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Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Russian (9RU0)

Paper 2: Written response to works and
translation

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Paper Introduction

Purpose of the Paper

This paper is designed to test candidates' ability to write accurately in Russian, structure their responses and demonstrate their knowledge of the target-language culture and / or society through the study and critical and analytical response to two literary texts or a literary text and a film.

This was the fifth year of the A Level specification, but only the third year in which the examination has been conducted with a full cohort of candidates. As last year, an increasing number candidates had been well prepared for this paper, clearly having referenced the specification, sample materials, previous examiners' reports, and studied their chosen texts or films in detail over the two-year A Level course. There were examples of both heritage / native speaker candidates and learner candidates whose lessons had clearly focused on how to translate accurately from English and how to write a structured essay which makes critical and analytical points about the chosen works. This was once again pleasing for the examining team.

As in previous years, there were also some examples of candidates (although perhaps fewer than there once were) who had clearly not been prepared at all. Often, they simply retold the story of their chosen work or were not able to offer any coherent essay with a critical or analytical response.

Centres must be reminded that it is not possible for a candidate to be entered for this examination without having studied two of the texts from the specification in detail. Simply having read the texts or seen the films is not enough for candidates to perform well.

Structure of the Examination

The paper requires candidates to complete a translation into Russian and then write two essays. Their essays must either be on two literary texts or on one literary text and one film. The two texts or text and film offered for examination must be from the list set out on page 51 of the specification.

The translation (section A) is worth 20 of the available 120 marks, and the two essays (section B for texts and section C for films) are worth the remaining 100 marks, with 50 marks for each essay. The essay marks consist of 20 marks for Critical and Analytical Response (AO4), 20 marks for Range of Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary (AO3) and 10 marks for Accuracy (AO3).

The time allowed for the examination is two hours and 40 minutes. An appropriate division of time would be for candidates to spend about 30 minutes on the translation and about an hour on each of the essays, including spending time planning their response carefully.

Section A: Translation

Section A of this paper required candidates to translate a short passage of English into Russian. The passage will always be based on one of the sub-

themes from Theme 1, 2, 3 or 4 from pages 8-9 of the specification. This year's passage was based on Theme 4 (*The Last Years of the USSR – M. S. Gorbachev (1985-1991)*).

The translation is split into 20 'assessable elements' (see the markscheme) and one mark is awarded for each correct element. For an element to be considered correct, it must have all the details contained in the English original (i.e. no word omitted) and the grammatical endings must all be completely correct (including noun, verb and adjective endings). Spelling errors are tolerated, provided they are not part of the grammatical ending.

Overall, the majority of candidates performed well in this task. As they had studied the topic of the translation, they knew the relevant vocabulary and were able to deploy their knowledge of grammar. Many learner candidates were able to score at least 12-15 marks out of 20, with some scoring 19-20. Some native speaker candidates lost marks due to omission of parts of elements, or due to confusion over the use of tenses.

Native speakers also sometimes failed to offer correct specialist vocabulary, such as not knowing the word for 'nuclear power station' or 'standard of living'. Those with little ability to manipulate the grammar of the language scored very low marks in this task, even when they knew every word of the required vocabulary. Some candidates scored only 1 or 2 marks for this reason, although they had translated every word of the English.

Candidates faced the most difficulty with the following elements:

- 'In 1985, Gorbachev came to power' was usually translated correctly, with a wide range of different translations of 'came' accepted by examiners. Where learner candidates made mistakes, it was often in the dative case ending for the soft sign noun 'власть' required after 'к'.
- 'At that time, the standard of living was falling' was sometimes incorrect because candidates did not correctly agree the past tense verb with the gender of 'уровень жизни'. There were a number of allowable alternatives for 'standard of living', with examiners concentrating on candidates transmitting the correct meaning rather than expecting them to use a specific phrase.
- Surprisingly, some candidates did not know the word for 'West' and named various other compass points instead, with 'на Востоке' occurring quite often.
- Very often, for both learner candidates and native speakers, 'economy' was translated as 'экономика' rather than 'экономия'. This was not accepted as a correct translation, even when the grammar was correct.
- Some candidates found difficulties with translating 'a more open society', using 'больше' instead of 'более' to form the comparative adjective. However, this appeared to be less frequent than with this type of comparative construction in previous years.

