

# FRENCH LITERATURE

---

Paper 8670/41

Texts

## Key Messages

Teachers should:

- Think carefully about which texts to prepare as some present conceptual problems that are challenging for average and below average candidates.

Teachers should train their students to:

- Check carefully that they manage their time in the examination room well and answer three questions;
- Check carefully that they do not answer two questions on the same text;
- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them before they start to write;
- Refer to the question during the answer, not just at the start and the finish.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If questions have not been labelled, it can look as though **(ii)** and **(iii)** were not attempted at all, when all three of **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)** should be answered in the passage-based questions.
- Remember that 'soit ... soit' means 'either ... or' and should not be copied before question numbers
- Choose carefully either **(a)** or **(b)** and invest in providing as complete and relevant an answer to that one question as possible.
- Answer with reference to the appropriate text, even if other works by the same author have been read. Sometimes candidates wanted to write about Molière's 'Tartuffe', but 'L'Avare' was set this session.
- Note key words in the questions.
- Answer the question precisely, stating in the introduction what will be said and coming to interim and final conclusions.
- Explore all elements of questions.
- Finish with a concluding paragraph.
- Start each new essay on a fresh page.
- Be careful to attach continuation sheets in order.

## General Comments

Candidates need to find a 'happy balance' between 'assuming that the examiner knows nothing' and 'remembering that the examiner has also read the text'. Although narration irrelevant to the question is not required, candidates should begin to answer the question at the beginning, but should not hold back from showing knowledge of the texts, not just retelling the story, but also making a point.

Candidates should not write an opening paragraph which addresses in rather general terms the author, his or her works or the audience that he or she was addressing. Candidates should just answer the question.

It was evident that Centres had used past questions when training their candidates, and detailed knowledge was shown in those areas. Candidates should select the question they choose to answer carefully, though, and ensure that their material is relevant. Sometimes the material was tailored efficiently and relevantly to this session's questions, but at other times, there were resounding echoes of previous years' questions.

The language used was on the whole appropriate but some essays contained colloquialisms. The best responses were those that were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although it is helpful if these are crossed through to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1**

Molière: *L'Avare*

This was an extremely popular text, chosen by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates referred to events which occur in films of the play but which are not in the text, which was a concern. While it is good to watch film interpretations of the texts and to remember that the plays have been written for performance, the content of the texts should take precedence. Both maître Jacques and Cléante were occasionally confused with Valère.

- (a) (i) Most candidates had little problem identifying the context of the passage and the situation, but some answers were more perceptive and showed that the text had been well understood. 'Emportements et colère' had to be explained and the precise context given, however some candidates felt that Cléante's 'emportements' were solely the result of his quarrels with his father over money. It was clear that some candidates were unsure of the exact meaning of 'emportements' (line 3). A small minority of stronger candidates noted that these 'emportements' were generated by Harpagon's successful attempt to hoodwink Cléante into confessing his love for Mariane in Act IV, scene iii. Harpagon had played a trick on Cléante, pretending that he might look favourably on his union with Mariane, letting him reveal his love, probing into his courtship and then announcing that she was the lady he intended to marry himself. Cléante was irate because his father had been deceitful, though relatively few were able to relate the 'emportements et colère' back to Harpagon's deceit. Of course Harpagon's anger was justified in his view, because Cléante was rebellious and remained firm in his intentions. Harpagon's language was unrestrained. He regarded his point of view as legitimate, and his anger was uncontrolled.
- (ii) There were two parts to this question, so it was unfortunate that some candidates answered, 'Commentez le comportement de maître Jacques dans cette scène', but not, 'et dites dans quelle mesure ce comportement est typique de lui', particularly as this would have been a good moment to show knowledge of the rest of the text. The behaviour of Jacques was analysed satisfactorily. Responses varied, but more important than whether the behaviour was judged typical or not was the illustration of that judgement.

#### **Typical**

Whilst most candidates who identified that maître Jacques' behaviour was typical because of his desire to ingratiate himself with his master, few identified maître Jacques' williness, although some explained well that his position in the household had been challenged by the arrival of Valère, and that he would very soon show an aptitude for telling fibs when he accused Valère of stealing the 'cassette'. Some candidates recalled maître Jacques' handling in Act III, scene i of his dual role, 'cocher et cuisinier', likening it to taking alternate roles while with Cléante and Harpagon respectively.

Few showed that they had grasped that this behaviour was falsely conciliatory, or showed understanding of maître Jacques' true nature and intent to 'get his own back' for his previous unjust treatment by Harpagon. Many candidates had too rosy a view of maître Jacques' motives, tending to see him rather as a benevolent, anxious to please factotum with warm affection for his employer.

