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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Japanese (9JA0)

Paper 2: Translation into Japanese and Written
response to works

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Introduction

Once again this year candidates had been well prepared for this paper; they responded well to both the translation and the essay questions. In some cases of the latter, there was too much 'story-telling', which while not entirely unnecessary, was either too long or the candidate failed to show how this was relevant to the question. The language used by many candidates in their 'response to works' was of a high standard, both in terms of the grammatical structures included and the particular vocabulary needed for each work. Some candidates were able simply to incorporate learnt phrases into their argument, whilst others were able to manipulate the language in order to express their thoughts clearly. Whilst some of the works of literature and the films were perhaps predictably more 'popular' than others, there was no question which had no takers. Interestingly, this year more candidates chose to write about キッチン (Q3a) than either of the options for どんどん読めるいろいろな話.

Q1: Translation

Since the translation is marked in 'chunks' (as detailed on the mark scheme), it is possible for all learners at every level to gain marks, and teachers should make this clear to candidates.

Whilst it is close to impossible with many structures in Japanese to make it clear exactly which structure is being tested (のに, for example), it is, of course, also the case that any equivalent alternative will be accepted as a correct answer. Candidates would be well advised to check the text before starting to identify phrases/key words which give an indication of language patterns which, it is hoped, will be used: 'as (you know)' (知っているように), 'unlike' (...とちがって), 'apparently' (そうです), 'has....draw' (かいてもらう), 'when (asked)' (~たら), etc.

A few comments on the translation, divided by paragraph:

Paragraph 1

- for most candidates this was the most straightforward section of the translation (as was indeed the intention).
- 'popular' and 'well-known' are not (quite) the same thing. Care should be taken to use the right adjective in the correct place.
- 'the man who writes the stories': the inclusion of a 'simple' relative clause (名詞修飾) was deliberate, so it was decided that the use of terms such as 作家・著者 was not suitable in this context. Some candidates changed the tense of the verb ('wrote'), which while it may have been factually correct, was not what the English text says. (It appears that the writing of 'One Piece' still continues as of the date of writing anyway!)

Paragraph 2

- this was the section of the translation that was 'moved around' most by candidates. Teachers should stress that altering the order of the text to suit what one is able to deal with linguistically is fine, but candidates should check that they have included ALL the necessary elements of the original. (It should be noted, however, that the translation is drafted with learners in mind; it is hopefully fairly clear what the intended Japanese language patterns are.)
- 'work': candidates need to consider the meaning of a word like 'work' in its context. Here, 仕事 was not appropriate.
- Oda Eiichirō: whilst candidates were not expected to be able to produce the kanji for the artist's name, the Japanese name order should have been retained. Some candidates rather unexpectedly wrote in katakana.
- 'apparently': many candidates, especially those who chose to divert from the original order of the English text, overlooked this important word. It did not matter what pattern was used – ようです、らしいです、みたいです – but it had to be expressed somehow.
- 'he has his staff draw just the backgrounds': it should have been clear from the English construction that スタッフは....かきます was not sufficient for this section. Also, the adverb 'just' is an essential part of the meaning here, stressing how much Oda does himself; again, this was frequently overlooked and omitted.

Paragraph 3

- many candidates handled the first sentence of this paragraph well, managing to include the indirect question, the 'hidden' passive ('asked') and the と答えました successfully.
- the second sentence was much more challenging as it had a relative clause as well as a causative verb. Many did, however, cope well with this, the only problem being the change of particle, depending on whether the writer chose to use もらう or くれる after the causative かかせて.

Q2-Q7: responses to literature and films

The most successful candidates made a brief reference to the question in their introduction, made a series of clearly defined points to support their argument, backed up in each case by evidence from the work/film, and then rounded off with a short conclusion. To help the 'flow' of the essay, it is always useful to refer back to the question at frequent intervals to show the reader where the argument is going; it also serves to remind the writer of the task and to ensure that the essay does not 'lose[] focus on the question'. Equally, phrases such as まず、それから、最後に, guide the reader through the essay. In this respect, paragraphs too are of vital importance: many very good essays

were spoilt by the absence of paragraphs, sometimes leaving the reader/examiner to decide if a new point had been broached or not.

As far as content is concerned, it generally does not matter whether the writer is 'wrong' or 'right' in the examiner's view, as long as a cogent argument is made to support the opening declaration. Sometimes candidates seemed to change their opinion halfway through, which meant that a 'persuasive conclusion' was difficult to reach; some said they would make 3 points, but then only gave 2. For responses relating to *どんだん読めるいろいろな話*, candidates should first consider whether the stories they choose actually demonstrate the point being made; in several cases, there were stories more obviously suited to the question than the one(s) chosen.

As mentioned previously, too many essays spent too long recounting the story, which, while it gave the candidate a chance to show off the language they had gained during the course, meant that fewer relevant points could be made. Candidates need to be trained to summarise a story or an important scene in a concise way which does not hold up the argument.

