



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Russian (9RU0) Paper 02

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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 sixth year of the current A Level specification. As in the two years following the pandemic, an increasing number of candidates had been well prepared for this paper this year. They had clearly been taught with reference to the specification, sample materials and previous examiners' reports, and had studied their chosen texts or films in detail over the two-year A Level course. Pleasingly for the examining team 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.

As in previous years, there were also some examples of candidates 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. Candidates need to be able to offer a critical and analytical response to characters, themes and technical devices used.

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 2 (*Political and Artistic Culture in the Russian-speaking World*).

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.

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:

- 'New Year is usually considered' was usually translated correctly, with a range of different possible translations of 'considered' accepted. Occasionally candidates omitted 'considered' or used a phrase which examiners considered to be too different in meaning to the English original.
- 'to be the most significant holiday' was well translated, with most candidates recognising that they needed to use a construction in the instrumental case. Some candidates did not know how to translate 'significant' or recalled the word incorrectly, but examiners accepted a range of words which conveyed the meaning, including 'важный'.
- 'Traditionally' was often mistranslated as 'традиционно', this losing otherwise strong candidates a mark for this element.
- Quite frequently candidates struggled with the element 'on 31st December every year', usually because they did not know which case they would need to use to convey the English 'on', or because they included the adjective ending on the ordinal numeral but used the wrong case. A regular error was to see something like 'на 31-го декабря'. Candidates are advised not to include the adjective ending on numerals if they are not certain how to do so correctly, as it is not needed to gain a mark. This element also saw frequent omission of 'every year' in the translation.
- The two most common ways of translating 'relatives and friends are invited' were 'родственники и друзья приглашены' or 'родственников и друзей приглашают', and these were both accepted by examiners, alongside the less common but also accepted 'родственники и друзья приглашаются'. The most common errors were caused by incorrect case endings in these constructions, rather than a complete lack of knowledge about what type of verb to use, and it was pleasing to see so many learner candidates able to deal with English passive constructions correctly when rendering them in Russian.
- 'for a very important celebratory dinner' caused occasional issues for candidates who did not know how to translate 'celebratory'.
- 'Russians prepare lots of special dishes' was well translated by most candidates, with a range of verbs used for 'prepare'. Errors most frequently encountered from learner candidates were an incorrect ending on 'Россияне' and an attempt to use 'еды' as a plural noun to mean 'foods', which does not work in Russian. It was, of course, accepted when used in the singular. Also occasionally an issue was a lack of knowledge about the genitive plural of the neuter noun 'блюдо'.
- 'the famous 'Olivier' salad' caused very few problems, with candidates seemingly familiar with the dish and how to spell it in Russian. That said, candidates did not lose marks for spellings such as 'Оливиер' or for rendering 'salad' as 'салад'.
- More candidates had difficulty with 'champagne and vodka for toasts', with 'шампанское' often not known by both learner and native speaker candidates. 'for toasts' caused some candidates confusion, with 'для бутербродов' being the most amusing.
- 'People give each other gifts' was handled well by most, with the verb ending usually correct. Where there were difficulties, they were usually with 'друг другу', with an incorrect ending cause the candidate to lose a mark.
- Some candidates did not decline both parts of 'Дед Мороз' in their translation of 'and children receive theirs from Grandfather Frost', and as in previous years very many candidates struggled to use 'свой' correctly. Having said this, 'и дети получают их от Деда Мороза' was accepted on this occasion as meaning 'and children receive *them* from Grandfather Frost', which has the same meaning as the English original. 'и дети получают их подарки от Деда Мороза' was not accepted.
- The biggest issue with translation of 'Families often watch' was that candidates did not use a plural of 'семья'.
- 'old Soviet films together' was nearly always correctly translated, although candidates do need to know how to spell 'советский' correctly, and know 'русский' is not a synonym for it.

