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Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Japanese (9JA0)

Paper 2: Translation into Japanese and Written
response to works

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Introduction

Two things were noticeable this year about the responses to the tasks set on the specified films and literary texts: firstly, there was a wider spread of answers across the question options, and secondly, there was far less 'storytelling', in past years a feature of responses hoping that some of what was written was relevant to the task and would gain at least some marks for language.

Whilst in the film section 千と千尋の神隠し was the clear 'winner', with only a handful of candidates (but more than in previous years) choosing to write about the other two films on the specification, there was a move away from the collection of short stories towards the other longer works; more than a third of candidates wrote about 窓ぎわのトットちゃん this year. Hopefully this indicates a move on the part of teachers and/or candidates to be a little 'braver' in their choice of set works, especially now that there is a good stock of past papers to refer to when deciding which aspects of the works to focus on.

It was very pleasing to find that candidates were far more able to provide a succinct summary of the relevant details from the film/text to underline the point that they were making. Some element of retelling the story is, of course, inevitable in such discussions of the set works, but teachers and candidates have clearly been working hard at building up a stock of short 'snapshots' that can be used as evidence for points being made. These short passages also frequently included good examples of the language structures that are set out in the specification.

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 there were some slightly 'tricky' vocabulary items in the translation ('rich in nature', 'escape the stress of the city', 'countryside', 'paddy fields'), most candidates were successful in identifying the grammatical patterns that the English text was trying to test, and then transposing those into Japanese.

A few comments on the translation where needed, divided by paragraph:

Paragraph 2:

- surprisingly many candidates wrote the number of this year (and 2016) in kanji. There is no need to translate numerals into kanji.
- considering that the content for this specification includes 東日本大震災後の日本, it was quite surprising how many candidates had to resort to hiragana for Fukushima.

- it was decided that ‘where Mrs Hayashi now lives with her son’ had to be expressed with a relative clause (連帯修飾), rather than divide the first sentence into two sections (‘Mrs Hayashi lives..... /Fukushima prefecture is....)
- many candidates were misled by the English ‘popular **with**’ into using と rather than に, although use of an incorrect particle here was not penalised .

Paragraph 3:

- whilst a certain amount of flexibility was allowed in the translation of ‘paddy fields’, writing the two words in katakana was not accepted.
- ‘I was told by my husband that....’: as long as the particles were correct, this section could have been expressed actively rather than passively.
- ‘I decided to come here’: the most natural translation of this would be ここに来ることにしました, and although other ways of expressing the idea were accepted, it was not considered enough simply to say ここに来ました.

Paragraph 4:

- わけ is one of those words that it is difficult to ‘signal’ in English. Although a good number of candidates did use わけ correctly when translating ‘is not without its problems’, an easier alternative (for example, ‘my life now still has problems’) was accepted.

Q2-Q7: responses to literature and films

Please refer to the mark scheme (MS) for examples of points that could have been included by candidates.

A reminder of important points for candidates to bear in mind when tackling these tasks:

- When deciding on option (a) or (b), consider whether you have enough **appropriate** evidence for the points you are going to make.
- Keep the task in mind as you write, referring back to it at points so that the reader can see the relevance of what you are saying.
- Decide on your approach (e.g. agree or disagree?) **before** you start. Too many essays seem by the end to contradict the viewpoint that was given at the start.
- Use paragraphs or at least other verbal signals to indicate to the reader the ‘flow’ of your argument.
- Make sure you have learnt the kanji that you will obviously need; that is to say, names of works/stories/characters/writers/directors, as well as useful ‘metalanguage’ such as 登場人物. Writing this word, for example, in hiragana will not only adversely affect the mark for grammatical structures and vocabulary (GSV), but will also take up a lot of space!

- If there is a genuine need to continue answers on Additional Sheets (remembering that you are not expected to write more than the exam booklet allows for), please write on lined paper ACROSS the page from left to right, rather than use the paper as 原稿用紙. This is for technical reasons.
- Please remember to mark clearly at the top of the page the correct option you have chosen for each essay.

Q2 どんどん読めるいろいろな話

- (a) This was the more commonly answered option for this work. Candidates generally chose appropriate stories that clearly have some kind of ‘message’ for the characters, and in turn thus for the reader too. (See MS for examples.) For some stories that were chosen, such as エレベーター・ボーイ, it was rather more difficult to be persuaded that the character/reader learns anything. Interestingly, few candidates pointed out that in a story such as this, what the reader learns is something about Japan: department stores have lifts that are generally operated by a member of staff. This kind of point would have been as valid here as any about the ‘meaning’ of a story.
- (b) This was a question where the success of a response relied very much on an appropriate choice of story. There are several cases in this collection of people changing in some way (see MS for examples), but in a story such as エレベーター・ボーイ it feels very ‘forced’ to argue that we witness the main character change in some way. Equally, is it not rather the case with the hunters in 注文の多い料理店 that in some ways they do **not** change – they are still happy to buy a bird to eat (十円で鳥を買って) -, despite the bizarre experience they have been through?

