

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
in French (5FR03/3H)  
Paper 3H: Reading and Understanding  
in French

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**GCSE French**  
**Unit 3 Reading and Understanding**  
**Examiner Report**

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some excellent performances.

**Question 1**

This overlap question was targeted at C grade candidates and a good number achieved full marks. 1ii) was answered very successfully by the majority of candidates. A surprising number struggled with 1iv), failing to identify *changer* for change. In questions of this nature, candidates require the ability to understand sections of text and centres are advised to prepare candidates for this by using similar material with a degree of complexity at the learning stage in order to help them develop the necessary skills.

**Question 2**

Most candidates performed well in parts i) and ii) and iii) of question 2 which was targeted at D grade candidates. A number of candidates failed to associate the phrase *ma mère doit me conduire au collège* with the English *I go to school by car* in 3iii) which was the part of this question which presented the most difficulty to candidates. The phrase *il n'y a rien à faire le soir* was also a problem for a number of candidates who were unable to find the correct answer for 3iv).

This type of task requires candidates to do more than simply find a French term and its equivalent in English, as some of the answers included references to material in the text, but in an incorrect text. Centres are advised to teach students to learn to understand full statements rather than vocabulary items in isolation in order to perform well in such tasks.

**Question 3**

Many candidates scored 2 out of 4 marks on this question which was targeted at B grade candidates. Parts i) and ii) of this question proved to be the most challenging with candidates apparently guessing the answers to these. Access to similar texts in the learning phase should help candidates to acquire the skills needed to answer questions like this one.

**Question 4**

This question was targeted at Grade A candidates and candidates of a lower ability found this question challenging. Comprehension of a text based on an adapted authentic original was tested by questions in English. Very few candidates made the mistake of answering this question in French. Answers for the questions could be found sequentially in the text and centres need to ensure that candidates are aware that this is usually the case. Candidates need to have access to authentic materials containing some quite complicated structures in order to develop their ability to perform well in an exercise at this level.

4a) was tackled quite well with many candidates recognising that Marcel spoke only Russian. The *ne...que* foxed many, though, with its implied negative leading some to conclude that Marcel could not speak Russian. Failure to read the question properly led many to deduce that the fact of being an immigrant was the problem, and a number of candidates misunderstood "primaire". Misunderstanding over the direction of the migration had many candidates imagining Marcel was in Russia whilst others blamed divorcing parents for Marcel's problems. Another common error was that Marcel had difficulties with learning languages.

In 4b) failure to read the question properly, or to really work out what was being asked, led many candidates astray. The word *sorties* was not well known and gave rise to many answers about sorting, organising and more understandably, exits. Others felt that Grace was an important friend but many were able to work out that going out (with his mentor) was important. Many wrong answers focused on the wrong section of the passage and candidates needed to establish and recognise the link with the word *important* in the text.

4c). Many candidates left this part of the question blank. The majority of candidates who attempted this question gave a correct answer concerning Marcel's progress in French, securing one point. They were not all quite as successful with their second answer. The main confusion lay in the mistranslation of the expression *à l'aise* which was often interpreted as finding school easier, instead of feeling more at ease. Popularity and confidence were also recurrent incorrect responses. There also seemed to be widespread misunderstanding of *collège* with any number of strange interpretations of Marcel's problems getting into college because he either didn't speak Russian or spoke only Russian, or because he was badly behaved.

4d). The majority of candidates found this part of the question challenging with some failing to attempt it. Most candidates achieved 0 marks. Common incorrect answers included *he put his feet on the table* or *he walked on the table*.

4e). Candidates found this part of the question quite accessible and many were able to give a very detailed answer. Incorrect responses often included the idea of Marcel's parents inviting him out to a restaurant for a meal.

4f). Many candidates failed to gain any marks for this part of the question. A significant number of candidates simply left the answer blank. Common incorrect answers often referred to Marcel being badly behaved, finding lessons difficult or having no friends. Many responses appeared to be guesswork on the part of the candidate rather than related to misinterpretation of any part of the text.

4g). Many candidates fared better with this part of the question and were able to produce a good answer which incorporated the idea of speaking to the teacher, contacting the school or arranging for Clément to sit on his own.

### Question 5

Most parts of this question targeted at D grade candidates were tackled well with many achieving full marks. The majority of candidates were able to identify the common outdoor activities *faire un tour à vélo, jouer au basket, aller courir* and successfully answer 5i). Part 5ii) was not well answered by the weakest candidates who chose C as their answer, probably as it contained the synonym *télévision*. 5iii) also presented problems for the weakest with some opting for the incorrect B for this question, failing to notice the negative in this sentence. 5iv) was also surprisingly badly tackled with the weakest candidates unable to identify that the words *lire, roman* and *magazine* were all connected with reading. Questions such as this offer candidates several vocabulary items to help them to arrive at the correct answer and practice of similar exercises in the learning environment should help them to develop this skill.

### Question 6

This question, written predominantly in the perfect and imperfect tenses was targeted at C grade candidates and required them to understand a range of verbs in these tenses. 6i) was not well answered with many candidates choosing the incorrect *broke her leg*. Three quarters of candidates were able to deduce that *elle s'ennuyait* meant *she was bored* in 6ii). *On est tombés en panne* in 6iii) presented a problem to many candidates. In 6iv) candidates had to deduce that Brigitte was on her own by understanding *papa n'était pas là*, which the more able candidates were able to do successfully. The multiple choice questions required candidates to demonstrate the ability to extract detailed information from the text and centres are advised to note that this is an essential skill for candidates to consider entering this paper at Higher Level.

### Question 7

Almost half of the candidates managed to gain at least 3 out of 4 marks in this question, correctly identifying correct statements from eight possibilities. A small minority of candidates identified more than four statements, this led to the deduction of a mark for every additional box crossed. Practice at reading short authentic texts helps candidates to develop their ability to cope well with such tasks.

### Question 8

This question was aimed at Grade A\* and was adapted from an authentic text on the town. The passage contained some complicated material and structures, as is appropriate for a question at this level. Candidates achieving the lower grades for which this paper is designed found this question very demanding but most candidates did attempt it, perhaps guessing their responses. Candidates at C grade typically scored 0 marks in this question. Many candidates found 8iii), 8v) and 8vii) the most challenging and 8i) and 8vi) the most accessible. A disappointing number of candidates failed to follow the instruction to turn the page and did not answer the last question on the paper.

The performance of better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the rubric
- good knowledge of vocabulary
- recognising the use of negation
- a good command of English giving them the ability to recognise synonyms
- attention to detail, giving full rather than partial answers in the question which required written answers in English
- expressing themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in English and relating their answers to facts in the text
- drawing logical conclusions
- reading over and correcting their answers.

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