- There were frequent different versions of 'at midnight' used to translate 'At midnight people gather', with incorrect versions such as 'полночью', 'на полночь' and 'в полночи' losing marks for candidates.
- 'to watch the celebrations in Moscow' caused a few problems for candidates who did not know how to translate 'celebrations'. They sometimes used 'праздник' instead of 'празднование', and this was not accepted.
- Candidates reasonably frequently had difficulties with 'on television' in 'and the President's speech on television', with 'на телевизоре' and 'в телевидение' common examples of ways in which candidates lost marks. 'Speech' proved tricky for some, but many were able to find a word that they did know which was acceptable, such as 'объявление'.
- 'Everyone says "Happy New Year!"' was usually well translated, although some candidates tried to use something like 'Счастливы Новый год!' and lost marks.
- 'but that is just the start of the party!' was well translated by most candidates, although 'партия' instead of 'вечеринка' was an occasional error made by learner candidates, as well as not recognising that 'начало' is a neuter noun.

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 68% of candidates answered on one text and one film, and the remaining 32% answered on two texts.

Around 65% of the candidates chose *Пиковая дама* as their literary text, including the majority of learner candidates entered for the examination. This is around the same as last year, with those centres not selecting *Пиковая дама* usually studying *Ревизор* instead, with 31% choosing this. *Вишнёвый сад* seems to have fallen in popularity, with about 12% of candidates choosing it as one of their works, very similar to *Неделя как неделя*.

About 29% of candidates chose *Утомлённые солнцем* as their other work, this being similar to previous years. *Кавказский пленник* and *Левиафан* each continue to be studied by about 15% of candidates.

The works are given below in order of popularity:

Пиковая дама

Ревизор

Утомлённые солнцем

Кавказский пленник

Левиафан

Вишнёвый сад

Неделя как неделя

Сонечка

Крылья

Один день Ивана Денисовича

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 while slightly less popular than 2(b), was answered by a large number of candidates. Candidates were required to examine to what extent Lizaveta Ivanovna can be considered an important character in Pushkin's story. The best essays consisted of a response which had a clear structure, for example several separate paragraphs which looked at the various ways in which Lizaveta interacts with the other characters, then considering how other characters might also be important, and summing up at the end with a clear conclusion.

Candidates often mentioned how Lizaveta is the key link between Germann and the Countess, using evidence from the text to show how she longs for attention and therefore responds to Germann's advances. They set out how she therefore propels the plot forward, concluding that she is therefore an important character without whom the narrative would not work. They often mentioned that she is the only character who has a 'happy ending', underlining the contrast with the other characters, with the best essays carefully incorporating the evidence about her character into their work. A more sophisticated line of argument for many candidates was to explain how Lizaveta's role in the story is to bring out the true character traits in the other characters, such as Germann's greed and the Countess's egocentrism, and the most successful were able to use clear and specific evidence of this with quotations from the text. The strongest candidates were also able to marshal correct and impressive literary terminology (e.g. второстепенный персонаж) to explain Lizaveta's role, and to describe her development as a character throughout the story. Less successful essays tended to retell Lizaveta's story, or sometimes the whole story, without a critical or analytical approach.

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 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 consider whether the theme of gambling is the most important theme in Pushkin's story. Many answers were well constructed, but too often candidates simply began with telling us about the game of cards at the beginning of the story and then retold the whole story, emphasising where gambling is mentioned. Such essays scored very low marks as they did not take a critical or analytical approach.

Many stronger candidates were able to zoom out from the details of the plot and consider how the theme of gambling develops through the story, weighing it up against other important themes such as those of greed and supernatural forces. Candidates often mentioned that Pushkin's presentation of gambling in his story offers a clear lesson for the reader, using evidence of its impact on Germann, and concluded that it is therefore an important theme. They also often mentioned the cyclical nature of the story, beginning and ending at the gambling table, and the title itself, as key evidence that gambling is an important theme. The best candidates showed their wider knowledge and noted Pushkin's own views on chance and fate, and his own belief in the mysterious powers that rationality tries to banish. The very best candidates were able to link gambling and card-playing to the context of Germann's arbitrary upward mobility in a burgeoning capitalist society that enables anyone to escape their upbringing and rise to the top, using evidence from the text with skill and control. While lots of candidates were able to give key quotations from the story, not all were able to label the techniques Pushkin used or to analyse the significance of these quotations, and this lost weaker candidates marks.

