

FRENCH

Paper 8670/41

Texts

Key Messages

To do well in the Texts paper, candidates should:

1. Read, study and know the texts very well;
2. Read the question carefully, work out the key words and answer all parts of the question. This session, some candidates answered **Question 8 (b)** as though the question were about being '*libre pendant la guerre*', whereas it really read, '*libre en zone libre pendant la guerre*', which is different. If the demands of the question are not understood, it may result in 'simple and superficial' responses or answers which show 'dependence on narrative' (i.e. the lower mark bands);
3. Show their knowledge relevantly in detailed answers with full explanations, structuring their essays with an introduction, points for and against, including illustration and development, and finally a conclusion. Familiarity with the principles and the standards of the Mark Scheme will help them; stronger candidates are distinguished by their ability to answer the questions fully and to draw comparisons and contrasts.

Candidates should write the question number and **(a)** (as well as **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)** in **Section 1**) or **(b)** and need to answer the question set. Using key words from the question is likely to help candidates to focus and produce a relevant response. It is perfectly legitimate to teach the social, historical and/or literary background to the work in question, but teachers of this examination should stress to candidates that ONLY textual knowledge and understanding are being assessed.

Teachers are advised to choose texts commensurate with their candidates' ability. This session, many candidates coped well with texts such as those by Anouilh, Joffo or Molière, whereas it tended to be only the stronger candidates who made good sense of 'La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu' and who had a handle on the plot complexities (and probably the length) of 'Le Grand Meaulnes'.

'Soit ... soit' means 'either ... or' and should not be copied before **Questions (a)** or **(b)**, which should not **both** be answered. In **Section 1** passage based questions, all three parts of the question, **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**, should be answered and divided into these numbered parts to ensure clarity, and candidates should try to steer an intelligent course between answering the questions specifically and showing knowledge of the text beyond the extract, remembering that relevance to the question rather than knowledge of the plot is the aim.

In **Section 1, Questions (b)** do **not** relate to the passage. If no knowledge of the text is shown except what is contained in the passage, the candidate can not be deemed to have independent knowledge of the plot.

General Comments

Many candidates had clearly studied hard and read the texts thoroughly. Unfortunately there seemed to be more language problems in candidates' scripts this session.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Duras: *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*

- (a) Most candidates could write about the mother's 'malheur' arising from disappointments and unfulfilled plans, although these answers to (i) often ran into (ii), which was unfortunate if the questions had not been clearly labelled.

Candidates of all abilities could readily recall the 'grand vampirisme colonial' in (ii) and the mother's letter in Part 2 chapter 14, although some candidates could do no more than claim that it was a major theme in the novel, and then move on to other themes or a summary of the plot, which could not gain marks for relevance. Its 'physical' presence was occasionally exaggerated in expressions such as, 'les cadastres toujours viennent pour voir si la mère a un nouveaux cultivation' (sic).

This question invited candidates to summarise how the mother fared throughout the remainder of her life, with a specific focus on the extent to which she showed herself capable of confronting this situation. Her perseverance, hard work, optimism, attitude towards M. Jo and the diamond he gave, and boldness against the 'agents du cadastre' were all mentioned.

- (b) This question invited candidates to comment on the relations between Suzanne and Joseph. Candidates recalled various different events involving the two siblings and drew conclusions about the relationship, including their mother's actions and its influence on their interaction, and Suzanne's various suitors and the similarities between Agosti and Joseph.

Question 2

Anouilh: *Antigone*

- (a) This question was more popular than (b). In (i), candidates knew that Antigone had got up early that morning to bury Polynice. Most candidates could also expand on the nursemaid's curiosity and suspicion, namely that Antigone had gone out to meet a man other than her fiancé, Hémon.

Candidates could often allude to different parts of the play in their response to (ii), which illustrated their points well. Some responses to (iii) seized upon the word 'petite' and mentioned other parts of the play in which Antigone was said to be small which unfortunately did not answer the question.

- (b) Créon made this remark in his long conversation alone with Antigone immediately after the guards caught her in the act of burying her brother for the second time that day and brought her to the king. Before and after this phrase, Créon claimed that 'une bonne brute ordinaire de tyran' would have had Antigone killed by now. On the whole, candidates did not seem to grasp that Créon was contrasting himself with such a tyrant and mostly seemed to assume that Antigone was accusing him of being such a man, consequently taking it upon themselves to discuss whether such a label was appropriate or not.

