

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01
Speaking

Key Messages

- Candidates are doing well in using a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- Candidates need to take more initiative in developing longer, fuller answers.
- Candidates need to improve the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation.
- Candidates should explore Japan related themes in their presentation and make clear reference to Japanese culture or society.

General Comments

Most candidates seem to have prepared well for the presentation, and were able to give detailed information about their chosen topic. Presentations could be further improved by better verbal signalling of the structure of the presentation. Some presentations did not relate to contemporary Japanese society or Japanese cultural heritage, which is a requirement. In some cases presentations over-ran the time allowed; examiners must interrupt candidates if the presentation continues beyond the stipulated 3½ minutes.

In both the topic and general conversations, most candidates were able to understand the examiner's questions, and give at least a basic answer. The majority of candidates did not manage to take the initiative to develop more detailed answers. Sometimes pronunciation was also an issue.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1: Presentation

There were many interesting presentations, and candidates had clearly selected topics that were of personal interest, and worked to find out information about the topic. Candidates are to be congratulated on their knowledge of, and interest in, contemporary Japanese society. In weaker presentations, facts were offered in no particular order, which made it hard for the listener to follow. Candidates should think about creating a clear structure for their presentation in the preparation stages. The best presentations included the candidates' own opinions and / or comparison with the candidates' own country.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Some candidates were well prepared for this section; others, however, seemed to have said everything they wanted to say in the presentation and had no further information to add or opinions to volunteer. The strongest candidates had extra material that they did not use in the presentation available to bring out during the topic conversation. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of considering this part of the test when they choose their topic, to ensure that it is broad enough to support a follow-up discussion and that they have considered how such a discussion might develop.

Although candidates were usually aware of the need to ask the Examiner questions, there were occasions where this did not happen and Examiners did not prompt candidates at the end of each of the conversation. The questions in this section tended to feel rather artificial, compared to the questions asked by candidates in Section 3.

The range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammatical structures used in this section were generally good, but the weakest candidates struggled with first language influence on pronunciation and intonation. Candidates are encouraged to listen to a wide range of native speakers to improve their intonation and pronunciation.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates were generally well-prepared for the simpler questions. However, quite frequently the content of the conversation was restricted to a rather basic level of exchange of information. Although the conversation could start with some basic, personal or factual questions, candidates must be moved on to more complex issues and have the opportunity to show they can give and justify opinions on more advanced topics. Candidates should also be encouraged to develop more mature and detailed answers, particularly to the simpler questions, taking the initiative and expanding their responses.

Occasionally, a mismatch between the balance of fluency and the use of complex grammatical structures was heard. Some candidates spoke confidently and fluently but only used very basic sentence patterns. Others tried to use many complex grammatical structures, but lost the fluency in the process of mentally preparing complex sentences. This is a difficult balance to strike, but candidates are encouraged to keep this issue in mind when practising speaking in the classroom.

This year it was evident that the language used by a number of candidates was influenced by their exposure to Japanese films or anime. The language used in these genres is highly informal, and often inappropriate to be used in an oral examination. Candidates needed to be mindful that language from one situation does not always apply in another; an awareness of the complexities of Japanese register was needed in these cases.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** a multiple choice question in which candidates must identify the word (or words) with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence with the provided grammatical changes;
- **Question 3 and Question 4:** candidates should formulate answers with their own words and refrain from copying from the text;
- **Question 5:** respect the word limit. In part (b) candidates should express their own ideas rather than repeating ideas from the two texts;
- **Language:** when preparing for the examination, revise the basic grammar, structures and kanji list.

General comments

The level of performance this year was generally good. Most candidates engaged with the topic, and attempted all the questions on the paper. Many candidates showed that they had understood the reading passages and questions, and made efforts to express their answers in their own words without relying too heavily upon copying language from the texts.

Candidates are required to write their answers in the spaces provided. All candidates are reminded of the need to write clearly and legibly as Examiners cannot give credit for work they cannot read.

Candidates from Chinese-speaking countries should be careful not to include Chinese characters in their writing. There were a few cases where responses were difficult to understand as Chinese characters were used which do not exist in Japanese as kanji.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

Most candidates were familiar with the format of this question and many managed to identify 4 or 5 correct answers in this vocabulary exercise.

Question 2

Most candidates produced an appropriate sentence using the required grammar, and in many cases a variety of kanji were used successfully. This year, this question was omitted by more candidates than in the past. Candidates need to be familiar with the IGCSE and AS Level grammar syllabus to prepare for this exercise. Sentences can be short, but need to make sense using the grammar structure provided in order to gain one mark. Both polite form and plain form are accepted.