- Many candidates were able to translate 'introduced' correctly, although some did have difficulties with the past tense, especially if they chose to use a perfective verb. 'The famous policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*' was often translated well, although 'policies' caused some difficulties. A frequently offered alternative was 'правила', but examiners did not accept this.
- 'Some historians say' occasionally caused a problem for learner candidates who did not know the word 'историк'.
- The passive construction 'was caused by Gorbachev's economic policy' presented fewer issues than this type of construction in the past, although some learner candidates did find it challenging to translate 'by' correctly in this context.
- 'Gorbachev himself disagreed' was occasionally rendered incorrectly, usually due to incorrect agreement of the short form adjective. 'Himself' was comparatively well translated by most candidates.
- Many candidates did not know the correct spelling of 'explosion', with 'зрыв' often used. This was counted as a spelling error by examiners and so did not mean that candidates lost a mark.
- There were a large number of different translations of 'nuclear power station'. Examiners were flexible in what they accepted, with any plausible and grammatically correct phrase given a mark.
- 'the government's reaction to the disaster' was often wrongly translated by learner candidates who did not know which case to use after 'на' in this context, or who used a different preposition. 'Disaster' was often not known by both learner and native speakers, with 'дизастер' appearing often.
- As frequently happens with this type of construction, some candidates struggled with the use of the instrumental case in the structure 'were the real reason'.
- 'Five years later' presented some problems for some candidates, with 'назад' occasionally appearing for 'later'.

Overall, examiners would advise candidates to go through the translation carefully and annotate it with the case endings or particularly difficult structures you are going to use. Candidates are also advised to examine the required grammar appendix in the specification and ensure they know the most difficult structures. It is likely that the translation will test the range of the grammar in this appendix.

Section B and C: Written Response to Works or Films

In section B or C candidates were required to write an essay on two of the texts or one text and one film that they have studied. They have to present a critical and analytical response to access the highest mark bands.

Critical and Analytical Response (AO4)

A critical and analytical response is defined in the specification as selecting relevant material from the works, presenting and justifying points of view, developing arguments, drawing conclusions based on understanding, and evaluating issues, themes and cultural and social contexts related to the works studied. In order to access the highest mark bands (9-12, 13-16 and 17-20) for 'Critical and Analytical Response' (AO4), essays must partly or wholly address this requirement for a critical and analytical response.

Accordingly, essays that simply re-presented the story from the text or film scored very low marks, usually in the 5-8 mark band unless there are some elements of critical or analytical response, where they may be placed on the 9-12 mark band. A critical and analytical response always involves the candidate using the essay to make points about the question being asked and using evidence to back up these points. Many non-taught candidates did not reach the top half of the 13-16 mark band because they had not considered how to structure their essay coherently, or planned its content before starting.

Essays that scored the highest marks (17-20) in the 'Critical and Analytical Response' (AO4) mark grid were relevant, succinct, carefully planned and focused on giving a critical response throughout. Examples (usually in the form of targeted quotations or short descriptions of events or actions) were used consistently to back up the points being made, and the points were linked to an overall argument. The structure was fully coherent and the examiner could follow the sophisticated points being made throughout. In most cases, every paragraph took a 'point-evidence-explain-link' approach, with links being made to the wider thread of the essay and leading to the overall conclusion. There was no retelling of the story or lack of focus on the specific question being asked. There was invariably a very detailed knowledge of the text amongst those candidates scoring the highest marks for AO4.

Range of Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary (AO3)

Essays that scored the highest marks (17-20) in the 'Range of Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary' (AO3) mark grid had a range of complex structures, such as passives, conditionals, relative pronouns in cases other than the nominative, extended sentences to express abstract ideas (e.g. sentences requiring conjunctions and pronouns), synonyms for more common vocabulary, correct use of verbal aspects, correct use of verbs of motion, use of the subjunctive with verbs of commanding, etc.

The highest scoring essays also contained regular use of terminology and structures appropriate for literary and cinematic analysis, with a good command of specialist vocabulary such as 'director', 'character', 'plot', and also frequent structures allowing for appropriate critical and analytical response (such as 'the reader can see that...', 'from this it can be concluded that...' or 'this quotation shows that...'). Learner candidates often scored in the 13-16 band due to their ability to use essay phrases and specialist literary vocabulary. Weaker non-learner candidates often scored in the 13-16 mark band because the register of their essay was not appropriate, even though their language was completely

accurate and they made relevant points. Addition of literary terms and more formal essay structures would have enabled these candidates to access the 17-20 mark band for 'Range of Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary'.

