

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/01

Reading

Key messages

To do well in this paper, candidates should:

- take care to read the questions in Part 1 carefully, taking into account the number of marks available, in order to produce a relevant and full response. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in order to gain higher marks for Language.
- produce a structured response in Part 2, making each point briefly, rather than expanding on each point.

General comments

On the whole, candidates performed well in this year's paper, and all managed to complete it.

Although the quality of language was generally quite high, it is important that candidates are reminded to use their own words throughout the paper to show that they have understood the texts and the tasks. Word-for-word copying from the texts without attempting to tailor responses to specific questions will have a negative influence on a candidate's performance, particularly on marks awarded for Language. Candidates are therefore urged to read widely and to practise using the words and stylistic range they acquire to enable them to answer questions in their own words with confidence.

Some candidates would have benefited from devising a plan or drafting rough notes before writing their answer to **Question 2**. A very small number of candidates wrote a general summary rather than a targeted response to this question.

Language was generally accurate but there were a number of persistent errors, especially with verb conjugation.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates managed to do well in this first part of the examination. Candidates are reminded that some questions have to be answered with reference to the text as a whole, not just a small part of it.

- (a) This question was answered well by most candidates.
- (b) Some candidates had difficulties inferring the writer's opinion from the words '*dwingeland*' and '*treffend*'. Weaker candidates explained what the parents thought of television, rather than the author of the article himself. It is worth reminding candidates of techniques which can help them to deduce the meaning of an unfamiliar word or idiom from the context in which it is used.
- (c) This question was answered well by most candidates.
- (d) Some candidates struggled to spot the irony in the phrase '*wachten tot het leuker wordt*', and interpreted it quite literally as waiting several years until people would have a wider choice of TV programmes they could watch.
- (e) The majority of the candidates did not have any problems with this question.

- (f) This question was not answered well by quite a large number of candidates, mainly because they lifted the phrase '*onzinnig, je kunt toch zeker maar naar één tegelijk kijken*' from the text without explaining what the grandfather meant by this.
- (g) This question was done well by candidates who showed a good overall understanding of the text, as was **Question (h)**.
- (i) and (j) These two questions were answered well by most candidates.
- (k) This question indirectly referred candidates back to an earlier statement made by the author in paragraph 3. The stronger candidates were able to pick up on this and gave the correct answer, i.e. you don't *have* to watch TV.
- (l) The last sub-question was done well by most candidates. A range of answers was accepted, provided candidates were able explain why they agreed with Wim Kan's assessment of television, or, indeed, why they did not.

Question 2

Most candidates wrote good summaries which focused on the demands of the question. Candidates had to discuss similarities and differences between the ways in which the two authors approach the topic of television, and what they want to achieve with their texts. Many candidates discussed the obvious differences in opinion and the fact that the first text takes a much more general approach to the topic than the second text.

Strong candidates were able to get down to business quickly by writing an appropriate introductory paragraph, such as: '*Tekst 1 en tekst 2 gaan allebei over televisie. De eerste tekst is algemener en gaat over de geschiedenis van de tv in de laatste 60 jaar; de tweede tekst over het lievelingsprogramma van de schrijver.*' The most successful candidates went through the two texts systematically and made a plan before they started to write their answer. Among the things such candidates mentioned were the different perspectives from which the texts were written; areas where the opinions of the two writers appeared to overlap; and the differences in text type.

The way in which the two authors used language was also explored, often to good effect. Those candidates who were able to sustain the linguistic quality of their summaries by using appropriate conjunctions and other linking devices and by devising a logical structure for their answer, received good marks for language.

Many candidates made effective use of paragraphs in their summaries and were able to reach a suitable conclusion. Only a small number of candidates wrote a general summary which neglected to address the aspects they were asked to focus in the question.

FIRST LANGUAGE DUTCH

Paper 0503/02

Writing

Key message

To do well on this paper, candidates should:

- write accurately
- use a wide range of vocabulary and structures
- provide a range of well-developed ideas
- ensure their essays are relevant to the chosen topic, well organised and coherent.

General comments

The majority of candidates produced impressively well-structured essays rich in ideas and detail. Some candidates, however, might have benefited from an essay plan to help them keep their essays more focused, to manage their time more effectively, and to stay within the word limit. Lack of a proper structure made comprehension rather difficult and restricted the flow in the case of some essays. Some of the weaker candidates struggled to write in a style appropriate to their chosen task.

Most candidates had a sufficient grasp of Dutch grammar and spelling rules, and communication was hardly ever impeded by linguistic errors. There were some candidates who had problems with simple Dutch spelling rules, which had an adverse effect on their mark for style and accuracy. Common errors included:

- incorrect verb conjugation, for instance: adding a *t* after a verb ending with a *d* in the third person past tense (e.g. '*hadt*' and '*werdt*') and incorrect irregular verb forms
- using *ei* for words spelt with *ij*, and vice versa, e.g. '*beivoorbeeld*' and '*zi*' for *zei*,
- writing words spelt with *oe* with *ui*, and vice versa
- writing compound nouns as two or more separate words instead of one word, e.g. *bus halte*.

