack of concord. For instance, in many cases the passive mood was often correctly used in box 12 but then marred, either by the omission of something for 'always' or by the offering of a flawed past participle of the verb to punish. Many versions seemed to be proceeding competently only to deteriorate in the latter stages. For many this was a translation of two halves. From about box 15 through to the end this passage proved to be very challenging.

The piece was based on Theme 4, the Occupation of France. Sections which were intended to be straightforward, such as boxes 2, 3, 6, 7, 9 and 11, were well handled and did indeed give rise to a good amount of credit. Apart from the use of *faire*, the sentence involving boxes 13 and 14 was also well translated. Vocabulary did not cause too many problems, although the number of candidates who did not know a suitable word for 'wall' was surprising. *Risque* was commonly made feminine and *coordonner* seemed too far away from the correct word and too much like English to gain credit. In box 13 *faire* was deployed much more often than the correct *rendre*. Attempts to render the last box by using some form of *bouger* were not worthy of credit. There were many fanciful inventions to cover 'successfully' but these were not acceptable. Some expressions, rather than single words, proved to be troublesome. Thus 'to some extent' was not well done and hardly any candidates knew that *passer leur temps* needed to be followed by *à* plus an infinitive, most relied on a present participle with or without *en*. In the penultimate box *éviter* was infrequently followed by *de*. More candidates appreciated the difference between *les* and *des* this year. Many candidates were able to deal with 'members, commit, exciting, dangerous, slogan, effective, capture and constantly' with relative ease.

As ever, verb forms and tenses remain the linguistic features which require most attention. The difference in usage between the perfect and imperfect tenses is not fully appreciated. Rather strangely, to translate 'spent their time' in the first sentence, several candidates used a present tense. On the other hand, it was gratifying to note that box 10, which required a verb in the pluperfect tense, was in general well done. It is acknowledged that the sequence of tenses including a pluperfect and then a past conditional in boxes 15 and 16 constituted the most challenging part of the exercise. Most candidates failed to provide an accurate rendering of this section. Those who did produce correct verbs often spoil the sequence with other avoidable errors.

Many candidates accurately conveyed a superlative in box 18 and then, as stated before, gave a feminine form to the French for 'risk'. It was not acceptable to offer English words such as 'group, equipment, success and risk', even where this gave rise to only a minor spelling error.

The constant impression gained by examiners is that most candidates, with a little more care, could boost their scores in this exercise by a few points. It may be that there is a tendency to rush through Question 1 in order to get to the essays which are seen as the more substantial part of the paper.

Sections B and C

The quality of the answers in Sections B and C was quite mixed. Most essays revealed good knowledge of books and films but this was not always harnessed to provide consistently relevant responses. The language used was in most cases at least adequate for the task. As in previous sessions, the vast majority of essays were in response to just six prescriptions. These were *L'Étranger*, *No et Moi* and *Un Sac de Billes* among the books and *Intouchables*, *La Haine* and *Les Choristes* from the films. There is some indication that the last of these films is slowly losing its popularity. No essays at all, or very few, were found on *Le Blé en Herbe*, *Le Château de ma Mère*, *Une si longue lettre*, *Chocolat*, *Deux Jours*, *Une Nuit*, *La Vie en Rose*, *Le Dernier Métro* and *Un Long Dimanche de Fiancailles*. No further comment is, therefore, required on these prescriptions.

Virtually no candidates took any notice of the recommendation to write between 300 and 350 words for each essay. Examiners read and assessed everything a candidate produced. Many pieces were inordinately long. Candidates who write at such length invariably do not do themselves any favours. Their essays tend to ramble, to digress and become generally irrelevant. Many indulge in lengthy description and narrative for their own sake and to the detriment of analysis. There is a great temptation, which is understandable, to include everything known about a book or film in an attempt to impress a reader. This is something to be avoided, as it tends to have the opposite effect to the one intended. The best essays are those which answer the precise question set succinctly with relevant analysis illustrated with accurate references to the work. Such references do not have to be in the form of direct quotations, although the latter can be effective, if used properly. Some candidates learn a series of quotations and are determined to insert them into any answer. Introductions appear to be becoming longer. Often a synopsis of the whole text or film is given, including an explanation of the circumstances in which it was produced. This merely provides a delay to what should be the essence of the task. There is a widespread tendency to round off such openings with a statement that the candidate is going to answer the question set, often using word for word the title given in the paper. There is arguably no harm in this, perhaps it is done to focus the mind but often to examiners it appears to be a waste of time.

The language used in the essays was varied but it almost always used a correct register and conveyed the desired message perfectly well. The best pieces, of which there was a pleasing number, were a joy to read. Without being of native-speaker tone, they were fluent, informative and very often virtually error free. One cannot expect candidates to be literary or film critics but many essays contained terminology appropriate for literary and cinematic analysis. It is recognised that this is easier to do in answer to certain questions on films.

