

FIRST LANGUAGE JAPANESE

Paper 0507/02
Reading and Directed Writing

Key Message

In order to do well in **Part 1** of this paper, candidates need to:

- ensure that the content is relevant to the question, and focussed on the theme of the 2 passages.
- ensure that their composition is coherent and includes a brief introduction and conclusion.
- show a confident grasp of the issues, taking ideas from the passages and developing them to relate to the task set.
- produce a clearly structured argument.
- display accurate grammar, well-formed sentence structures, effective linking between sentences and paragraphs, appropriate style for the genre with consistency throughout the prose, and good knowledge of kanji.
- observe the word limit

Part 1, Question 1

Candidates need to show that they have understood the main messages in the passages and should summarise passages A and B succinctly, making a comparison between the two and describing the difference in their approach to a common theme.

Part 1, Question 2

Candidates need to respond to the passage by producing a piece of directed writing in the form stated on the paper (this year candidates were asked to produce a letter). Candidates needed to compare and describe the similarities and/or differences between personal experience and the situations described in A and/or B concerning a common theme. Candidates should support their arguments with a brief logical discussion, preferably providing a concrete example. Candidates need to give their own opinion as to which of the two approaches they agree with and to what extent.

For both **Questions 1** and **2** relevance of the content is of paramount importance. Moreover, a confident grasp of the issues must be demonstrated in coherent prose.

General Comments

Candidates generally performed well although with varying levels of accuracy and fluency. Most candidates completed all the questions in Parts 1 and 2, demonstrating good time-management and familiarity with the exam format.

The majority of candidates were able to understand and describe the main messages in passages A and B adequately in both questions in Part 1. Stronger candidates were characterised by being able to cover all the important issues whilst summarising the main messages from the passages. They were also able to depict contrasting approaches to the common theme in coherent prose in answer to **Question 1**, Part 1. Generally, weaker candidates tended to simply lift sections of text directly from the passages, and required stronger analytical skills in their writing.

In **Question 2**, candidates were asked to give their opinions on the given theme. Lower-scoring candidates tended to give a more emotional reaction and needed to produce writing with a clearer structure. In contrast, stronger candidates supported their opinions with concrete examples, using interesting and original ideas to develop a strong case with clear and logical arguments.

Candidates at this level are expected to compose a coherent discourse using longer sentences and structured paragraphs. However, there was a general tendency towards shorter, simple sentence structures and a lack of conjunctive expressions. Missing particles, unfinished sentences, inconsistent sentence-ending styles, and idiosyncratic syntactic structures were also observed among weaker candidates.

Regular exposure to a selection of good prose across genres may help to enhance candidates' writing skills and improve in these areas.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

There were many good responses to this question. The best compositions managed to move beyond mere summary; material was developed and expanded through clear, logical and coherent discussion, avoiding repetitions and circumlocution. The structure of such essays was clear and well thought-out, showing evidence of good pre-writing planning, and including a brief introduction and conclusion comparing the views and approaches described in passages A and B objectively.

In some essays, material was developed in a more limited way, using less varied sentence structures and vocabulary, but still managing to communicate messages sufficiently using very simple but accurate language. Such essays demonstrated good paragraphing skills, accurate basic grammar, and effective use of conjunctive expressions. A small number of candidates wrote well over the word limit.

Question 2

This year, candidates were asked to write a brief letter to one of the protagonists in passages A or B. Candidates were expected to: describe their personal response to any aspect of the articles concerning cultural heritage; make suggestions about the handling and preservation of cultural heritage in a chosen country and in a particular situation, giving reasons and concrete examples to support the argument.

Candidates generally responded to the question positively with a sense of involvement. For example, some candidates chose the stance of either A or B and explained reasons why they adhere to that approach to the handling of cultural assets, comparing the similarities and/or differences to their own experience or a relevant situation that they are aware of. Stronger candidates argued for an ideal approach to handling politically sensitive cases and how the current situation might be improved. They provided concrete examples to support their arguments in a logical and convincing manner.