Question 3

Molière: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

- (a) **Question (i)** required candidates to explain that the masquerade involved Turkish disguises which would convince M. Jourdain to allow his daughter to marry the supposedly aristocratic ‘fils du Grand Turc’, alias Cléonte, to whom Jourdain had refused Lucile’s hand on the very grounds of his unsuitable social status. Candidates were quick to explain that Dorante wished to support it in an effort to get married himself, to Dorimène. Sometimes they also identified his tendency to entertain Dorimène at Jourdain’s expense and his desire to do so again at this point in the play.

The ‘profusions et les dépenses’ most often mentioned in **(ii)** were the meal from which Mme Jourdain was excluded but which she inadvertently disturbed on her return from visiting her sister, the borrowed money, and the diamond that Dorante was to have passed on to Dorimène from M. Jourdain, but for which he took the gratitude himself. It had been expected that candidates would comment on Dorimène’s words particularly in line 12, but instead they often said that she was superficial and should have seen through Dorante’s veneer. Ironically, this tended to lead to superficial answers.

Question (iii) stated, ‘Dorante traite Monsieur Jourdain de fou’. Even the most able candidates wanted to illustrate how and why this might be said rather than answering the question to impart the extent to which Dorante’s attitude was agreed with.

- (b) More candidates chose to answer this question than **(a)**. Most could clearly present the case that Monsieur Jourdain was a ‘bourgeois’ who wanted to become a ‘gentilhomme’. More able candidates could elaborate using material from the play about the protagonist’s father and therefore his heritage by birth, as well as selecting highlights from the wealth of material about Monsieur Jourdain’s efforts to become more refined, but the ultimate impossibility of achieving this. Overall, answers lacked full development and illustration, and there was also some confusion of the terms ‘bourgeois’ and ‘noble’.

Question 4

Alain-Fournier: *Le Grand Meaulnes*

- (a) This question was marginally more popular than **(a)**. In some cases candidates appeared to have found difficulty in dealing with the complexity of this novel with its different ‘layers’ of narrative. Although the location of the passage had been given as ‘1ère Partie, Ch. 11’, many candidates had difficulty with answering the questions in **(i)** about why Augustin Meaulnes was there or why he was hiding. Meaulnes had spontaneously decided to take ‘la voiture à Fromentin’ in ‘1ère Partie, Ch. 3’ to compete with Seurel and Mouchebœuf, who had been chosen to collect Seurel’s grandparents from their train in père Martin’s. He lost his way, horse and carriage, but happened across an ‘étrange domaine’ (line 21). Meaulnes was hiding for fear of scaring them – his school clothes were by this time ripped, and they, by contrast, were dressed for a ‘fête’.

Apart from possibly ‘enabling Meaulnes to deduce (in line 20) that there was a wedding feast’, the children did not really have a formal ‘rôle’ in this extract, but candidates of all abilities showed themselves able to grasp some of the atmosphere evoked by the children’s clothes and conversation in **(ii)**. Of course it was the question referred to in **(iii)**, ‘Et si Frantz rentrait dès ce soir, avec sa fiancée’, that was the biggest single ‘clue’, at this point, about a wedding. Then the rest of the novel recounts the complicated route of aspirations and disappointments, ultimately culminating in Frantz and Valentine’s settling in ‘3ème Partie, Ch. 15’ in a home on the property as he had planned (‘1ère Partie, Ch. 15’). There was therefore a lot of scope for detail in the answer. Most candidates were able to respond relevantly to this part of the question, though usually without a great deal of development.

- (b) At one extreme, candidates did not always read the whole question carefully and ended up writing about *Meaulnes* as a ‘jeune héros romantique’. Most could focus on the remark about Frantz, although it was rare for a candidate to say that they recognised the quotation from ‘3ème Partie, Ch. 8’ when Frantz returned to the manor, for the first time since what would have been his wedding day, unhappy, crying, perplexed and still wanting ‘retrouver la trace que je cherche’ (Valentine Blondeau). ‘Se moque’ in the question may imply ‘negative’ sentiments, but François seemed to be reacting with sympathy, and certainly still loyally aspired to seeing Frantz’ broken

relationships being redeemed. The novel as a whole was not really against youth, romanticism or the heroic.