An important point with regard to this collection of stories: some candidates had read the wrong version of 羅生門. The one that candidates should be familiar with is the one included in this collection, **not** the version by 芥川龍之介.

Q3 キッチン

- (a) This was the second-most commonly answered question out of those in Sections B and C, and was answered well by many candidates, who were able to provide clear evidence to convince the reader that their chosen character was the one who had the greatest effect on Mikage’s life (at least within this story). The most popular choices were, of course, her grandmother, Yuichi and Eriko, with only a very few mentioning Sotaro, Mikage’s former boyfriend. Where some lost marks for critical and analytical response (CAR) was in their failure to come to a ‘persuasive conclusion[]’: the question clearly says 一番影響を与えている人, yet it was quite common for the first paragraph to declare allegiance to Mikage’s

grandmother, then proceed to discuss Yuichi's influence on her. It was, of course, possible to state that, for example, we cannot dismiss Yuichi's influence (before going back to the grandmother), but too many essays ended up contradicting their initial statement, meaning that arguments were 'made but with inconsistencies'.

- (b) The best essays here gave good examples of how 'real' the world that is described in this work is (see MS for examples), but also recognised the element of 'magical realism' that exists at certain points in the narrative. For a totally convincing answer to this question, it was necessary to make some mention of the imagery of light/dark that frequently occurs in Mikage's view of the world around her.

Q4 窓ぎわのトットちゃん

- (a) Convincing answers (of which there were a good many) to the discussion of whether Totto-chan is a いい子 or not, sensibly mentioned that there are examples of her being 'bad' (those mentioned in the very first chapter being of particular note), before moving onto examples of actions which seem to show someone essentially 'good', as recognised by the head teacher in his encounters with Totto-chan. Some candidates retold incidents such as the search for the purse in the toilet outflow or the head's request to Totto-chan to stop wearing the ribbon his daughter covets, without explicitly stating how these show her 'goodness': in the first instance that she clears up properly, and in the second, that she willingly does as the head asks, despite the ribbon being a particular favourite.
- (b) There were fewer responses to this question, but in almost all cases candidates, either deliberately or because they had not read the question carefully enough, ignored the important word 東京. A few included relevant details (see MS for examples), but the majority used this question either as an excuse to write about how the war had an impact on Japan, or about the state of education in Japan at that time. (One or two even talked about the treatment of dogs in Japan at this time, something not even mentioned!) The information given was not untrue, but was barely relevant to the task, as the question did not ask about Japan as a country. No one seemed to have picked up on the fact that, apart from a few geographical details, such as the name of the railway line and the stations Totto-chan was familiar with, there is actually very little information given about the capital.

Q5 千と千尋の神隠し

- (a) This was the question on the paper that had the most 'takers', the best responses giving some examples of how the film is indeed 日本らしい before going on to give reasons for the film's popularity worldwide. Many, in fact, pointed out that one major reason for so many people loving this film is its very 'Japanese-ness'. Unfortunately a good number of responses to this question used it as an excuse simply to rewrite their 'why Chihiro is such

an interesting character' essay, without really trying to make it relevant to this particular question title. It is not necessarily that Chihiro's strength of character and her development through the course of the film do not contribute to the film's being popular, but it could be debated whether or not this is a major factor. As this was quite a 'broad' question, it would have helped candidates to take a step back and consider the more obvious reasons – an general increasing interest in Japanese culture, the skill of the animators, the music - for the film's popularity.

- (b) As in (a), the best responses gave some consideration to the first part of the statement (the 'unreality' of the world shown in this film) before discussing the very realistic and understandable emotions that the characters display in this story. Again, although not a 'wrong' answer, many candidates focussed almost exclusively on Chihiro; a broader view across a range of characters (see MS for examples), would have led to a more satisfying and more complete essay.

Q6 ディア・ドクター

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

Q7 誰も知らない

- (a) Interestingly, several candidates decided that the argument proposed in the question was **not** true. However, while their reasons for saying so were perfectly valid – that the Japanese nation as a whole needed to know about these cases of child abandonment – these essays were not as well argued or constructed as those who agreed with the given thesis. Those candidates gave good examples of adults refusing to acknowledge the situation (see MS for examples) and literally 'doing nothing'. (The possible interpretation of the question as referring to the children, stuck in their apartment with little to do, was likely to lead to a fairly short essay.)
- (b) Only a handful of candidates answered this essay. For possible material to include in an answer, please refer to the Indicative Content in the mark scheme.

Finally a few language points that will help to improve the writing of future candidates:

- use ...のおかげで rather than ...のせいで for a positive outcome. (In an essay of this sort,.....のため might be preferable to ...のせいで as well.)
- note the correct spelling for the useful expression ...に気づく (not 気づく)
- the verbs 同意する and 賛成する both take に after the object
- note the difference between かえる and かわる (to change)
- review the potential form (Examples of non-standard forms from this year's scripts: 行けられない、使えられない)