The presentation of this year's essays was generally good and most handwriting was legible.

Comments on specific questions

Discussion and Argument

The essays in this part of the examination require a solid structure, including an introduction and a conclusion. It is advisable that candidates should attempt to take a considered and well-balanced approach to the topic and that they construct their argument accordingly. Argumentative essays should be written in a suitably formal style, and colloquialisms in particular should be avoided. The best discursive essays this year were able to develop a complex argument in a logical fashion, where each stage in the discussion followed on from the preceding one and the sentences within the paragraphs were soundly sequenced.

Many candidates chose to write about whether it was necessary to learn the language spoken in the country of residence or not. The best used their own experiences and insights into the topic to good effect, and showed great confidence in presenting their views, which made their essays very interesting to read. Most candidates agreed it was a good idea to learn the language spoken in their immediate environment for practical reasons but also out of interest in the local culture.

Most candidates were against the idea of abolishing the long summer holidays and introducing shorter holidays lasting no more than 14 days. Although most candidates saw some advantage in the fact that shorter holidays would mean they would forget less of what they had learnt at school, only some thought that it would also be better for families to spend less time together during the holidays as this would alleviate

stress and make everyone more amenable towards each other at home. Most candidates thought they were entitled to an extended break of at least six weeks after a long academic year of stress and hard work.

Some of the most impressive and thoughtful essays were written by the candidates who chose to write on whether one should always be able to say what one thinks or if one should consider other people first. Most essays discussed the pros and cons of each stance in sufficient detail before formulating their own, closely argued views. Many candidates concluded that one should be able to say what one likes as long as one does not hurt other people.

The subject of whether it was worth collecting money for endangered animals elicited a number of very interesting responses. Some of the candidates who were in favour missed the opportunity to propose what could be done with the money collected to improve the chances of animal survival.

Description and Narration

The descriptive and narrative tasks demand a different approach from each other. Candidates who choose either of the two descriptive tasks have to attempt to define and develop images and other sense impressions in order to evoke atmospheres and emotions in the reader. The focus in these compositions should therefore be on depiction, not storytelling. An example of a good start in response to one of the topics this year (*Beschrijf het gevoel dat je krijgt als je de schoolbel hoort*) was: *'De schoolbel roept verschillende gevoelens in mij op omdat het telkens weer iets anders bekend als hij afgaat: de eerste schoolbel 's morgens is niet dezelfde als de laatste voor de zomervakantie'*. This immediately set the tone for a sustained and convincing piece of writing in which the candidate expressed a range of different reactions to hearing the school bell at different times of the day and the academic year. In contrast, a first sentence such as: *'Toen de laatste schoolbel voor de vakantie ging rende ik de klas uit want eindelijk had ik vakantie en binnen de kortste keren zat ik op mijn fiets naar huis'* touches all too briefly on the sense of freedom felt by the author on hearing the bell at the end of the school day before moving off in a direction only very loosely related to the task.

There were some exceptionally good descriptive essays this year. The description of a favourite garden or park was marginally more popular than the school bell topic. Central Park in New York was described by several candidates. One or two essays were rather too factual and dry in parts as they focused on the exact dimensions of a garden or listed the names of plants and animals seen without describing the atmosphere of the garden or the feelings it inspired. A small number of candidates were ill-prepared for a task of this kind and wrote stories, using the chosen title only as a cue from which events unrelated to the topic unfolded.

Narrative essays should seek to provide a complex and sophisticated account of a series of events, and candidates are encouraged to make appropriate use of narrative devices, such as flashbacks and time lapses. To obtain the best marks, the different parts of the story should be effectively sequenced and the climax carefully managed, with sentences arranged in such a way as to build up tension or excitement. Stories which rely too heavily on linking words as *toen* and *daarna* will often struggle to achieve high marks. An essay plan might help candidates to position the climax at the right point in the story (usually towards the end), so that candidates do not feel under pressure to work towards another climax before they can bring their narrative to a close.

This year's narrative topics (the meeting of two people on a beach and the receipt of a letter from a far-away place) were equally popular. Some narratives were very moving and many others were thrilling.

Most beach stories had an effective romantic plot, with quite a few twists to keep the reader entertained. Other love stories were rather too straightforward to gain access to high marks for content or language. There were also quite a few adventure stories which took the beach as their setting, with variable success; while some candidates were able to build excitement by pacing their story effectively, others tended to get lost in the details and their stories either fizzled out towards the end or ended abruptly.

The letter from someone far away gave a lot of authors their father or mother or other family members back, often in the most moving circumstances; other letters contained a more menacing message, prompting a series of thrilling events. Good candidates were able to manage their storylines effectively before bringing them to a suitable close within the word limit.