It was interesting to read what candidates had to say about the works they had studied. Usually, it was apparent that they had enjoyed exposure to these works. Essays commonly contained ideas not covered by the Indicative Content which formed part of the Mark Scheme. This is perfectly legitimate

and welcomed, particularly if such thoughts are supported by cogent arguments involving references to the works in question.

Boule de Suif

Those who chose to answer Q2a tended to concentrate on the content of Maupassant's output in order to assess his qualities as a writer. Essays usually did not address the meaning of *conteur* and thus there was relatively little analysis of Maupassant as a producer of short stories in particular. Not many candidates considered style in his writings. Nevertheless, some analysis was evident which gave rise to some appropriate interpretations. The general consensus of opinion in pieces in answer to Q2b was that the eponymous central character in *La Mère Sauvage* deserved her title, once she learnt of the death of her son, but that in earlier times she was a much gentler figure. Some of these discussions were quite convincing.

La Place

Not many candidates chose to discuss the minor characters in this work. Those who did so tended to agree that they were much less important than the two dominant characters. Most of those who tackled Q3b showed considerable pity for the father and, by implication, animosity towards his daughter in *La Place*. He was felt to be worthy of pity for his lack of educational opportunities, for his hard work which resulted in little success and mostly for the way in which his daughter grew apart from him.

Le Gone du Chaâba

Only a small number of candidates had studied this text and almost all of them chose to answer Q6a. There were some convincing descriptions of the situation in which Azouz found himself and explanations of why he was the subject of criticism by his fellow Arabs.

Les Mains Sales

There were some thoughtful discussions on why Hugo found it difficult to carry out his mission. Candidates pointed to his own inherent indecisiveness and also to the way in which he came to admire and respect Hoederer. Some essays mentioned Jessica's role in undermining her husband's resolve. In answer to Q7b candidates agreed that Jessica is frivolous and insincere to begin with but contended that she became more serious as the play progressed. Taking account of *le seul personnage* in the question title, some candidates sought to show that other characters also evolved but these arguments were not always very convincing as they tended not to be justified by evidence selected from the work.

Les Petits Enfants du siècle

This text has recently become a little more popular. Q8a gave rise to some interesting pieces of work. Most candidates were of the opinion that the period in which the story is set is depicted as far from glorious. To back up this contention, they pointed to the materialism and misogyny which was rife in the society described by Josyane and to poor housing and the widespread neglect and abuse of children. Those who tackled Q8b painted a very black and white picture. The Rouvier family was seen as thoroughly bad and in contrast to the virtuous Lefrancis. It was felt that the latter were included in the story to highlight the shortcomings of the principal family.

Le Tartuffe

Candidates felt that Molière had many lessons to share. For example, one should not be duped by flatterers and hypocrites. This was the main piece of advice. It was also thought that the demands of

autocratic parents and arranged marriages were things to be avoided. Some said that one should remain calm and rely on reason in times of stress and some even thought that Molière was advising his audience to trust in the good sense of the king to ensure a happy outcome. In Q9b Elmire was commonly found to be admirable for her calm common sense, her resourcefulness and for her concern for her undeserving husband and for her stepchildren. However, it was not usually thought that she was the most admirable person in the play. This accolade was reserved for Dorine and/or Cléante.

L'Étranger

L'Étranger remains a very popular prescription. Q10a did not attract many candidates. Those who chose it often got rather involved in complicated exposés of existentialism which were not always very clear. The religious aspect of the encounter, however, was well handled. Some strangely thought that l'aumônier featured in Meursault's trial. Many more candidates dealt with Q10b and this produced some quite good answers. Few candidates spent much time discussing Meursault's guilt, this was in many cases taken as read, although there was some mention of the fact that he fired multiple times. Most felt he deserved his fate but not because of his behaviour at his mother's funeral which was described in great detail. There was less mention of Meursault's failure to accept commonly held religious views. Good knowledge of the first part of the book was usually shown. Personalities involved in the trial, however, were given less coverage.

No et Moi

Many candidates had studied *No et Moi* and their answers suggested that they had enjoyed exposure to it. Q11a was not nearly as popular as the alternative question. Surprisingly, there was often little mention of school life and activities or of Lou's teacher. Candidates concentrated almost entirely on the idea that the best education was to be gained by exposure to real life. Thus, Lou was said to have learnt a lot from No and from her exposure to the world of the homeless. Most candidates who addressed Q11b took a different approach to the one originally intended by the question. They did not often discuss what function the parents had in the novel but preferred to assess what sort of parents they were. This interpretation was deemed to be perfectly acceptable and as a result there were many very satisfactory answers. Much emphasis was given to the mothers of the two girls who were both in various ways said to have deprived Lou and No of maternal love. This was usually argued very well with good, appropriate illustration from the text. Lou's father was usually given very sympathetic treatment. Little mention was made of the fact that it was he who required No to leave the family home and thus send her back into the world of the homeless.