'Accuracy of Language' (AO3)

For 'Accuracy of Language' (AO3), most native speaker candidates scored 10. To score the highest marks, writing does not have to be error free, but the general impression does have to be of accurate language with errors likely to be in more unusual or irregular forms. Learner candidates whose communication was clear and where the reader can always understand what is being said, even if not entirely accurate, can score in the 7-8 band. For the highest band, 9-10, learner candidates had to demonstrate that they were able to apply their knowledge of case and verb endings consistently, with errors not occurring from a lack of understanding but instead from lack of knowledge of a more complex situations or from how to apply their understanding in a particular context. The overall impression is of a candidate who has been taught their grammar and knows it well.

Popularity of Questions

Around 65% of candidates answered on one text and one film, and the remaining 35% answered on two texts.

Around 62% of the candidates chose *Пиковая дама* as their literary text, including the majority of learner candidates entered for the examination. This is a fall from around 70% in previous years, representing a move away from this text to *Ревизор* by some centres.

About 27% of candidates chose *Утомлённые солнцем* as their other work, this being a substantial decrease from previous years. *Кавказский пленник* and *Левиафан* have both increased in popularity, with around 15% each. A number of centres with large entries of learner candidates seem to have moved from studying *Утомлённые солнцем* to *Левиафан*.

The works are given below in order of popularity:

Пиковая дама

Ревизор

Утомлённые солнцем

Вишнёвый сад

Кавказский пленник

Левиафан

Неделя как неделя

Сонечка

Один день Ивана Денисовича

Крылья

There are individual comments set out below on the different texts and films.

Question 2(a) - Пиковая дама (Pushkin)

There were many successful answers to question 2(a), which although less popular than 2(b), was still answered by a large number of candidates. Candidates were required to analyse how successfully Pushkin depicts changes in society in the 19th Century in his text. The best essays consisted of a response which had a clear structure, for example considering how each of the main characters is used by Pushkin to demonstrate changes in society, and then summing up at the end with a clear conclusion.

Candidates often mentioned how the Countess is used to represent the older generation who have not adapted as society has changed, using evidence from the text of how she 'lives in the past'. Germann was usually mentioned as a character who is being used by Pushkin to represent a younger generation for whom money can buy status. Where essays were most successful, they considered some of the wider social change that Pushkin does not mention in his story, such as the plight of poorer people or the continuing impact of serfdom on society. There were some convincing arguments that the Countess's death as a result of being frightened by Germann was symbolic of 18th Century aristocracy being destroyed by the more modern 19th Century emerging middle class in the role of Germann. Less successful essays tended to retell the story, perhaps mentioning some social changes but not considering critically and analytically whether Pushkin is successful in his depiction of these, or were lacking in an appropriate understanding of the historical context.

Where quotations were used most successfully, they were incorporated into the text of the essay, with the very best candidates able to select targeted evidence and use a wider range of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Candidates are advised to make sure that they always construct essays in paragraphs, use clear evidence for their points, and use phrases like 'this shows us that' or 'from this we can see that' to help them take an analytical approach.

Question 2(b) - Пиковая дама (Pushkin)

This was the most popular question on this year's exam paper, with a large number of both learner and non-learner candidates attempting it. Candidates were required to examine the extent to which the relationship between Germann and the Countess in Pushkin's story is realistic. Answers were generally very well constructed, with the majority considering carefully a number of scenes which demonstrate to the reader how their relationship unfolds, and in the case of the best essays, commenting analytically on whether this is realistic or not.

Many strong candidates mentioned why the reader believes that Germann would behave as he does towards the Countess, for example by giving evidence from the text that he is from a very different background to her. They also often

mentioned how his personality and relationship to the Countess changes as he becomes ever more obsessed with discovering the secret to great riches, commenting analytically on how realistic and convincing the evidence is of this change. Very strong essays tended to consider different viewpoints on the realism of Pushkin's depiction, for example stating that some aspects might not be considered to be particularly realistic, such as when Germann considers becoming the Countess's lover, or when her ghost visits him with an ultimatum. Strong candidates showed a good understanding of the different social positions of the Countess and Germann, and used this to support their argument that the relationship was realistic at first, and unrealistic later. As so often, less successful essays tended to simply narrate each of the interactions between the two characters, but without specific evidence or analytical comment, and so scored lower marks.