Section 2

Question 5

Mauriac: *Thérèse Desqueyroux*

- (a) This question was more commonly chosen than (b). Religion as a subject of conversation at the dinner table (Thérèse had purposed to avoid conversations about politics with the la Trave family, but ‘mettait son orgueil à ne pas ouvrir la bouche, sauf si l'on touchait à la question religieuse’), or Thérèse’s exchanges with Jean Azévédo tended to be fairly well covered. Churchgoing and the fact that it was this element that kept Thérèse and Bernard together for so long were also pointed out. Thérèse’s school friend and later sister-in-law, Anne de la Trave, described as ‘dévote’, was relevantly mentioned, but more could typically have been made of the curate, or Aunt Clara’s part in the depiction of religion in the novel. She was said to be ‘plus croyante qu’aucun la Trave, mais en guerre ouverte contre l’Etre infini’.
- (b) Very few responses to this question were seen. Thérèse had just been released from the Palace of Justice and ‘aspire de nouveau la nuit pluvieuse, comme un être menacé d’étouffement’ as the novel began. The significance of ‘étouffement’ was wider than just having been released from an imprisonment, though. Thérèse’s thoughts immediately turned, at that point, to ‘Julie Bellade, sa grand’mère maternelle’, whose memory had been all but deleted from the family history. As she put it to Bernard later, ‘Je disparaîs ... Je consens à être rejetée; brûlez toutes mes photographies’. Longer term, Bernard proposed a suffocating, lonely existence, which he only abandoned in fear because she became so unwell.

Question 6

Giraudoux: *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*

- (a) This question was more frequently answered than (b). Giraudoux may not have declared that the war was inevitable, but over the course of the play, the situation between Pâris and Hélène, a man’s pride, a woman’s flippancy, and their peoples’ words and actions, caused the war to become inevitable. Candidates were able to illustrate their answers well with examples of comments and actions of pacifists and warmongers, and the fragility of peace. On the whole, though, they needed to develop their writing beyond comments about pacifism or the characters, to show how war gradually became inevitable.
- (b) Candidates chose different illustrations with which to develop their essays about how tension and attention never slacken in this play, charting the discussions held between pacifists and warmongers and the toleration of a certain amount of provocation and belligerence, in order to avoid unwanted hostilities, but not indefinitely. Examples were given such as Oiax’ treatment of Hector, given the latter’s pacifism, but not at any price. Separate from ‘human’ actions and reactions in the play, candidates did not neglect the element of ‘fate’ in the drama and its contribution to the tension.

Question 7

Bazin: *Au nom du fils*

- (a) Responses on this text sometimes appeared to reflect knowledge only of the beginning of the novel, or of the main points. While most candidates found a way to mention that M. Astin was not sure that Bruno was his son, it was rare for them to mention the blood group information discovered in chapter 22 which proved that he was not.

As far as M. Astin’s narration was concerned, some candidates managed to mention Bazin’s choice of M. Astin’s perspective to achieve his own ends as the author, but there was often little development beyond this. Some interesting comments were made about the plurality of roles held by M. Astin (father, brother-in-law, son-in-law, teacher...) and the ways in which they are all communicated through him as narrator. It would have been nice to see more about the occasions

on which he referred to himself as ‘M. Astin’, when he was thinking of himself more objectively as ‘the teacher/professional’ rather than ‘the emotionally engaged father’.

