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Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Chinese (9CN0)

Paper 02: Written response to works and
translation

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Introduction

This paper, which was examined in summer 2024, was sat by about 6,000 candidates. This paper includes a translation exercise and two written responses to works. The total mark for this paper is 120.

Candidates must answer Question 1 in Section A by translating a short piece of text from English into Chinese. In addition, they must answer two questions from Sections B and C – this means either two literary works from Section B or one literary work from Section B and one film from Section C. The duration of the examination is 2 hours 40 minutes.

In Section A Question 1 (20 marks), candidates are required to translate a short piece of text from English into Chinese. The content of the translation is a passage based on one of the four themes as indicated in the Specification. Candidates are assessed with reference to their ability to produce an accurate and appropriate translation.

Section B consists of three questions (Question 2, Question 3 and Question 4) on different literary works, whereas Section C consists of three questions (Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7) on different films. The prescribed literary works and films can be found in Appendix 2 of the Specification.

For Question 2 to Question 7, each essay is assessed based on the following three categories: critical and analytical response (20 marks); range of grammatical structures and vocabulary (20 marks); and accuracy of language (10 marks).

Section A

Question 1

This question consisted of a short English passage on “Music” in Sub-theme “Cultural Activities” of Theme 2 “Chinese Culture”. It was divided into 20 discrete language sections. Each correctly translated section was given one mark.

Most candidates understood the English text and could convey the meaning reasonably well. Some competent answers made only a couple of mistakes. A small number of candidates provided pinyin. As a result, marks were lost.

Carelessness was still evident in some candidates’ translation, resulting in mistranslation of months by mixing “June” with “July”, “buy” and “sell”, which are GCSE-level vocabulary. Words

which proved to be tricky to handle for some candidates were: “summer camps”, “calligraphy” and “festival”, which were all GCSE vocabulary.

The following aspects of the text were identified as challenging to some candidates:

Vocabulary:

Inaccurate translations were frequently made when rendering the following vocabulary items:

painting ≠ 油畫 / 油画

national treasure ≠ 傳統寶藏 / 传统宝藏

arts festival ≠ 美術節 / 艺术节 ; 藝術展 / 艺术展

ancient music ≠ 古典音樂 / 古典音乐

Sentence structures:

Some candidates closely followed the English word order rather than making changes appropriate for Chinese grammatical structures. Typical examples were:

A two-month-long arts festival took place in Beijing from early July to late August ≠

一個長達兩個月的藝術節在北京舉行, 從七月初到八月底 /

一个长达两个月的艺术节在北京举行, 从七月初到八月底

An expert invited to perform a traditional musical instrument said ≠

一位專家應邀表演傳統樂器說 /

一位专家应邀表演传统乐器说

In summary, candidates should familiarise themselves with GCSE-level vocabulary (e.g. “calligraphy”, “painting”, “festival”, “July”, “summer camps”), and going beyond that, pay close attention to the contextual meaning of some common words relevant to the theme (e.g. “national treasure”, “promote”, “ancient music”). They should also learn how to handle basic word order differences in time adverbials (e.g. “... from early July to late August”), and simple grammatical structures (e.g. “apart from”, “in order to”, “since”).

Section B

As in the previous exam series, many more candidates attempted the questions on literary works. Candidates should be aware that evidence must be based on the original literary works. No credit will be given for essays on literary works that are based on the film versions adapted from the literary works.

Question 2

Question 2 continued to be the most popular question attempted by the candidates. Their responses were generally quite good. Candidates were able to make relevant responses to the question supporting their answers with evidence from the novel. Their answers tended to highlight the use of contrast to illustrate the rich-poor gap between the two boys. Evidence used to support this included: Qiuhu's family background which left him with a sense of inferiority; Xiawang's arrogance due to his wealthy background; Xiawang's strong feeling of embarrassment when Qiuhu's father sold Feng to his father; the sudden change in Xiawang's family leading to the boys becoming closer; and their friendship deepening as evidenced by the two boys collecting the prize money together.

However, some candidates still mixed up Xiawang and Qiuhu, and thus the evidence taken from the novel can become confusing. In addition, some made a lengthy discussion on the relationship between Qiuhu and the pigeon, Feng, rather than the relationship between Qiuhu and Xiawang in relation to their family circumstances. The most common weakness remained being descriptive rather than analytical. Some of the analysis was not justified with enough exploration. For example, the candidates mentioned, without detailed evidence and in-depth discussion, that the writing technique of contrasting was used to highlight the differences between the two families, or the family situations of Qiuhu and Xiawang highlighted the goodness and the pure friendship between them.

While most candidates were able to use a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary to produce a generally coherent essay, the use of terminology for literary analysis was rather limited. It would be advisable for them to learn more literary terminology which can be applied to a range of different possible questions. Apart from the writing technique of contrasting, other suitable examples of terminology may include: play important roles, hyperbole, character development, and turning point.

Question 3

Although this story is the longest among the prescribed literary works, candidates showed a very sound knowledge and understanding of the plot. Out of this year's responses, it was evident that many candidates made a good critical analysis of how Xiuzhen missed her daughter; supported with rich details. The most frequently cited evidence included Xiuzhen's unstable frame of mind, repeatedly asking Yingzi to look for her daughter and bring her back, and meticulously narrating the details of her daughter's birth.