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 3(a) - *Ревизор* (Gogol)

This question, which required candidates to analyse the extent to which the Mayor could be considered a 'tragic character' in Gogol's play, was significantly less popular than 3(b), but actually tended to lead to stronger answers. Candidates tended to argue that the Mayor could be considered a tragic character because he is a victim of the way that things are run in Russia, and that we might sympathise with him because of this. Many, but not all, answers were well constructed, arranged with appropriate paragraphing and clear points, and making reference to the detail of the text.

The best candidates were able to construct an argument that considered the Mayor as a much subtler character than he might appear on the surface, with reference to his increasingly desperate behaviour as he worries about the Inspector's arrival, and his wife and daughter's treatment of him. They then went on to analyse the Mayor's final address to the audience ("who are you laughing at?") and the 'dumb scene', commenting on his despair and accusations directed towards the audience themselves. Some weaker candidates understood the term 'tragic' as a synonym for 'negative', which led them to argue that the Mayor is a 'tragic' character where they were really giving evidence that he is simply of low moral character. Weaker answers also tended to show less knowledge of the text, or were only able to talk about the character of the Mayor in a very generalised way rather than using specific quotations or evidence.

Candidates should ensure that they have prepared in-depth character studies of the main and perhaps less central characters in the works they have studied. They should be able to analyse the role of each character, and how they might be perceived by the audience or reader. Character studies often form the spine of questions for this paper.

Question 3(b) - Ревизор (Gogol)

There were some successful answers to question 3(b), which required candidates to evaluate to which extent Gogol successfully depicts Russia at the start of the 19th Century in his play, and it was more popular than 3(a). It seemed to the examining team that this was perhaps because candidates might have thought it to be more straightforward. Whilst this was perhaps the case, the question did require candidates to have concept of the social and cultural setting of the play in order to present a successful argument, which not all were able to do.

Many candidates were able to argue that the portrayal was successful because we are shown clearly through satire the problems with various aspects of Russian society at the time. They were able to use the actions and words of various characters in the play to demonstrate this, and link to some knowledge of wider society, perhaps also balancing their argument by considering why some might say that the extreme levels of corruption and ridiculous behaviour could make the play unbelievable and therefore unsuccessful in its aims. Weaker candidates tended to write very long essays on the corruption in the town with little analytical insight and without reference to the social conditions that obtained in Russia at the time, thus receiving a very low mark for Critical and Analytical Response. The best candidates were able to use literary language like *irony* and *satire* and mention Gogol's deft humour and use of language. The strongest answers provided a balanced view, arguing that while Gogol did critique social institutions, he was also a master of the grotesque and that the play was never meant to be realistic.

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 4(a) - Вишнёвый сад (Chekhov)

Of the two options for essays on Chekhov's play, this question, inviting candidates to analyse the extent to which the depiction of the relationship between Ranevskaya and Lopakhin can be considered successful, was the most popular by a significant margin. Candidates usually knew the play very well, and were able to cite specific evidence to make their argument.

The best candidates wrote carefully structured responses which set out how the relationship between the two characters is central to the play, what we learn about how Lopakhin was treated by Ranevskaya in the past as the son of a former serf on her estate, and how we learn about their character and motivation through their words and actions towards each other. Candidates were often able to mention specific quotations from both characters which underlined the points that they made. Successful candidates often discussed the profound misunderstanding between the different classes that two characters represent, and some went even further by bringing in the idea that Lopakhin's love for Ranevskaya was predominantly built on his memories rather than

being a true love as he started cutting the orchard before she had left. Weaker candidates tended to simply retell the story, falling into the trap of starting with a description of each of their characters, and then explaining how they interact as the play progresses, without any critical or analytical comment.