- (b) There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 8

Joffo: *Un sac de billes*

- (a) There had clearly been enjoyment of this text and candidates had, to some extent, identified with Joseph and Maurice. There was knowledge and relevance in answers to (a), which was a more popular choice than (b). Candidates seemed to be able to draw from a wealth of examples of anxiety (such as the treatment of Jews, the separation of young boys from their parents) and hope (the strong family relationships and the help the boys received, often from strangers, as well as their survival and desire to retell the story for their children) in the novel and to show that hope was stronger.
- (b) Answers to (b) depended to a fair extent, on the candidates’ knowledge of the ‘zone libre’ – its context, *raison d'être*, location etc. One candidate suggested it was somewhere in southern Europe, but outside France; another was convinced it was in Russia. In the main, candidates did not show understanding of the continuing daily threat of danger, capture or betrayal, most preferring the idea that the children had at last found a haven of peace in the ‘zone libre’, where they could find work, live fairly comfortably and enjoy relaxation and free time with the elder brothers or new-found friends. Although most responses reflected knowledge and understanding of the novel, general essays on the extent to which, according to Joffo, people were free during the war did not come close to answering the question well unless they took into account the place required by the question: the ‘zone libre’. As mentioned above in the ‘Key Messages’, it was unfortunate that some candidates had not seemed to understand the question fully, occasionally not mentioning the ‘zone libre’ at all.

FRENCH LITERATURE

Paper 8670/42

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General Comments

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Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Duras: *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*

- (a) The extract was taken from chapter 4 of the '1ère Partie'.

Mention 'broadly in favour of' a marriage between M. Jo and Suzanne was considered to be a minimum in (i). The 'point de vue' (lines 2-3) that Joseph was about to express to M. Jo was that Suzanne's family had waited long enough (fifteen days, but they were 'malheureux' – only the rich, it was said, could wait two years!) for M. Jo to marry Suzanne. Joseph thought he should do this for their mother's sake. There were a small number of answers which did not include a reference to marriage.

Joseph's tone (and language) was described as 'grossier', 'scandaleuse franchise'. His mother sought to justify it to M. Jo later in the chapter, 'S'il est grossier quelquefois, ce n'est pas de sa faute, dit la mère, il n'a reçu aucune éducation.' Most candidates understood Joseph's low opinion of M. Jo, whether as a possible match for Suzanne or otherwise, but did not often refer to the manner in which Joseph presented his ultimatum, or the coarseness or vulgarity of his address.

Answers to (ii) were generally fair and detailed. Some candidates approached the question by discussing their opinion of the description of M. Jo as 'raté', drawing on evidence from elsewhere in the text. Others discussed Joseph's treatment of M. Jo in this way, although material repeated from (i) could not be given further credit. Few candidates gave even a hint of sympathy in their assessments of the character of M. Jo.

The mother 's'attristait davantage' (line 7) as a result of the champagne, already looking at Suzanne and M. Jo 'tristement', and 's'assombrit encore' (line 15) after a flicker of doubt that M. Jo really was 'un raté', followed by a swift decision that the word described her equally well. Responses to (iii) did not always mention the champagne (line 6) and its effects, or the mother's sudden realisation of herself as 'de plus raté' (line 14) or 'la preuve en est ... de marier ma fille à ce raté-là' (lines 16-17).

- (b) Most candidates were able to give at least some balance to an analysis of the mother's 'naïveté' and lack of common sense versus the virtues of her long and valiant struggle against misfortune and to achieve some justice. Unfortunately the 'cadastre' was not given the benefit of similar understanding, receiving very short shrift, often without any attempt at all to suggest possible mitigating circumstances such as attributing its limitations to incompetence, or even fair business. Candidates usually had sufficient to say, but the weakest answers were content merely to catalogue the mother's trials in narrative.

Question 2

Anouilh: *Antigone*

- (a) There were a number of very capable answers to this question. Answers to (i), almost without exception, understood the reference to the deaths of Antigone, Hémon and Eurydice narrated by the chorus immediately before. Generally there was good understanding of Crémon's appearance, character and attitude to duty in (ii), a small number of responses making some comparison with the page boy. Lack of emotion was not always recognised but there was good emphasis on the word 'seul'. In (iii), most understood Antigone's obligation to bury Polynice. With 'c'est vrai', the chorus acknowledged and affirmed Antigone's own statement to the guard shortly before, 'Sans la petite Antigone, vous auriez tous été bien tranquilles', and this was sometimes recognised by candidates.

- (b) Although this was among the more frequently studied texts not so many candidates chose to answer this question. They sometimes used 'key' words, but without seeming to understand the demands of the question or to realise the significance of '*le sale espoir*'. The phrase was used by the chorus almost half way through the play as Anouilh defined and praised the virtues of tragedy, in contrast to '*le drame, avec ... ces lueurs d'espoir, cela devient épouvantable de mourir ... Dans la tragédie on est tranquille ... c'est reposant, la tragédie, parce qu'on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir, le sale espoir*'. Antigone used the expression towards the end of the text, attributing '*le sale espoir*' to Créon and distancing herself from it.