(i) e.g. すしを食べたことがあります。

Many candidates managed to write a sentence using a correct ta-form. Some candidates had difficulty producing a correct ta-form, and made mistakes such as 行いた or 読みた or 読むた。

Some sentences produced by candidates did not make sense, like 和紙をしたことがあります。

- (ii) e.g. どれもおもしろいです。
A number of candidates did not respond to this question at all, which may indicate unfamiliarity with the structure. Most candidates who attempted the question produced an appropriate sentence using *どれも*. Common incorrect answers included: *私はどれも行きません*, *うちでどれもありますか* and *どれも日本に行きたいです*.
- (iii) e.g. めったにテレビを見ません。
This question had the highest number of no responses, but also had the most accurate answers from those who did attempt the question.
- (iv) e.g. 漢字が書けます。(Potential)
This question was found to be the most challenging, with candidates commonly creating a passive sentence, which was not what was required. It is important for candidates to read the passage thoroughly in order to understand the grammatical structure to be produced in the question.
- (v) e.g. 病気のときうちにいます。
Candidates needed to know how to manipulate adjectives and verbs properly in order to write a correct sentence here. It is possible to use adjectives, nouns and verbs with *とき* and so there were various incorrect answers such as *あついのとき、、、* or *夏休みとき、、、* or *ゆめがかなだとき、、、* etc.

Question 3

Most candidates appeared to have understood the text and therefore they were generally able to respond well to the questions. In **Questions 3** and **4**, to show clear evidence of understanding, it is expected that candidates will rephrase the passage to express their answers in their own words. This does not mean that they have to rephrase every word they take from the passages to use in their answers. Candidates may use the passages as support to retrieve some vocabulary, but should not lift material from the passages indiscriminately or at length, as this does not show that they have fully understood either the passages or the questions. Furthermore, it is important that candidates try to use full sentences where possible when answering questions, as they need to show they can use more complex structures accurately to reach the highest marking band for Quality of Language.

Candidates should be reminded that the answers to these comprehension questions must come from the information given in the passage; personal opinions should not be included.

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this question successfully. Candidates needed to mention the attributes of a living national treasure, rather than giving too specific answers such as *かぶき* or *金工* or *和紙*.
- (b) (i) This question was not well-answered. Common mistakes included: *ほうりつで決めました* or *日本人が決めました* or *ほうりつを決める人たちが決めました*, etc.
- (ii) The majority of candidates responded successfully and were awarded the full two marks. Those candidates who only managed to score one mark often needed to include key words in their answers such as *何もしなかったら*.
- (c) The majority of candidates received two or three marks in this question. Candidates needed to be careful not to just mention specific fields where people might become human national treasures or how many people are human treasures, but rather what is particular to those fields. There were several cases where candidates used the Chinese kanji for *伝統的*.
- (d) Many candidates performed well on this question. A few candidates did not provide three different fields of human national treasure and therefore could not be awarded the full three marks. It is important to take note of the number of marks available for questions, as this indicates the number of separate points needed to be made. Some incorrect answers included: *日本文化にとってじゅうようなテクニ ックです* and *男性でも女性でも年に関係なく人間国宝になれます*.

- (e) Most candidates answered this question successfully. A few candidates produced answers which did not make sense such as: 田中さんはだれまでになかったです or それまでになかったからです or ほとんどが中高年者でした, highlighting the need to check work thoroughly before submitting it.
- (f) The majority of candidates performed very well in this last question in **Question 3**. In cases where candidates did not score full marks, they often needed to explain more fully about the advantages of being a human national treasure.

Passage Two

Question 4

The majority of candidates performed extremely well in this section and attempted to answer each question. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the passage thoroughly and then reading each question carefully in order to give themselves the best chance of scoring highly.

- (a) (i) Many candidates managed to respond to this question appropriately. Candidates needed to include *how* Mr Nakajima makes pottery rather than *what* he makes.
- (ii) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- (b) (i) Most candidates were able to identify the correct information from the text.
- (ii) Most candidates answered this question correctly. Some incorrect answers included: 前より気持ちが強くなりました or 10こ作ってよく できたと思うのは一つぐらいです.
- (c) The majority of candidates scored one mark for this question. Very few candidates mentioned both reasons why Mr Nakajima did not have a teacher. A small number of candidates made up their own answers such as だれも中島さんに教えられませんから which could not be credited. Answers must be found from the information provided in the passage.
- (d) Candidates generally performed very well on this three mark question.
- (e) This question was well-answered by the majority of candidates.
- (f) Many candidates managed to score one mark in this question. When candidates did not receive the full two marks it was often because their answers were not full enough. Some incorrect answers included: こういうものを作りたかったです or 自分も作り たいと思いました or 「せいじ」を美しいと思いましたから, etc.
- (g) Candidates often scored two marks but rarely three marks in this question. Candidates frequently needed to mention 見たときにいい/きれいだと思うもの (です) to score the full mark.

Question 5

The vast majority of candidates answered this question well and demonstrated a good understanding of both passages. There was clear evidence that candidates had prepared for this exercise and many were able to produce clear written Japanese, using their own words in their responses. Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Candidates need to be aware that they must provide 10 distinct points from both passages according to the question asked for **part (a)** and talk about their opinions or ideas in **part (b)**, all within the word limit of 280 characters.

Candidates should be aware of how to use 原稿用紙 and answers should be written neatly and horizontally. Candidates are required to write their answers in the spaces provided; if they decide to change a response and need to write it somewhere else on the question paper, it is helpful for Examiners if they indicate in the original response area that this is the case.

- (a) Many candidates managed to identify points from the passages about what is needed to become a human national treasure and how Mr Nakajima became a human national treasure.