Thérèse Desqueyroux

Relatively few candidates had studied this novel and only a very small number attempted Q12a. A general character study of Bernard was commonly given, there could have been more precise discussion of the trait picked out in the question title. More candidates selected Q12b and relevant responses followed. Essays usually contained the agreement that considerations of family interest dictated behaviour. A lot of treatment was devoted to the opening scenes involving Thérèse's father. This might have owed something to a question set in a previous session but it was very pertinent. Less consideration was given to the family's reactions to Azévédo and his relationship with Anne, which was a little surprising.

Un Sac de Billes

Un Sac de Billes remains the most popular text. In answer to Q14a many candidates went beyond the boys' arrival in the free zone and talked in very general terms about much of the second half of the

story. This inevitably involved a lot of unfocussed narrative. Those who concentrated on the crossing of the demarcation line spoke sensibly about the insight the episode gave into the characters of the boys at this juncture, the help given to them by people of goodwill and the plight of the Jews who were trying to reach greater safety. Q14b received many responses. Most spoke about an ambivalent attitude to having grown up shown by Jo at the end. When assessing in what ways he had grown, it was legitimate to recall how young and innocent Jo had been at the beginning. However, many candidates spent far too long discussing the early part of the story to the detriment of a proper assessment of the situation at the end. A lot of sensible things were said about the loss of childhood which revealed good awareness of an important theme.

Au Revoir les Enfants

This film remains fairly popular. Q15a was the option which attracted more interest than the other. Candidates mostly had a very positive view of *le père Jean*. They pointed to his piety, his caring attitude and his courage in sheltering the Jewish boys. The ending was felt to be particularly poignant and added to the admiration felt for the priest. Very few mentioned any potentially more negative traits, such as his intransigence or his lack of foresight in dismissing Joseph. There were few answers to Q15b. François's greater maturity to that of his brother was noted. The other pupils were often largely ignored.

Cléo de 5 à 7.

This film has become steadily more popular. In Q17a the visit to the hat shop was seen as important in establishing Cléo's character as it was at the beginning of the film. Little was made of the significance of the mirrors in helping to show Cléo's rather shallow vanity at this stage. Very detailed familiarity with the film was usually shown. Those who answered Q17b felt that Dorothee was important at a turning-point in Cléo's development. She was said to provide Cléo with several crucial lessons and her part in introducing her friend to the film within the film was highlighted.

Entre les Murs

Not many candidates chose Q19a. Adolescence was generally thought to be presented in the film as a very turbulent period. In Q19b a balanced assessment of M. Marin's year's achievements as a teacher was usually given. His patience and dedication were seen to be rewarded in certain class activities and in his relations with some pupils. However, his efforts were thought mostly to bring little success. Insulting two of the girls was a particular low point. Many essays ended on a rather depressing note with the mention of the girl who said that she had learnt nothing.

Intouchables

Intouchables is the most popular film by a wide margin. There were some good responses to both options. Candidates knew about music used in the film in great detail. Music was said to be used to enhance emotion in particular key scenes, to provide humour, to highlight the disparity in the characters and backgrounds of the two main figures and to show how they eventually came to appreciate the other. In Q20b candidates said that Driss becomes a competent carer after a shaky start, treating Philippe as a normal person and showing no exaggerated pity. Surprisingly, few mentioned Driss's role in bringing Philipp and Eléanore together. Philippe, on the other hand, was seen to play a crucial part in taking Driss on in the first place against the advice of others and in improving his behaviour and his awareness of finer things. The conclusion was usually that both men played an equal part in furthering their relationship.

La Haine

La Haine is still studied by a large number of candidates. In answer to Q21a most agreed that it would be difficult for the inhabitants of the *cit * to leave their surroundings. Reasons put forward to justify this were the lack of education and means, their inability to cope or adapt in the outside world and the prejudices of people from more advantaged areas. It was also said that the vicious circle of violence and police antagonism would prevent their leaving but it was not convincingly explained why this was so. Some claimed that not all the characters wanted to leave anyway. Good awareness of issues raised by the film was demonstrated. In Q21b it was legitimate to talk of Hubert and Vinz, in order to make the comparison implied in the question but some candidates went too far with this and neglected Saïd. Others talked of the latter's importance in the film. By inference, this presumably made him interesting. A few candidates claimed that Saïd was the most interesting and put forward some convincing points to back this up.

Les Choristes

As stated before, *Les Choristes* seems to be losing some of its appeal and is less favoured now. In Q24a some essays clearly described the dreary day on which Cl ment Matthieu arrived at the school and the forbidding building itself. They then showed how the first days were very challenging. Few mentioned P pinot standing at the gate. Quite a lot of essays ignored Matthieu's arrival but described in lengthy, undirected narrative his first few days at the school as a pion. In Q24b Maxence's role was seen to be that of a pleasant character who helped to bring out the difference in outlook between Matthieu and Rachin. Only a small number said he was there to illustrate Cl ment's idea of making the punishment fit the crime.

Les 400 Coups

This film gave rise exclusively to essays on Q25b. The schoolteacher and the parents of Antoine were most commonly cited to illustrate the idea of adult treatment affecting the behaviour of the young. Relatively few mentioned Ren 's parents or authority figures. Antoine's misdemeanours were said to be the direct result of how he was treated.