Part 2

In this section, the majority of candidates demonstrated good lexical and grammatical knowledge and a good command of kanji.

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Paper 0507/03
Continuous Writing

Key Message

On this paper candidates must demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1. Material presented should be relevant, appropriate and accurate.
2. The structure should be coherent and cohesive in particular with regards to paragraphing and sentence structure and candidates should include an introduction and conclusion.
3. The style should be appropriate to the audience and should include a varied range of vocabulary and sentence structure.
4. Candidates' work should be accurate, particularly regarding grammar, punctuation, and usage of *Genkô Yôshi*.

Candidates should also ensure that they adhere to the specified word limit.

General Comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated originality and competence in highly readable compositions. In general, successful candidates chose a subject that was suitable to their linguistic level and personal style of writing. Such a choice of topic helped many candidates to gain high marks by producing a readable and interesting composition in a style that was appropriate to the genre and content.

Stronger candidates tended to choose topics which required an analytical and argumentative approach. Such candidates typically used a wide range of vocabulary and employed complex sentence structures. Furthermore, they were able to write coherently using a clear three-part (Introduction-Content-Conclusion) structure. Some candidates skilfully employed a traditional Japanese four-part discourse structure to maintain coherence in an authentic Japanese style.

Stronger candidates' essays demonstrated relevance of content to the chosen topic, clarity of arguments, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and paragraph links. A few candidates distinguished themselves in terms of originality, use of *Kanji*, and appropriateness of lexical choices.

Weaker candidates, in general, opted for imaginative stories and free composition in a simple style.

Comments on specific questions

Nine titles were given to call for the candidates' imaginative, descriptive or argumentative responses in an appropriate style. Candidates need to remember to keep the content relevant to the chosen topic in all cases. Candidates are also encouraged to plan the content and overall structure before they start writing.

Question 1

誕生日の朝、いつもより早く目が覚めた。静かだ。まだ誰も起きていないようだ。（この続きを書きなさい）。

Candidates who chose this topic generally told a story about his/her own experience and performed satisfactorily. Some opted for a more imaginative story, but did not manage to create a coherent story with a clear ending.

Question 2

「公共の場での喫煙」について、自分の意見を述べなさい。その際、根拠を明確にし、説得力のある文を書きなさい。

Questions 2, 4, 5 and 8 required candidates to indicate their standpoint first, and then to develop analytical and logical arguments in a consistent manner. This requires an appropriate three-part discourse structure, which consists of an Introduction, Content and Conclusion. The candidates who chose this topic tended to be stronger in language use and in writing skills.

Question 3

あなたにとって「生きがい」とは何を意味しますか。具体的な例をあげて書きなさい。

Topic 3 required creativity and effective use of language to express personal opinions.

Question 4

「遅刻癖（遅刻を繰り返してしまう習慣）」の原因や、その問題の解決策について考察しなさい

See Question 2.

Question 5

「暴力のない社会」を実現するために、一人一人がどんな事ができるか、またそれを推進するにはどうすれば良いか、具体的な提案を交えて意見を述べなさい。

See Question 2.

Question 6

「雨だれ岩をも穿つ」という表現を文中のどこかで使用して文章を書きなさい。

For topics 6 and 7 a clear and succinct explanation of an idiom/proverb is required. Successful essays explained how idioms may be paraphrased in more ordinary language, and proverbs can be explained taking an example from daily-life situations.

Question 7

「日進月歩」という四字熟語について思うことを書きなさい。

Question 8

「自家用車は、一家に一台以下にすべきだ」という考え方について、まず肯定か否定かを述べ、具体的な例をあげながら自分の意見を論理的に述べなさい。

See Question 2.

Question 9

下の絵を見て、物語を自由に書きなさい。どのような視点から書いてもよいです。
(i.e. picture of a bird escaping through the opened door of its cage).

Topic 9 required creative writing from a visual stimulus. Candidates were expected to describe vividly what they see in the picture and to develop the material by supplying an original story or by discussing issues arising from the photo. The interpretation is entirely open to the candidates.