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 4(b) - Вишнёвый сад (Chekhov)

This was the least popular question on Chekhov's play, perhaps because it required specific literary terminology which perhaps candidates did not feel they had mastered, and there were very few answers overall. It required candidate to consider how Chekhov uses different dramatic techniques in his play. Where candidates had studied this as part of their course, they were able to offer very successful responses. The best essays were able to set out the range of techniques that Chekhov uses in his play, explaining that he was a pioneer with many of these. 'Indirect action' was frequently mentioned, as was the use of sound and symbolism. Less successful essays did not show an understanding of what was required and instead either retold the story or provided a set of character studies.

Candidates are reminded that a knowledge of the literary or dramatic techniques that writers have used in the various texts on the specification could be required in order for candidates to answer some of the questions on this paper.

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 Solzhenitsyn's depiction of the character of Shukhov can be considered successful was the most popular of the two. The strongest candidates were able to explain how the writer uses various techniques to help us understand Shukhov's character, and evaluate the success of these. The best essays mentioned how we learn about Shukhov's ingenuity in the face of adversity, and how his internal monologue helps us to understand the relentless focus on the tiny details of everyday life in the hardship of the camp. Good examples also often mentioned the structure of the text as a technique used to give us a sense of Shukhov's character daily trials, but also perhaps a limiting factor as we have much less information about the impact of the GULAG on him over time.

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

This question was less popular than 5(a), with very few answers. Candidates were asked to discuss how Solzhenitsyn uses the symbol of the cold in his novella. Those answers that were offered explained that 'cold' features on nearly every page, this giving us a picture of the relentless Siberian weather that the prisoners experience every day. They were also able to consider how the literal 'cold' is used as an effective symbol of the coldness with which the prisoners are treated by the guards, with clever use of quotations from the text to make the point. Less successful essays tended to simply explain where the cold is mentioned in the novella, rather than explain how Solzhenitsyn is using symbolism.

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

Baranskaya's novella once again attracted a range of answers, from some very strong, to some weaker. This question, inviting candidates to consider whether the theme of the 'double burden' is the most important, was by far the most popular of the two options. Very many of the candidates had a clear understanding of the theme and its implications, and were able to analyse Olga's role in depicting the theme using quotations from the text, often concluding that it was indeed the most important theme. The best candidates were able to make wider reference to the social and cultural background at play, including Baranskaya's attempt to bring the role of women in Soviet society to the fore, and reaction to her writing at the time. Occasionally, candidates were able to consider other themes (such as poor living conditions) that might also be important, but universally candidates thought that they were less important in Baranskaya's novella.

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

This question, requiring candidates to consider whether the structure of the text helps us to understand its main themes, was answered by very few candidates, perhaps because it required some specific literary vocabulary. Where candidates were successful, they were able to explain that the novella's diary format over a seven-day period helps us to understand the frenzied nature of the weekdays focused on domestic and work practicalities, as contrasted with the weekends where there is time for leisure perhaps more for men than women, thus underlining the effect of the 'double burden'. Some were able to suggest how the structure might be limiting, or argue that we only get to understand others' opinions or actions through Olga's eyes. Weaker answers tended to retell the story without reference to the purpose or effect of the diary format.

Question 7(a) – *Сонечка* (Ulitskaya)

There were once again very few answers on Ulitskaya's novella. This question, on how the writer depicts the impact of the Great Patriotic War on different generations, was by far the least popular of the two. This was perhaps because Ulitskaya rarely explicitly mentions the impact of the War, and so successful answers required a detailed knowledge of the text. The best essays were able to draw reference to the personal sacrifices made by women of Sonechka's generation, especially in how they support their family in times of hardship, and how women of Tania's generation do not appreciate these sacrifices. Strong essays also noted the difference impact of the war on women such as Sonechka and men such as Robert Viktorovich.

Question 7(b) – *Сонечка* (Ulitskaya)

This question, on whether Yasia can be considered a negative character, was much more popular than 7(a). Candidates who chose this question generally seemed to know the text very well, being able to suggest evidence both for and against the proposition of the question. A frequent structure was to comment on Yasia's status as a victim because of her traumatic childhood, but then mention that she ultimately brings discord to Sonechka's family through her actions and could therefore be considered 'negative'. Yasia's seemingly negative influence on Tania was often mentioned, as well as her use of sex as a way to express gratitude, and her disruption of the relationship between Sonechka and Robert Viktorovich. Weaker essays tended to miss the subtleties in some of these depictions of Yasia, or offered broad-brush comments which led to definitive conclusions without considering alternative interpretations.