Candidates are reminded to learn a range of quotations which tell the reader things about each of the main characters and themes of Pushkin's work. These, accompanied with appropriate essay phrases which demonstrate a range of more complex grammatical structures, will always support candidates to score higher marks.

Question 3(a) - *Ревизор* (Gogol)

This question, which required candidates to explain whether or not they considered corruption to be the most important theme of Gogol's play, was significantly more popular than 3(b). The strongest essays argued that corruption is a major theme in the play, pointing out that Gogol's depiction of the audience's recognition of the corruption in the small town "N" was one of the reasons that it attracted so much attention when it was first performed. Answers were usually well constructed, arranged with appropriate paragraphing and clear points, and making reference to the detail of the text.

The best essays were able to use quotations from the different characters to show the extent to which corruption permeates all levels of their lives. They mention the key characters of the Mayor, Judge, Postmaster and Superintendent of Schools, and how the streets are dirty, the police are drunk, prisoners are poorly fed, the mail is illegally opened and the wrong people are being conscripted. They also drew reference to Khlestakov's corruption from the very beginning of the play. Many candidates were able to mention other themes which could also be considered important, such as wider human foibles, or individual moral decay. The vast majority agreed that corruption was the most important theme, with reference to this in a clear conclusion. Weaker answers showed less knowledge of the text, or repeatedly talked about corruption but did not identify where we see this in the individual characters' actions, or make reference to Gogol's intentions in writing his play.

Examiners would remind candidates that their essays should have a clear introduction and conclusion, and that concluded comments are most effective where they are based on the analysis in the essay, and come to a clear view which uses the specific words from the original question. Such work is a feature of essays in the highest mark band for Critical and Analytical Response.

Question 3(b) - Ревизор (Gogol)

There were many successful answers to question 3(b), which required candidates to examine to what extent Gogol successfully depicts the character of Khlestakov in his play. It seemed to the examining team that this question was perhaps more straightforward to answer, as candidates were able to clearly trace Khlestakov's progress as a character from his ignominious leaving of St Petersburg as a very minor indebted official to his arrival in 'N', and his thorough exploitation of mistaken identity.

The strongest candidates argued that Gogol's portrayal of Khlestakov is successful because we learn a lot about his morally questionable character through his actions. We are given a sense of a rude and irresponsible man by the way that he demands more food, makes unrealistic demands, and treats his servant poorly. These candidates were often also able to mention less successful aspects of the character's portrayal for example suggesting that the extent of Khlestakov's greed and stupidity are not believable for the audience, and questioning whether he would really ever go so far as to move in with the Mayor and flirt with his wife and daughter. Weaker answers lacked knowledge of the character's actions beyond a vague understanding of the plot of the play, or were unable to use quotations to back up their analytical points. A number retold the story from beginning to end, and did not mention their view on whether they felt Gogol's portrayal of the character was successful, thus receiving a very low mark for Critical and Analytical Response.

Candidates are reminded that planning essays before beginning them will nearly always lead to better performance. Where the examining team saw that plans had clearly been made on candidate's papers, with notes about which evidence they had decided to use to back up their points, there was a correlation with higher marks for the essays presented.

Question 4(a) - Вишнёвый сад (Chekhov)

Of the two options for essays Chekhov's play, this question, inviting candidates to consider whether Trofimov is an important character, was the least popular. Candidates usually know the play very well, and this was also true this year of candidates who opted to answer this question, but perhaps others had not considered his role in the play fully enough to feel confident to answer this question.

The best candidates wrote carefully structured responses which considered how Trofimov is important because he is the main character through which the audience hears rational ideas about what the future of Russia could be like. They were able to show that Chekhov included Trofimov in the play for a specific reason -- as a representative of the 'intelligentsia' and a model of an optimistic advocate for change. They also often mentioned that the character provides a link with Ranevskaya's past and her dead son, and so a way for the audience to learn more about her former life and more information about her motivations. Weaker candidates did not know enough about the social and cultural background to the play to analyse Trofimov's character fully, failing to recognise him as an 'armchair' social reformer who is philosophical rather than practical

(an 'eternal student'), typical of the time, and presented here in direct contrast to Lopakhin.

