A-LEVEL

FRENCH

7652/2: Paper 2 Writing
Report on the Examination

General overview

All of the questions on the paper were attempted and they all enabled students to demonstrate some level of understanding of the work and some degree of success in their critical and analytical response to the question chosen. However, with some works, students showed a marked preference for one question over the other. For the literary texts, by far the most popular were *No et moi*, with 1614 entries, *L'étranger* with 1469 entries and *Un sac de billes* with 1291. For the films, the most popular were *La Haine* with 2962 entries and *Au revoir les enfants* with 1002. The totals for all of the other texts and films were in hundreds rather than thousands.

On nearly all questions, well above 50% of answers were in the excellent or good bands for AO4: knowledge of texts and films was accurate and detailed and was used to good effect to defend and support judgements made. The overall impression was that students had enjoyed and engaged with their study of the works in question.

There was clear evidence that, where students had taken time to prepare and plan their answers, this was reflected in the quality of the response produced. The process of planning allows for the specific focus of the question to be considered and for knowledge to be organised around a number of key points that are relevant to that question. Essays where detailed planning had not occurred tended to be recycled versions of essays written previously, which may or may not be fully relevant to the question chosen.

Students should make it clear at the start of their answer which one of the two questions they have chosen and this information must be shown in their answer booklet. In some cases there was simply the number of the work (eg 4 or 12) and no indication of which of the two options for text 4 and film 12 had been chosen. It should also be noted that, where a film version of a text has been viewed, this is not always sound evidence to use in support of points made as there are often significant differences between film versions and the original books.

Section A: Observations on specific questions

Questions 1.1 and 1.2

Around 73% of students opted for question 1.1. and approximately 27% for 1.2. Answers to the first question were better than answers to the second, with a very clear understanding of the themes of religion and reasons and their significance in the play. Around 28% of these answers were in the excellent band for AO4 and these were characterised by a full and detailed explanation of the roles of the characters representing religion and hypocrisy, on the one hand, and reason, on the other. In question 1.2, many students provided character studies rather than analysing how characters reacted to the events of the play as they unfolded.

Questions 2.1 and 2.2

Question 2.1 was the more popular choice here. Around 72% of students answering this question achieved scores in either the excellent or good band for AO4 and they successfully addressed both elements in the question, outlining those features of the work that made it an amusing tale but then arguing that the philosophical content made it much more than this. Question 2.2 was less well answered. The philosophical significance of the stay in Eldorado was not always addressed and many answers became descriptions of this episode in the work.

Questions 3.1 and 3.2

The choice of questions was more even for the Maupassant short stories, with slightly more students opting for 3.2 and successfully dealing with both the optimistic and pessimistic features of human behaviour in *Boule de Suif*. Knowledge of the text was detailed and accurate: around 77% of students here scored in the excellent or good band compared to 70% for question 3.1 dealing with the theme of hypocrisy. Stories to illustrate Maupassant's treatment of this theme were well chosen.

Questions 4.1 and 4.2

Neither of the questions proved to be significantly more popular and both were very similar in the performance of students, with around 62% achieving in the excellent or good band for AO4. There were some well-argued answers in response to the fairness of Meursault's condemnation and some very sound evidence to show that he represents the absurdity of life, though, in some cases, rather too much time and attention were given to explaining the philosophy with no real reference to the work.

Questions 5.1 and 5.2

Both questions proved equally popular and both produced some pleasing answers. There were some effective arguments developed around the degree of sympathy the reader can feel for the characters, with Raymond almost universally condemned to deserving no sympathy. Similarly there were well-argued answers in response to the effect jealousy has on the characters, with Cécile, Anne and Elsa featuring as the main victims of this.

Questions 6.1 and 6.2

Very few students had studied this work but those who did produced some excellent responses, especially to question 6.1, which enabled students to discuss the importance of racism as a theme and then to bring in other equally important themes. Question 6.2 was less well-handled and often became a character-study of Lucien.

Questions 7.1 and 7.2

Question 7.1 was by far the more popular of the two. The changing relationship between the brothers was very well documented, with a range of detailed evidence in the excellent and good performances. Some students tended to narrate events without really analysing their significance in terms of the brothers' relationship. Question 7.2 produced some excellent and good responses (around 67%) and again the significance of lying was well documented. The best answers here brought in evidence from beyond just Jo and Maurice.