## Untypical

About a quarter of candidates got the idea that maître Jacques was untypically trying out deceitfulness on this occasion as he had been frank in what he had said to his master in Act III, scene i, leading to beatings. Even when they mentioned this however, they usually also said, 'so his conduct was typical', rarely highlighting his difference in approach. Not many were able to see his lying as a response to having been reprimanded for telling the truth on that earlier occasion – he had not had much luck telling Harpagon the truth, so why not attempt a few diplomatic lies? He was an old retainer and had admitted to Harpagon that he had some affection for him, in spite of everything, but he needed to re-establish his credit.

- (iii) This question was often answered in the affirmative but then candidates back-tracked to give a more or less correct response. Even when candidates identified that maître Jacques was wrong to say 'vous êtes d'accord', many also felt a need to say that at that point in time he was correct, since he had created a temporary cessation to hostilities. Candidates generally struggled to explain why maître Jacques was wrong unless they showed knowledge of the following events: when the truth was revealed, the anger of both father and son would explode, more bitter than ever.
- (b) Candidates had clearly enjoyed watching the Louis de Funès version of the film, but mentioning, sometimes at length, the costumes, or the part where Harpagon avoids the collection plate, illustrated the dangers of relying on film versions, since they are different from Molière's play as well as from other representations of it.

The key points in the question were

- Harpagon's inhumanity/faults
- how Molière succeeds in making a comic character of him, despite them.

Examiners acknowledge that it is difficult to analyse comedy, but this question generally elicited a string of examples of Harpagon's behaviour, sometimes with comments on the comic effects, or candidates spent the first half of their essays recounting Harpagon's inhumanity/faults and the second half (or less) mentioning comic incidents from the play, even those that had little or nothing to do with Harpagon. Candidates sometimes found themselves confused by whether it was actually Molière or Harpagon who was responsible for the comedy. The question obviously asked how Molière succeeded in making his character, Harpagon, comic. It was necessary to explain how Harpagon was funny in each incident or feature mentioned. Stronger candidates began by saying what the faults of Harpagon were, and continued to give a detailed analysis of the techniques Molière used to make a comic character of him despite those faults. Occasionally candidates successfully argued that the play is funny in spite of and even because of Harpagon's inhumanity and faults.

## Successful examples

- Harpagon, La Flèche and 'les deux autres' mains in Act I, scene iii
- Harpagon's avarice and exchanges with other domestic staff in Act III, scene i
- the analysis of excess, the study of a miser who denies that he is rich, who wears a diamond ring whilst starving his horses, would have a motto (the reverse, a comic confusion, of what Valère had just said!), written in gold letters, in his dining room, yet inviting his dinner guests to sobriety and serving them plebeian food
- exaggeration and the evolution of his obsession into paranoia presented with touches of comedy in the monologue concluding Act IV, scene vii: 'Où courir? Où ne pas courir?'

## Successful examples if handled with care

- incidents such as Harpagon beating his servants raised a laugh, but were not intrinsically funny; explanation of slapstick and the unexpected were required, without forgetting that farce can also be different from comedy

### Unsuccessful examples

#### Because they were not good examples of inhumanity/faults:

- choosing one's children's future spouses (not untypical for the era)

#### Because the comedy did not arise from Harpagon's inhumanity/faults in these cases:

- 'sans dot' (Act I, scene v) – the comedy did not result from Harpagon's inhumanity/faults, but from repetition as well as the fact that Valère was temporarily floored by the force of the significance of the phrase, so was stopped in his tracks and rendered powerless instantly to overcome the additional hurdle it represented, threatening to prevent him from marrying Élise

Clearly candidates are exposed to technical information such as types of comedy or terms such as 'quiproquo', but simply listing them does not answer the questions set for this paper. Candidates should put into words what actually causes the laughter. The following type of sentence, about Act I, scene iv, was rare in scripts seen, 'En rédigeant un dialogue entre Harpagon et Élise où celle-ci contredit systématiquement l'affirmation de son père au négatif, Molière fait rire le public devant l'audacité de cette jeune femme aux idées modernes ; la répétition et les dialogues en parallèle sont en effet un outil indispensable du dramaturge qui correspondent avec le comportement obsessionnel du protagoniste'. It would be best for candidates to say what they find funny about different things as this would be more convincing than repeated generalisations about how hilarious the play has been widely acclaimed to be for centuries.

'Tragedy' always seems to be a favourite topic among candidates answering on Molière, but it was irrelevant to this question. Even if an individual did not think that Harpagon was especially funny, it was indisputably Molière's intention with this play to make us laugh.

### Question 2

Guy de Maupassant: *Bel-Ami*

This text also seemed to have been enjoyed and appreciated by candidates, almost half of the total cohort, who generally understood it well, despite its complexities. Answers typically showed very good knowledge of the text.