Question 8(a) – *Крылья* (Shepit'ko)

Shepit'ko's film was again studied by a very small number of candidates this year. This first question, the least popular of the two, required them to consider whether the theme of love and marriage is the most important in the film. Candidates were usually able to explain how the theme is depicted through the different characters, usually with a focus on differing attitudes of Nadezhda Stepanovna and her daughter Tania. The best essays were able to show how the character's attitudes towards love may have changed over time, with specific evidence from the film, and consider other possibly important themes before drawing conclusions.

Question 8(b) – *Крылья* (Shepit'ko)

This question on whether Nadezhda Stepanovna can be considered a tragic character was well answered by many candidates. They were able to use detailed descriptions of what happens in the film, and sometimes information the director's cinematic techniques, to show that Nadezhda Stepanovna's unhappiness and loneliness make her undeniably tragic. Generally, candidates had a very good knowledge of the film and its themes, and were able to relate it effectively with its social and cultural context. Candidates sometimes considered other evaluations of Nadezhda Stepanovna's character, such as chiefly heroic or patriotic, but rarely settled on these as main interpretations. Weaker essays tended to simply tell her story, stating along the way that she is 'tragic' rather than explaining how Shepit'ko achieves this effect through her cinematography.

Question 9(a) – *Утомлённые солнцем* (Mikhalkov)

This essay question, requiring candidates to consider to what extent betrayal might be the most important theme in the film, was much less popular than 9(b), but still a frequent choice for both learner and non-learner candidates. Where candidates had been well prepared, they were usually able to write well-constructed essays, often taking an approach which considered how betrayal might affect different characters.

Candidates tended to discuss Kotov's betrayal by Stalin with clear reference specific scenes where we begin to understand this, and perhaps even the dramatic irony that the audience knows about this long before Kotov

realises it. Whilst many focused on Kotov, good candidates also offered an understanding of how Mitia is a victim of betrayal by Marusia, and by the State whose mission he must accept. Successful essays tended to select three key moments in the theme to use to analyse the theme of betrayal, rather than retelling the plot of the film and mentioning the theme along the way, and the best examples were able to apply Mitia's fairytale to Kotov's betrayal. A number of candidates were able to conclude convincingly that that Kotov, whose faith in the Soviet state was always robust, is ultimately betrayed by the State. Weaker candidates tended to simply state that betrayal is a key theme at the start of the essay, and then retell the plot. Such essays will always score very low marks for Critical and Analytical Response.

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 which scenes best help us to understand the character of Kotov. There were many very strong answers, which showed clear evidence of a detailed knowledge of the film as well as its social and cultural setting.

The best candidates selected three or perhaps four key scenes which tell us something about Kotov, and were able to use specific evidence to tell the reader what we learn and its significance to the wider narrative. The most commonly chosen scenes were where Kotov saves the harvest from the advancing tanks and we learn about the esteem in which he is held and his willingness to help others, the scene with Nadia in the boat where we learn of his idealism and his relationship with his daughter, and the scene with Mitia in the forest where we learn more about their past and Mitia's motivation. Candidates also frequently drew reference to the scenes with Marusia's family where we learn about the contrasts between him and the intelligentsia that they represent. The best essays tended to be able to show Kotov in a nuanced light, as some whose past has caught up with him, or someone who has many facets that are not all visible simultaneously. Weaker candidates tended to describe Kotov at the start of the essay but not relate what we know about him to specific scenes.

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 10(a) - Кавказский пленник (Bodrov)

Of the two questions this year on Bodrov's film, this one was the most popular. Candidates were invited to analyse the extent to which Vanya is the important character in the film. There were many strong answers which showed detailed knowledge of the film and how the character of Vanya develops as the narrative progresses.