Candidates should ensure that they have considered in-depth character studies of the main and perhaps less central characters in the works they have studied. These often form the spine of questions for this paper.

Question 4(b) - *Вишнёвый сад* (Chekhov)

This was a popular question for those who had studied Chekhov's play, and required candidates to examine the extent to which liberation could be considered the most important theme. Responses varied in terms of quality, but many candidates who knew the play well were able to write a coherent response which examined the theme of liberation in depth.

The best essays were able to place the play firmly in its historical context, recognising the events as taking place just 40 years after the Emancipation of the Serfs and with Russia on the brink of revolution, and tracing each of the character's personal relationships with this period of tumultuous social change. A common, and usually very successful, approach was to refer to the characters of Lopakhin and Firs and discuss how each of them is (or isn't) liberated from their own positions as former serfs. Lopakhin's ability to exploit his freedom from serfdom to become a wealthy businessman, and Firs's inability to capitalise on his own theoretical freedom, remaining loyal to the family, were successfully contrasted in the best answers. The symbolic loss and destruction of the cherry orchard was occasionally referred to as Ranevsky's point of liberation from her past, which examiners felt was an interesting view. As always, detailed knowledge of the text enabled candidates to feel confident in their conclusions. Weaker answers often demonstrated that the candidate did not know the text and did not understand the social changes taking place in Russia at the time, saw things in too simplistic terms or only through the lens of our own modern Western sensibilities and attitudes. On a number of occasions, candidates referred to the film 'The Cherry Orchard', which perhaps indicated that they had not studied the play in depth.

Centres and candidates are reminded that for all of the works on the specification, a sound knowledge of social and cultural contexts behind the works is necessary to effectively respond to most potential essay questions.

Question 5(a) - *Один день Ивана Денисовича* (Solzhenitsyn)

There were very few candidates who chose to study Solzhenitsyn's novella for this paper. This question on whether the structure of the text is successful was the least popular of the two. Those candidates who did answer it were able to explain how the setting in a single day, and the fact that it is due to be repeated 3,653 times, helps emphasise the smallest details of the hardships suffered by the GULAG inmates, as well as the monotony of their daily experience. The best essays mentioned how perhaps the structure could also limit the reader's understanding of some of the issues faced over time, such as the enormous length of the sentences or the impact of the GULAG system in Soviet society.

Question 5(b) - *Один день Ивана Денисовича* (Solzhenitsyn)

This question was more popular than 5(a), but still answered by very few candidates. Candidates were asked to discuss how Shukhov's relationship with the other characters in the novella helps us to understand the difficulties of life in the Gulag. The strongest candidates chose three or four other characters and explained what Shukhov says or thinks about them, using targeted evidence from the text. They were able to mention how Tyurin represents someone who is tough and heroic in the face of hardships, and represents the injustice of the camps, and also how Tsezar's frequent luxury food parcels are envied by the other prisoners, showing how food is frequently in the prisoner's minds. Characters were often described as a microcosm of Stalin's Soviet Union, with Shukhov the average innocent citizen caught in the prison camp that it was.

Question 6(a) - *Неделя как неделя* (Baranskaya)

Baranskaya's novella always attracts a range of answers, from some very strong, to some weaker. This question, inviting candidates to explain the role that Blonde Lusya and Dark Lusya play in the story, had far fewer responses than 6(b), perhaps because it required detailed knowledge of two comparatively minor characters. Successful answers pointed to the symbolic nature of the two different types of Soviet women, as presented in contrast to Olga. Dark Lusya is shown as someone who has a more comfortable lifestyle, able to afford luxuries, whereas Blonde Lusya has a much more difficult life, a single mother living in a communal flat. Less successful answers were unable to explain why these two characters had been created by Baranskaya, or did not make links to the role of women in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.