Question 3

Molière: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

- (a) There were some good responses to (i), but a number of the weaker ones were too general (i.e. flattery to extract money) and some candidate's wrongly saw Dorimène as Dorante's partner in swindle and dishonesty. There was no reference to the comedy or its place in the context of the play. The weakest answers to (ii) did not recognise the references to the meal from which Mme Jourdain was excluded but which she inadvertently disturbed on her return from visiting her sister, and therefore provided little relevant comment, or recognition of Dorimène's graciousness in accepting the apology. Question (iii) was less well answered overall. In the main, the importance of the arrival of 'Son Altesse Turque' was adequately dealt with but, although there was general agreement that the scene was also comic, there was little attempt to explain what made it so. Few candidates understood that the scene was, after all, the climax of the comedy and that the humour provided by the disguise, 'Turkish' language and general confusion and misunderstanding was essential to the unravelling of the plot and to the dénouement of the play.
- (b) Within the context of this play, a comedy ballet, the spectator or reader is free to chuckle at M. Jourdain's egocentricity without seriously pitying him. Most candidates managed to present points in favour of feeling pity for M. Jourdain (he was exploited and manipulated), and a few provided more balanced responses by mentioning arguments against (he should have listened to his wife, servant, etc.; he pursued Dorimène behind his wife's back, so could not expect to be sympathised with; if he had not refused Cléonte, he would not need to be deceived by the masquerade). It was fairly common for candidates not to give a direct answer to the 'to what extent?' part of the question. Occasionally candidates attempted to assess the extent to which one could pity M. Jourdain in the passage in Question (a), but this did not give enough material representative of the play as a whole to produce very competent responses. Centres should note the 'Key Messages' above, particularly, 'In Section 1, Questions (b) do not relate to the passage. If no knowledge of the text is shown except what is contained in the passage, the candidate cannot be deemed to have independent knowledge of the plot.'

Question 4

Alain-Fournier: *Le Grand Meaulnes*

- (a) The extract was Seurel's 'reconstruction' of Meaulnes' diary. Meaulnes had by that point 'résolu ... de faire passer Valentine pour sa femme'. For her part, 'A vous, dit-elle, je veux donner tout ce que j'ai' – 'les lettres de son fiancé'. On occasions, candidates did not recognise the context and some attempts to explain the complexity of the situation were confused and lacking in clarity.

Whatever their ability, candidates were able to cope easily with (i), although regrettably there was sometimes little development beyond the information given in lines 12-13 of the extract, 'voilà que je lui ai pris sa fiancée'. Most answers to (ii) revealed little knowledge of Meaulnes' friendship with Frantz and sparse details of their encounters leading up to this point of the play. A few provided fairly good comparison of their characters and their common love of adventure. Like Meaulnes, Valentine had thought 'tant de bonheur était impossible' (3e Partie, Ch. 3) when she doubted her suitability to marry Frantz and broke off their engagement, and she gravitated to the house in Paris where the de Galais used to spend time (2e Partie, Ch. 12), so perhaps Meaulnes could have had more sympathy. Answers to (iii) tended to emphasise the candidates' opinions, however, rather than using the evidence of the novel.

- (b) This question was chosen less frequently than (a). The quotation, from Book 2, chapter 11, was preceded by 'je redevenais'. While Meaulnes was at the School, there was more of a polarity between him/Seurel and the local boys who liked a fight. When Meaulnes left the School, shortly

before the quotations, Seurel became reintegrated into social relationships. Nevertheless, the quotation may have been a little self-deprecating. Seurel valued education, learning and later teaching, and more perceptive candidates had no difficulty in appreciating that Seurel's loyalty and devotion to Meaulnes, Yvonne and their child went far beyond what could be expected of 'just anyone'..

Section 2

Question 5

Mauriac: *Thérèse Desqueyroux*

- (a) Although there were not a large number of responses to this text, there were some fair attempts at both (a) and (b), of which a few were sensitive and quite well illustrated. There was evidence that the 2012 film version had already provided an added resource to the study of this novel.