Strong candidates tended to argue that Vanya is an important character because he is the young soldier whose innocence is lost when he is taken prisoner by the Chechens, progressing from naivety to a realisation of the full horror of the war. The fact that the film starts and ends with him was considered to be relevant by many. Many candidates also mentioned Vanya's relationship with Dina, and how the complexities of this help the audience to understand some of the film's themes. The strongest answers were also able to explain how Vanya acts as a foil to Sasha, in terms of his acts of kindness, his humane values and also his aversion to bloodshed. Many candidates argued that Vanya is a positive figure in the film who Bodrov places at the centre of the plot, and he is therefore the most important character. Other candidates disagreed, and stated, occasionally without appropriate evidence from the film, that Sasha is a much more important character. Weaker essays tended to focus on describing Vanya's actions in the film without mentioning why these make him important, and therefore scored lower marks for Critical and Analytical Response.

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 consider whether Bodrov's depiction of the Chechens could be considered negative, was less popular than 10(a). Candidates tended to focus on specific scenes in the film which tell us something about the Chechens, occasionally drawing conclusions which lacked subtlety.

Successful essays tended to mention the initial capture of Sasha and Vanya when we hear the Chechens view of the Russians, and the fact that they are often depicted as ruthless in their actions towards the prisoners, especially in their execution of Sasha towards the end. Many candidates were able to balance this with some explanation and insight into why the Chechens behave as they do, and also suggest that the Chechens could be seen as honourable in the way that they protect each other and defend their land and way of life, and Dina is portrayed as kind in the way that she treats the prisoners. The best candidates were able to see the subtleties and moral questions in Bodrov's film, arguing that he is shining a light on duplicitous moral standards, with neither Chechens nor Russians coming out of it 'positively'. Weaker candidates tended to miss much of this, simply stating the brutal acts of the Chechens as evidence of their negative portrayal.

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

The two questions on Zvyagintsev's film were equally popular this year. The first question invited candidates to analyse which scenes in the film best help us to understand the character of Roma. There were very many strong answers, with learner candidates in particular having a detailed knowledge of the film and its wider setting.

Candidates tended to start their essays by mentioning what we learn about Roma at the start of the film when we see him arguing with both his father and stepmother Lilia, and being disrespectful and rude towards Lilia. It was also common for essays to discuss the scene in the abandoned church where Roma is drinking and laughing with his friends, and where he is depicted as a typical teenager. Many candidates also mentioned scenes such as that where he witnesses Lilia having sex with Dima, where he becomes angry and emotional. Better candidates were able to comment on Roma's use of language in the different scenes, and how this shows his disrespect and / or distress. Some candidates also commented on the isolation that Roma feels, drawing attention to key frames, such as where he sits isolated next to the whale's skeleton at the close of the film. Weaker candidates occasionally seemed to make up quotations from the film, which clearly demonstrated that they did not know it sufficiently well.

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

The second question on this film was very successfully answered by many candidates. They were invited to consider how Zvyagintsev uses symbolism 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 full range of symbolism in the film.

Candidates often argued that Zvyagintsev uses symbolism in the film to draw attention to some of the problems facing Russia today, focusing on the physical symbolism of the contrast of the ruined church where Roma and his friends gather, and the gleaming new Orthodox church that the Mayor has built on Kolia's land at the end of the film. The symbolism of the 'little man' was also often mentioned, with some candidates making references to this being a common trope in Russian literature through the ages. The portraits of Putin were frequently mentioned, as well as the actions of the bureaucrats which thwart Kolia at every turn. Other symbols, less commonly noted but well-chosen, included the skeleton of the whale (as a symbol of the indefatigable Leviathan), the title of the film itself, and bottles of alcohol. Weaker candidates tended to misunderstand what was meant by symbolism, and simply retold the plot of the film.

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. Once again, 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 for this paper would like once again to send their thanks to teachers of Russian in schools. This year, as last, many excellent candidates were presented for examination. Their teachers had ensured that they had been taught carefully about their chosen works, and they had had extensive practice in writing critical and analytical essays of the type which gain credit in this paper. Their grammatical knowledge and range of structures was impressive. There is a clear commitment to the study of Russian by so many candidates, which is very pleasing to the team, and is thanks to the dedicated work of their teachers.