Question 6(b) - *Неделя как неделя* (Baranskaya)

This question, requiring candidates to examine the extent to which Baranskaya realistically depicts the daily life of Olga and Dima in her novella, was much more popular than 6(a). The strongest essays were very convincing, analysing the relationship between Olga and Dima as largely positive and commenting on the 'double burden' of a working wife and mother in 1960s Soviet Moscow. They mentioned the myriad difficulties in their lives, typical of the time, such as the long commute, the flat in a district without facilities, and the queues for basic food products, but also noticed that Dima is depicted as a better husband than most, and that there is light and shade to their lives. Most answers argued that their daily life does appear very realistic for the time, demonstrating a wider understanding of social and cultural context. Weaker answers did not spot how contrasts are drawn in the novella, and how the minor characters are used by Baranskaya to show that Olga and Dima's experience is typical in some respects and not in others.

Question 7(a) - *Сонечка* (Ulitskaya)

There were again very few answers on Ulitskaya's novella this year. This question, on how successfully the writer depicts the character traits of Tania, was the least popular of the two. Successful candidates chose three or four specific episodes from the text which tell us about Tania, for example mentioning how Tania is drawn in contrast to Sonechka, and how using targeted evidence to

show that Tania is selfish and spoilt. Strong essays then considered why Tania's portrayal might be less successful, for example discussing that we learn little about why she chooses to avoid contact with Sonechka after Robert Viktorovich dies.

Question 7(b) – Сонечка (Ulitskaya)

A small number of candidates chose to answer this question where they were required to analyse the extent to which loneliness is the most important theme of Ulitskaya's novella. Most of these essays focused on how the character of Sonechka herself is used to communicate this theme, and contrasting her character before and after she marries Robert Viktorovich. As always, the most successful candidates considered other themes which could be important (such as the role of women) before stating their final view on whether or not loneliness is the most important of them in a clear conclusion at the end.

Question 8(a) – Крылья (Shepit'ko)

Shepit'ko's film was studied by a very small number of candidates this year. This first question, the least popular of the two, required them to analyse which scenes help us to understand the character of Nadezhda Stepanovna. Candidates were usually able to select several key scenes where we learn more about her, for example where she goes to the party at her daughter's apartment and where she invites her boyfriend over. The best essays also mentioned what we learn about Nadezhda Stepanovna from the flashback scenes, as well as using targeted quotations and specific evidence from the film.

Question 8(b) – Крылья (Shepit'ko)

This question on whether the theme of nostalgia is the most important theme in the film was well done by a number of candidates. They were able to use descriptions of what happens in the film as evidence to show that Nadezhda Stepanovna is nostalgic for her past as a fighter pilot and for her relationship with Mitia, often mentioning how the director uses flashbacks to create this sense of a past that is being longed for. Candidates sometimes considered other themes which could have been considered important, with most declaring that nostalgia was definitely the most important in a specific conclusion.

Question 9(a) - Утомлённые солнцем (Mikhalkov)

This essay question, requiring candidates to consider the extent to which Marusia is an important character in the film, was less popular than 9(b), but still a frequent choice for both learner and non-learner candidates. As always with those who have been well prepared, candidates usually write well-constructed and carefully considered essays, which contained extensive reference to the specific events of the film. Knowledge of Marusia's role and relationships with Kotov and Mitia was usually comprehensively demonstrated.

The best essays began by explaining the 'love triangle' between the three main characters, and using evidence to show that Marusia is important as a representative of the aristocratic or wealthy families whose lives changed after the Revolution, pointing out the contrasts that the audience sees between her

and Kotov, who cannot speak French or play the piano. Strong candidates presented detailed evidence to argue that Marusia plays an ambiguous role at the centre of the tension between the two men who fought on opposite sides in the Civil War, with intertwined conflicts of ideology and romance running through the whole film. Strong answers always made reference to key scenes, mentioning Marusia's clothing, behaviour and words. Weaker candidates tended literally to describe the story from beginning to end, or did not understand how the events that we see on screen have an important backstory that is occasionally mentioned, but not depicted.

Candidates are reminded by the examining team to ensure that they have the vocabulary that they need to make sophisticated analytical points in their essays, particularly terms appropriate for literary and cinematic analysis, such as 'character', 'plot', 'metaphor', 'simile', 'camera technique' and 'first person narrative',

Question 9(b) - Утомлённые солнцем (Mikhalkov)

This question on Mikhalkov's film was the most popular film question. This was not a surprise to the examining team as it invited candidates to consider how symbolism is used in the film to help the audience to understand the influence of Soviet power in the 1930s, something which is always a popular topic for those who have studied the film. There were many very strong answers, clearly making reference with commonly and less commonly understood symbols in the film, and explaining how Mikhalkov uses them to achieve his aims.