It did not seem necessary to doubt the veracity of the statement in the question, a quotation from chapter 13. It was clear, however, that Bernard would not say such a thing, as the sentence following it began, 'Mais Bernard...', and this was only a few pages before the end of the book.

- (b) This question put forward an accessible proposition that candidates found it easy to agree with, though not always with much explanation. There were, nevertheless, some interesting discussions centring on Thérèse as a victim, and on her upbringing in a bourgeois society. She was 'different' from what some around her expected of a young woman, with her love of reading, heavy smoking and feisty character, so was always to some extent at odds with those around her. Some argued convincingly that Thérèse was a victim of her own personality. She married her best friend's brother, but quickly found herself estranged from Anne. She needed not to jeopardise her father's political career or her husband's/family's reputation, and became the victim of an unhappy marriage and unsuitable husband, but perhaps not exactly 'la victime de la société bourgeoise dans laquelle elle a été élevée'.

Question 6

Giraudoux: *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*

- (a) Ulysse arrived in Act 2, scene 12 'pour une conversation diplomatique', knowing that the 'Troyens' were thought to be 'moins doués que nous pour le négoce'. He sought to establish whether Hélène had been 'respected'. He spoke at greater length in scene 13, including, 'Parce que nous avons été créés sensés, justes et courtois, nous nous parlons...', suggesting that he was indeed 'un homme de bonne volonté'. He accepted Hélène and pledged his sincerity to Hector. Some answers seen revealed little knowledge of Ulysses; others discussed his character at great length, but without mentioning whether he could be evaluated as 'un homme de bonne volonté'.
- (b) 'Balanced' discussions were achieved by candidates who stated what they understood by 'une tragédie pacifiste' and who explored possible 'yes' and 'no' answers to the question, 'Is the play a pacifist tragedy?' Candidates seemed ready to give 'for and against' material about whether the play was a tragedy (or a comedy), but this material was not usually well 'transferred' to the question in hand. Answers were generally successful; there was some understanding of plot and characters. 'Une tragédie pacifiste' seemed a fitting description in that war was not (initially) waged 'belligerently'. An ultimatum was given, and the conditions were not met.

Question 7

Bazin: *Au nom du fils*

- (a) Candidates found it difficult to comment on M. Astin's conduct in the light of the judgement – his interaction with his children, and the way in which they all 'got by' despite their emotional trials, and as M. Astin juggled his own emotional needs with his single parenting of his children. Candidates' strengths lay in explaining the family composition, but this did not begin to answer the question.
- (b) Mamette, Madame Hombourg, M. Astin's mother-in-law, who lived 'au mair' (until her death towards the end of the book after a long decline) opposite him, 'au pair', played a major role in the novel as she did in her family members' lives, hosting Sunday lunches and much more, so there was a lot of material that could have been drawn from. Memorably, it was she who commented in chapter 5 that it was Bruno whom M. Astin 'saved' from the water first – a significant point in their troubled relationship. Unfortunately candidates sometimes confused Mamette with other characters, most often Laure, producing a character study and evaluation of a role played, but which was not relevant to this question.

Question 8

Joffo: *Un sac de billes*

- (a) This question was chosen by just over half of candidates answering on this text, and there were a number of very competent answers. Père Joffo, the curate(s), the priest and the doctor all figured regularly in answers. Rather less frequently used were Zérati and the Mancelier family. Although in theory candidates could have provided a full answer on a single character, in the event, more thorough discussion was provided by candidates who developed their discussion in relation to a number of different people from the novel. A few candidates chose to include characters who were memorable for their prejudice or cruelty, such as M. Boulier and the SS officer who interviewed Ferdinand in the Hôtel Excelsior, thus providing some contrast and source of comparison.
- (b) This question was answered with the same enthusiasm as (a). Some good answers covered love from the parents, love of each other within the family and unexpected love and assistance from strangers. The more of the latter the better since lengthy illustration of different combinations of the family's interaction did not usually add a great deal to the argument. Some responses were often narrative in tone, but there were also answers which showed very good understanding of the text and ability to compare and evaluate.