It was impressive to see that some candidates made competent use of literary terminology to interpret the evidence and make logical arguments. Examples of vocabulary for the literary analysis used by candidates included: gestures, use of language, conversations, facial expressions and emotions.

As in other questions, the most common shortcoming was that some responses were overly descriptive and failed to directly address the question. For example, candidates described in detail why Xiuzhen lost her daughter rather than how the author shows Xiuzhen's longing for her daughter.

Question 4

This year, "Hometown" was quite popular among the candidates. Question 4 asked candidates to analyse how the author employed the writing technique of contrasting to express the changes in different characters. Most candidates confidently discussed the changes in two characters, Runtu and Second Sister Yang. However, only a small number of candidates were able to make an analysis of the changes in the narrator "I".

Good analysis was supported with strong evidence of not only recollection from the past but also the reality in the present. A considerable number of candidates effectively illustrated the changes in the main characters with relation to their use of language, appearances, attitudes, and greetings.

Various kinds of misunderstandings were found in the essays: only one character was discussed; confusion between the narrator "I" and the author; the relationship between the narrator's nephew and Runtu's son was irrelevantly used as evidence.

Section C

Compared with the questions on fiction, fewer candidates attempted the questions on films. Candidates should be aware that evidence must be based on the original films.

Question 5

In Section C, Question 5 was the most popular question with many well-written responses. Out of a variety of tactics which Chengcheng employed to win the votes, “booing” was the most discussed one among the candidates. Most candidates were able to make some relevant responses to the question with critical analysis of what Chengcheng did during the election: using lies, directly solicited votes, making empty promises, looking for his opponents’ weaknesses.

To fulfil the requirements of the mark grid of A03, some candidates used a variety of complex language, vocabulary, and cinematic language. It was particularly impressive that some candidates used appropriate cinematic terminology to describe the tactics employed by Chengcheng, such as, scenes, the angle of the camera, facial expressions and actions.

However, some responses tended to be descriptive, whereas some analysis was not justified with convincing interpretations. Examples included: no detailed description of how Chengcheng plotted against Xiaofei during the talent show, no details about how Chengcheng attacked Luo Lei’s weaknesses.

Some responses showed confusing analysis including misquoting Luo Lei’s tactics as Chengcheng’s tactics.

Some responses lost focus on the question and instead provided lengthy comments on Chengcheng’s personality; personal views on the meaning of democracy; parental expectation of children’s success or a comparison of all three candidates’ tactics.

Question 6

This year, Question 6 was one of the two least popular questions answered by the candidates. This question received mixed responses. Able candidates were able to illustrate different scenes from the film in connection with the theme of youthfulness, including Jian stealing family savings to buy a bicycle, practising stunts with his friends, dating a girl, losing the bicycle, and the fighting scenes. They were able to provide appropriate critical and analytical responses to indicate youthful rebellious nature, a sense of identity, romantic love, anxiety, and recklessness.

Apart from relevant analysis, some responses described vividly the scenes of Jian's cycling with his outstretched arms after riding home with Xiaoxiao, and his fighting scenes. Plenty of cinematic terminology was used appropriately: soft music, camera, facial expressions, gestures, scenes, dialogues, and lighting.

However, some responses simply retold the story about Jian with a lack of connection to the requirements of the question.

Some responses occasionally showed misunderstanding and confusion about the film. This included inaccurate evidence due to mixing up of the two main characters, Jian and Gui.

Question 7

This was another less frequently attempted question by the candidates in this exam series. While most candidates were able to describe Ka On's different attitudes to life at the beginning and at the end of the film, not many of them successfully examined how the film expressed the gradual changes in Ka On. The majority of the responses focussed on Ka On's relationship with his mother: how Ka On changed from lazing at home to taking part in housework. Top essays further explored his changes in other aspects of life, including his extended family, his neighbour, and his school life. Many outstanding responses used the hospital scenes and the Christian fellowship scene to support their argument for Ka On's changes.

Some candidates grasped the chance of applying their knowledge of cinematic analysis to respond to the question. Examples of appropriate terminology to describe the scenes included: a closeup of Ka On's face; zoom in, zoom out, and dining scenes.

Since there are many subtle details in the film, some candidates struggled to produce accurate evidence to support their argument. The most common misunderstanding was the sequence of the plot. For example, some candidates wrote that Ka On took the initiative to carry the television and replace the lightbulb for Leung Foon; some even quoted this as an example of Ka On's change of attitude to life. As a matter of fact, Ka On passively obeyed his mother to help Leung Foon.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Candidates preparing for A Level should also consolidate their GCSE vocabulary and grammar during their A Level course to improve their performance in Question 1.
- In Question 1, proofread the translation carefully so that there are no careless mistakes.
- Study the novels and watch the films thoroughly to identify relevant evidence.
- Pay extra attention to the key words in each question when writing the response. This can help them to avoid loss of focus.
- Write the essays critically, analytically and logically.
- Write Chinese characters correctly. Avoid pinyin words which are not acceptable in this paper.
- Incorporate appropriate literary and cinematic terminology into the response.