It may seem an obvious point, but candidates should know the relevant vocabulary (and kanji, where necessary) for their chosen work. Names also seem to present a problem, especially the names of the two Tanabes who offer Mikage a place to live: these were frequently wrong. Equally, the final story in the *どんだん読める* collection is **not** called *注文の多いレストラン!*

2 *どんだん読めるいろいろな話*

- (a) The best responses to this question chose appropriate stories and gave clear examples of how characters were influenced by others. In 「一房のぶどう」, for example, 「ぼく」 comes to recognise the power of forgiveness when Jim offers to shake his hand; 「ぼく」 is also forced to turn up for school the following day because of how he knows his teacher will be upset if he does not do so. Perhaps even more clearly, in 「鼻」 the priest Naigu, rather than tend to his spiritual duties, is more concerned about what people are saying about his nose; the entire plot is driven by concern for what others think, thus showing their influence on him. Too many candidates were happy simply to retell the story of their chosen story/stories without explicitly saying **how** this related to the question. Others chose stories like 「注文の多い料理店」 and tried to show how the hunters are influenced by others, whilst this would perhaps have been a better example of characters **not** being influenced by experience. (There are also not really any 他人 involved anyway.) In some cases, candidates chose shorter stories, such as 「外国語」 or 「私は美人」, but claimed that the main protagonists were not influenced by others, something that is arguably not true.
- (b) Most who chose this question were clear that the statement in the question was not true. However, what they then went on to say failed, in too many cases, to

back this assertion up. Responses tended to retell the story at great (and unnecessary) length and then, in the case of 「鼻」, for example, said that the lesson that Naigu learns from this story is what 心に残ります. Surely what might stay more with the reader is the amusing sight of Naigu's nose being held up for him while he eats, or the ridiculous lengths that he goes to make his nose smaller. Many candidates failed to pick up on the memorable details of a story, such as the mocking, funny end of 「私は美人」 or the nightmarish sequence of events that the hunters face when they enter the 料理店, as what really 心に残ります.

3 キッチン

- (a) This essay was attempted by a good many candidates and in many cases provided some of the best essays of this series. Writers were less prone to describe the plot (this being fairly minimal in this work) and more inclined to give relevant, succinct examples of why moving in with the Tanabes was a good thing for Mikage. The best responses pointed out how well the Tanabes were 'qualified' to provide a home for Mikage, having themselves dealt with much the same emotions that she is now experiencing. Some went on to stress the importance of the Tanabe's well-equipped kitchen to Mikage and the effect that being able to cook for others has on her future chosen career; most also described the importance that Eriko comes to have in Mikage's life. (Few, however, noted the fact that Mikage at one point tells herself that she needs to get out!)
- (b) Very few candidates attempted this question, but those who did generally failed to mention the images of light/life and darkness/death that Mikage uses in some of the more 'unrealistic' sections of the work. (See Indicative Content for further examples.)

4 窓際のトットちゃん

- (a) This was by far the less 'popular' of the two トットちゃん essays. Candidates generally were able to give good, relevant examples of when the main character shows herself to be a happy, cheerful child. However, it was important in the case of this essay to be aware that this statement is **not** true, as there are at least three occasions when a character dies and Totto-chan comes to experience emotions very different from her usual positive outlook. To ignore this aspect of the work meant that a 'convincing interpretation[]' was not given.
- (b) This essay was a popular choice and was often answered very well, as it allowed the writer to write about almost anything, as long as it could be proved to be 興味深い. Common themes that were identified as interesting to the reader were: the character of Totto-chan and the amusing situations she finds herself in; the educational philosophy of the headteacher, exemplified by events such as Sports Day; Tomoe school itself and the contrast to other schools of that time and of now; the 'gap'

between Totto-chan and the author in what purports to be an autobiographical work. Some candidates were eager to describe the work as a description of Kuroyanagi's struggles with what would come to be labelled as ADHD; whilst this is probably not untrue, it would be wiser perhaps to concentrate on using evidence contained within the work itself.

5 千と千尋の神隠し

- (a) Of the two essays about this film, this option was the more popular, but not overwhelmingly so. (It was the most answered question on the paper.) As was perhaps to be expected, there was a wide range of 'messages' identified in this film: the need to protect the environment, the need for support from friends, the need to がんばる in order to achieve your goals, the need to distinguish right/good from wrong/evil. Unfortunately, this was another essay title that candidates saw as an opportunity to simply recount the plot of the film, without clearly showing **how** the events described were relevant to the task. Another big problem was the failure to distinguish between 'theme' and 'message': 'environment', for example, can be a theme, but not a message. Thus, candidates often described the scene in the bathhouse where the river god is cleansed of all the rubbish that is trapped within him as an example of the 'environment message'. But this is not a message; the message would be to say, 'we should keep our rivers clean' or 'we should protect our land and our rivers better', for example.
- (b) Candidates who tackled this question had to be clear from the start what they thought about the character of Kaonashi; most decided that it was not possible to say one way or the other, and gave useful evidence to show both sides of this character. (Some candidates focussed on whether Kaonashi was わかりにくい or not, but this was not actually the main question.) To deal with this question convincingly, it was often necessary to describe events from the film, but candidates have to be beware of falling into the trap of story-telling, giving too much space to overlong description of events, rather than succinctly summing up what happens as evidence for one's own theory.

6 ディア・ドクター

Only a handful of candidates answered either of the essays concerning this film. For possible material to include in an answer, please refer to the Indicative Content in the mark scheme.

7 誰も知らない

Only a handful of candidates answered either of the essays concerning this film. For possible material to include in an answer, please refer to the Indicative Content in the mark scheme.

General comments

- when discussing the thoughts of characters, candidates should try to make clear when saying *思っている* whether it is the character who is thinking or the candidate. There were occasions when it was difficult to accurately identify the subject of the verb, this 'hinder[ing] clarity of communication'. Either adding a subject to clarify (*と私が思っている*) or using *ようだ* would help.
- candidates should take care not to use Chinese characters (as opposed to Japanese 漢字) in their answers. In many cases, these will 'prevent meaning being conveyed' and may have a negative effect on the accuracy mark awarded.
- this year there was noticeably frequent confusion at all levels of ability over the difference between *始* and *初*.
- there should be enough *原稿用紙* in the question paper for candidates to present a satisfying argument, and certainly in terms of time management as well, writing too much for one essay will probably be disadvantageous to the candidate. However, if there is a genuine need for extra paper, it is fine to continue writing **across** the page from left to right, perhaps writing on alternate lines to aid readability. For technical reasons, candidates are asked **not** to rotate extra sheets.