Questions 8.1 and 8.2

Both questions proved equally popular but there was a significant difference in performance between the two. For question 8.1, around 29% of students achieved scores in the excellent or good band compared to 44% for question 8.2. The main factor here was that, in question 8.1, the generation gap in the immigrant community was often overlooked and the focus became Doria's relationship with adults more generally. By contrast, though, the treatment of Doria's concerns and worries was well handled, although only a few students made reference to her relationship with Nabil.

Questions 9.1 and 9.2

The question choice here was two thirds for question 9.1 and one third for question 9.2, with a very even performance across both questions. Around 68% of students achieved a score in the excellent or good band for 9.1 and around 66% for 9.2. This is quite a challenging work to write about because of the complexity of the relationships involved, and some answers became slightly confused when dealing with the revelations of the past. The Jewish identity was dealt with very thoroughly in the best answers, with reference to the different generations from children through to grand-parents.

Questions 10.1 and 10.2

Both questions proved popular and both produced some excellent answers. In response to 10.1, most students successfully identified both pessimistic and optimistic aspects and these were well supported with accurate and detailed evidence. The complexities of the characters were also well understood by most students, but some took this as an opportunity to provide character studies with no real reference to the notion of complexity.

Section B: Observations on specific questions

Questions 11.1 and 11.2

Neither question was significantly more popular than the other. In each case the best answers were characterised by relevant points supported by evidence from the film. The universality of Antoine's situation was a key feature of the first question, and many students identified this even if they did not use this exact terminology. Responses to question 2 at times became slightly confused: some key aspects of society such as the judicial system and treatment of delinquents were omitted from many answers.

Questions 12.1 and 12.2

A quarter of students opted for 12.1 and three quarters opted for 12.2. There were some excellent answers to 12.1, with around 44% of students achieving scores in the excellent band. Evidence to support the judgement drew on both thematic and technical aspects and showed a very sound understanding and appreciation of both. Question 12.2 was well answered when the focus remained on the question, ie the differences and similarities. A significant number of students, however, made only brief mention of these and then went on to develop an answer about the friendship between the two boys.

Questions 13.1 and 13.2

The question choice here was two thirds for question 13.1 and one third for question 13.2. The best answers for 13.1 were those that argued that much but not all of what happens in the film can be summed up in the quotation « la haine attire la haine ». The more technical question 13.2 prompted some excellent responses, with detailed and accurate knowledge of camera angles, the stereo and mono soundtrack, the choice of black and white rather than colour. However, many responses made no reference to scenes set in Paris and some overlooked the link between techniques and locations completely and concentrated on techniques to highlight aspects of character in the three protagonists.

Questions 14.1 and 14.2

Question 14.2 was the more popular though both questions performed in a similar way, with around 60% achieving in the excellent to good range for AO4 in question 14.1 and around 62% in question 14.2 Most argued that the year was not totally wasted and that Xavier changed for the better in the course of it, realising that at the start of the year he was pursuing a path that was not of his choosing. The human relationships question prompted some very detailed and comprehensive answers that took in the full range of relationships, although some students remained focused on just those characters in the flat.

Questions 15.1 and 15.2

Question 15.2 was by far the more popular and was well answered, with approximately 30% achieving scores in the excellent band (compared to around 10% for question 15.1.) Both these questions lent themselves to thematic and technical content and there was a lot of detailed knowledge demonstrated in Jeunet's depiction of the war years as well as the pre- and post-war years. In question 15.1 many argued that the reconstruction of the past was a key technique more than a key theme and the arguments were generally well-presented.

Questions 16.1 and 16.2

16.1. was the more popular choice but both questions elicited similar levels of performance in the top two bands for AO4 (around 66% for 16.1 and around 64% for 16.2.) In response to 16.1 factors beyond Marin's teaching methods, such as family influences, socio-economic conditions, the presence or absence of self-motivation, were mentioned with supporting evidence. The link between techniques and the depiction of school life often became little more than a description of school life.

Assessment Objective 3

For many students the performance for AO3 at least matched their score for AO4 and there was ample evidence that the teaching and study of works through French effectively developed the vocabulary and linguistic structures needed to present clear and convincing arguments in French. In the majority of cases errors in language did not impede understanding, but there were instances where understanding was delayed because of inaccurate language or because of gaps in vocabulary. Scores for AO3 were often adversely affected by an excessive influence of English in the way sentences were formulated with, in the worst cases, very literal, word for word translations eg *ils ne pensent pas sur comment sérieux c'est.* There was a clear and close correlation between detailed and thoughtful planning in French and higher scores for AO3.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.