The best candidates wrote essays which considered a number of key symbolic elements in depth. Frequently mentioned was imagery focusing the absence or presence of water and on weather as a metaphor, such as the thunder that we hear during the film which is not followed by rain demonstrating that there is a constant threat from the regime that does not materialise until the end when Kotov is arrested. Colours were frequently mentioned as playing a symbolic role in the film, with the constant use of flashes of red in the pioneers' scarves and the flags at the beach representative of the constant presence of Soviet power. In very effective essays, candidates were able to draw a sharp contrast between how the colours of red and white are used. Other symbols frequently mentioned and well explained were mirrors, masks, the portrait of Stalin, the ball lightning, the death of the lost lorry driver, and Mikhalkov's use of music. Less successful essays tended to see the symbols as straightforward or clear cut, perhaps missing some of the subtleties in the director's intentions.

Candidates are reminded that in essays where they discuss several features, they should try to create a common thread through the discussion such that they are able to draw a clear conclusion at the end.

Question 10(a) - Кавказский пленник (Bodrov)

Of the two questions this year on Bodrov's film, this one was the most popular. Candidates were required to consider the extent to which the director's portrayal of the relationship between Sasha and Vanya is realistic. There were some very strong answers offered which showed a detailed knowledge of the relationship

between the two major characters, using quotations and analysis of key scenes effectively.

Strong candidates tended to suggest that the audience is given a realistic picture of the relationship between Sasha and Vanya through some of the key scenes in the film, such as when they are first captured. The audience sees a typical attitude of a seasoned soldier towards younger recruits, as Sasha continually forgets Vanya's name, seeing him as just more cannon fodder for the war. Sasha suggests that the commander will buy him out, but not Vanya. Candidates often mentioned how the relationship between the two soldiers develops during the film to one of trust and respect, as we later see how Sasha kills Hasan when the latter wrestles Vanya to the ground. Weaker essays failed to mention some of the possibly less successful aspects of the portrayal of the soldiers to help them make their point, such as that some scenes could be seen as exaggerated for comic effect.

Centres are reminded to ensure that when studying films, candidates are equipped with enough detailed knowledge of what the characters say, such that they can use targeted quotations and evidence in their analytical essays.

Question 10(b) - *Кавказский пленник* (Bodrov)

This question, requiring candidates to explain how Bodrov uses elements of comedy in his film, was answered by comparatively few candidates. Those candidates who did choose it were usually able to make reference to several specific scenes which show some elements of comedy, but drawing the conclusion that the film in itself is far from a comical one.

Successful essays often made reference to the opening of the film, where we see the doctor examining the new recruits, and we see Vanya naked from behind. Candidates often pointed out the contrast between the soldiers' laughing and joking, and the ambush and capture of Sasha and Vanya by the Chechens. Strong answers recognised that Bodrov uses comical elements to bring realism to the relationship between the two soldiers while they are in captivity, such as when they discuss their sexual conquests, or to break tension in the film. Weaker candidates did not always explain how contrasts can be drawn by targeted use of elements of comedy, or how this relates to the success of the film overall.

Question 11(a) - *Левиафан* (Zvyagintsev)

The two questions on Zvyagintsev's film were equally popular this year, with more candidates studying it than previously. The first question invited candidates to analyse how the theme of the role of religion is depicted in the film. There were many very strong answers, which showed a deep understanding of the complexity of religion in modern Russia, the differences between religion and the position of the Orthodox Church in the Russian state, and in how this is depicted in the film through the different characters.

The best candidates mentioned how the audience is repeatedly shown contrasts between the Orthodox Church in the past and the modern Orthodox Church, such as the ruins of the old church where the young people gather and the

modern Orthodox church that the mayor has built on Kolya's land by the end of the film. The corruption of Church officials was frequently mentioned, and the contrast drawn between the way that religion is seen by the Mayor and the Archbishop, and how it is seen by ordinary people. Strong essays also often mentioned the whale carcass in biblical terms as the eponymous 'Leviathan', and how Kolya's whole life is destroyed and his liberty taken from him in the name of religion. Weaker candidates did not always understand all of the symbolism present in the film.