To succeed in this task, candidates need to note, in the very limited space available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Candidates did not always seem to be familiar with this type of summary technique, and the inclusion of superfluous information sometimes meant that there was not space to include enough mark-bearing points. Some candidates were clearly able to produce a good level of written Japanese but did not manage to respond to the question well enough or include enough points to receive a high mark.

- (b) Candidates produced some imaginative and interesting responses to this question. There were a variety of ideas about who should become a living national treasure in the candidate's own country, including opera singers, calligraphers and traditional dress makers. Lots of candidates chose professional people who are involved in traditional works, mentioning how important it is to protect their culture and traditions. There were some candidates who chose a real person as they thought it was more realistic, and a few people wrote about how ordinary people might be nominated. Overall, many candidates managed to show their knowledge and ability in Japanese very well this year.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it difficult to structure their ideas grammatically to communicate clearly in written Japanese. Mistakes with particles are still common, and it is important for candidates to master the correct use of particles to ensure they can communicate their answers clearly. In **Question 5**, mistakes in the use of connecting adjectives were quite frequent this year.

In terms of the number of characters allowed in **Question 5**, candidates who showed good knowledge of the kanji in the syllabus were less likely to exceed the character limit as they did not have to rely on writing in hiragana.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03
Writing

Key Messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- address the specific question asked rather than the general topic area;
- set their work out in logical paragraphs;
- write a short, relevant, informed response that is well-illustrated and coherently structured;
- start by writing an essay plan to help them organise and structure their thoughts;
- ensure effective use of the target language, placing emphasis on range and accuracy;
- write in paragraphs, including short introductory and concluding paragraphs, and use appropriate rhetorical and cohesive devices to aid flow;
- use appropriate kanji and a range of more sophisticated vocabulary;
- use vocabulary they know that they can write accurately;
- be familiar with the conventions of writing on genko yoshi.

General Comments

The work produced by candidates ranged from acceptable to excellent. On the whole, candidates showed that they could write coherent Japanese and use complex grammatical structures and kanji, as well as a variety of vocabulary and idioms. They were less strong in the content of their writing. Sometimes the piece needed to have a much clearer structure and include a conclusion. Candidates should plan their work before they start writing, and set their work out in logical paragraphs. It is also important to have an introduction and conclusion. Personal stories are acceptable for some types of writing but not others, and candidates should recognise that in a formal essay requiring pros and cons, narrating a personal story will not enable them to reach the higher marking bands.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 若者

若者は家族との時間より、自分と同じ年代の友達との時間を大切にするとされていますがほんとう本当だと思いますか。あなたはどうですか。それはどうしてですか。

This question was very popular and clearly relevant to the age group. Many candidates had good ideas, starting quickly and confidently, but better planning was needed to maintain the same level of interest throughout the second half of the essay as well. Repetition and the lack of a conclusion were features of weaker essays. The best candidates were able to write a paragraph or two each about why young people may prefer to spend time with their family or with their friends and then come to a conclusion. Some candidates wrote a totally personal response, and needed to engage with the question at an academic or intellectual level to reach the higher marks. Others needed to address the issue of comparative use of time, rather than writing exclusively about how they enjoyed spending time with their family or exclusively about spending time with other young people.

Question 2 メディア

公式のニュースを待たなくても、ソーシャル・メディアによっていろいろな情報がすぐに手に入ります。このことについて、いい点と悪い点をふくめてあなたの意見を書いてください。

The strongest candidates were able to write a detailed response to this question, including advantages and disadvantages of getting news through social media. They had good ideas and the necessary vocabulary to respond fully to the issue. Weaker essays were characterised by generalised responses on the use of social media, which didn't address the use of social media as a means of getting news. Candidates must answer the specific question asked to score in the highest mark bands.

Question 3 教育

教育にお金がかかることをどう思いますか。大学に行きたいのにお金がなくて行けない人もいます。この問題について、あなたが思うことを書いてください。

Not many candidates chose this question. Those who did seemed to have difficulty in fully understanding the requirements of the question. Candidates often focussed on explaining where money is spent in the education system – on teachers, buildings, equipment and so on. Many candidates spent half or two thirds of the space of the essay on this, without addressing any wider points in any detail.

Question 4 技術革新

クローン技術によって、花や野菜だけではなく、食用の動物も作られています。このことに、あなたは賛成ですか、反対ですか。

This was the least chosen question. Those who chose it clearly had some knowledge about the topic, but they often wrote about cloning or genetic modification in general rather than specifically addressing the issue of rearing animals purely for human consumption.

Question 5 環境

環境を保護するための責任は、国や政府だけでなく、私達一人一人にも責任があります。個人では、どんなことができると思いますか。

Those candidates who correctly understood the question to be asking about individual actions to protect the environment were able to give full, detailed, well-illustrated answers to this question. Some candidates did not score as highly as they could have done because they included a lot of information about government responsibilities, local policies, or environmental protection in general, which were not the focus of this question. Those who did write about environmentally friendly activities an individual could do were often able to express their points well. Quite a few candidates mentioned educating others in regards to environmental protection as one of their points, which was an interesting perspective.