Question 11(b) - *Левиафан* (Zvyagintsev)

The second question on this film was very successfully answered by many candidates. They were invited to discuss the extent to which we can consider Kolya a 'positive hero' in the film. Learner candidates who have studied this film were often able to structure their responses coherently, with clear plans for their essays leading to answers which considered the subtleties of Kolya's character and drew clear conclusions at the end.

The strongest candidates were able to give evidence from the film for the way in which Kolya is shown to have love for and a strong bond with his family, and how he wants to protect them and provide for them. They made reference to key scenes such as when Kolya and Roma poke fun at Dima, or when the family goes out shooting and make kebabs together. The very best answers showed evidence that candidates understood the Russian literary trope of the 'little man' standing up valiantly against injustice and corruption, and were even able in some cases to relate the portrayal of Kolya in this context to other Russian literary characters. Candidates often mentioned Kolya's less desirable qualities, such as the difficulties he has with his son, and his occasional violence towards him and Lilya. Weaker essays often failed to see the subtleties in the character's portrayal, or tried to say that Kolya was simply a negative character with few redeeming features.

Paper Summary

Advice to centres

All centres and candidates are reminded that there is no penalty applied for essays that are overlong. Although teachers and candidates are encouraged to produce essays that fall within the suggested 250-word limit, candidates should not stop abruptly at 250 words and therefore perhaps fail to offer a conclusion or answer to the chosen essay question. Part of the skill at this level is to marshal material appropriately and be selective about what to include and what not to include, and to reach approximately 250 words. Quotations from texts or films are not counted as part of any word count.

Centres are advised to ensure that they choose works for examination carefully. Candidates should be well prepared for both their chosen works. This includes studying features such as characterisation, the form and the technique of presentation, key concepts and issues, and the social and cultural context, as appropriate to the work studied. Candidates must have a critical and analytical appreciation of the works. This means they must be able to offer points of view and support them with evidence from the text or film. Knowing the plot and

retelling it will not score highly, and neither will irrelevant information or points of view offered without evidence.

Candidates are also reminded to ensure that they write in black ink and write their answers in the correct place in the answer booklet. This year, a comparatively large number of candidates wrote both essays in the first answer space, causing difficulties in assigning marks correctly.

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

- Ensure that you prepare thoroughly for the translation task by studying the prescribed grammar list on page 52 of the specification.
- Divide your time carefully and do not spend too much time on the translation task.
- Check that you have not omitted any word from the translation task.
- Learn your grammatical endings carefully, focusing particularly on the cases required after prepositions and some common verbs.
- Ensure you know a range of essay phrases that will help you to write a critical response to the work you have studied.
- Ensure that you have a range of words and structures that are considered terminology appropriate for literary or cinematic analysis, such as 'plot', 'metaphor', 'first person narrative', 'the reader is given the impression that' or 'the audience can see that'.
- Seek to use more complex grammatical structures in your essay, such as passives, conditionals, relative pronouns in cases other than the nominative, extended sentences to express abstract ideas (e.g. sentences requiring conjunctions and pronouns), synonyms for more common vocabulary, correct use of verbal aspects, correct use of verbs of motion, use of the subjunctive with verbs of commanding, etc.
- Ensure that you know your text or film well and have a good range of quotations or evidence to back up your points, and ensure you do not make points without reference to the text or film.
- Plan your essay carefully, thinking about what your conclusion will be and ensuring that your points lead up to it – decide what you want to say before you say it.
- Use a 'Point, Evidence, Explain, Link' approach to writing your essay, ensuring that you make a critical point and then back it up using evidence, explain your point in more depth and then link it to your overall argument.
- Write your essay in paragraphs with a logical structure so that the examiner can follow your points.

- Keep to the suggested word limit and select your material carefully.
- Ensure that your handwriting is legible.

The examining team would once again like to thank teachers of Russian in schools. This year, a large number of excellent candidates were presented for examination. They had been thoroughly prepared and had an extensive knowledge of their chosen works. Overall, candidates performed very well, with a strong sense of interest and commitment to the study of Russian coming through. This is down to the hard work and dedication of them and their teachers.