- (a) (i) Candidates needed to comment specifically on the relations between the two men as they were depicted in the extract. Some candidates thought that 'Forestier' meant 'Mme Forestier', but she was consistently referred to as 'Mme' elsewhere in the question. Most answered quite well, pointing out the animosity and that the protagonists' relationship was breaking down by this stage. Duroy was lacking in gratitude to Forestier and in understanding of his colleague's condition. It would have been nice to have seen more candidates who were able to highlight the aggressive ingratitude of Duroy in his massive overreaction to a slight from a dying man. Although some contrast was useful between this situation and the strength of the men's renewed friendship upon their chance encounter at the beginning of the novel, too much retelling of the story was not welcome, as always. Some candidates took the opportunity to recount at length the history between Duroy and Forestier, leading up to Duroy's appointment to the newspaper staff, some even going on to explain what happened after this, but this was not to be recommended. Some thought that Charles was jealous of Duroy's success, but that did not communicate a good understanding of the context.

There were some good answers to part (ii). Candidates needed to show that they knew about Duroy's relationship with Mme de Marelle and the nickname given to him by her daughter, Laurine – the background to Madeleine's reference to 'Bel Ami'. They also needed to point out that it meant that the two women had talked about him.

Some candidates did not recognise why Duroy was thrown by the reference. That he was wrong-footed by Madeleine and wondered whether she knew more than he would have liked her to know was not always stated clearly. Candidates offered 'confident' or 'at ease' for Duroy's initial reaction rather than 'surprised', presumably inspired by the later 'il se rassura' (line 18), although that was relevant too, and, could have provided an opportunity to analyse and compare 'la sensation d'un soufflet reçu' (line 13).

- (iii) Although many candidates recognised Mme Forestier's jealousy, few acknowledged her malice, mocking tone, superior intelligence, sang-froid or that she was flirting with Duroy as she adeptly controlled the dialogue in this scene. Madeleine's attitude was sometimes wrongly seen as 'angry', or candidates overlooked the inferences of the last few lines of the passage.

- (b) This was an equally popular question.

It was tempting only to discuss Duroy, but the best candidates found other characters who could be brought into the discussion. For most candidates, the concept of 'le pouvoir' was never really tackled, the notion being quickly overtaken by sexual conquest or, less commonly, money. It was advisable for candidates to pause to think, and to stand back from the question and try an introduction such as, 'L'histoire se déroule à un moment où les journaux connaissent une influence croissante dans tous les aspects de la vie politique et sociale ; c'est dans ce monde où Georges Duroy pénètre, se lançant dans une poursuite acharnée du pouvoir. Examinons ce qu'est le pouvoir et comment on l'atteint en focalisant sur le périple du protagoniste.'

Most candidates relied too heavily on a list (with varying amounts of detail) of Duroy's conquests, producing essays which simply launched into paragraphs detailing his ambition and bed-hopping exploits, repeating how each jump moved him up the ladder, sometimes in chronological order and sometimes not. A fair number of candidates noticed that the women in the book, particularly Madeleine, were strong and supporting the men's progress without getting much by way of thanks for it.

There was a general understanding of Duroy's 'arrivisme' and his use of women to achieve his ends, but many candidates wrote an essay on Duroy-the-womaniser who reached the top thanks to women, developing one point only, which was Duroy's personal charm, and disregarding other sorts of power. Only stronger candidates went on to identify and analyse, in any significant way, politics, journalism and money as linked with power. The best answers made an articulate connection between types of power and also mentioned the struggles for power of Duroy's rivals.

### Question 3

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Les Mouches*

A smaller number of candidates, perhaps one in seven, opted for one of the questions on this text, with probably a little over half choosing the passage-based question over the essay. The play seemed to be generally well liked. It is recommended that teachers focus their input on the impact that remorse has over characters rather than on the political hints of the text. A lot of candidates were keen to state that Jupiter represents the government of Vichy and that Oreste represents the power of people to determine their own pathway in life in (a), or promoted the analogy of spurring the French people to resist and react to their subjugation under Nazi plus Vichy oppression in (b), but it is extremely difficult to explain Sartre's philosophy and the symbolism of the play while fully answering the question at the same time, without losing cohesion and clarity.

- (a) (i) Most candidates picked up on Jupiter's lassitude and dismay at his immortality, and many showed understanding that he wanted to stop individual members of the population from realising that really they were free. He had confided in Égisthe and needed the king to keep backing him up. Sartre depicted a god who was a weak, dependent creature, and there was recognition of Jupiter as doomed to carry out his role for ever, thus his freedom was limited and he was completely powerless without Égisthe as his enforcer. This extract showed how Jupiter was leading an artificial existence, given that he was condemned to play his role as a god when confronted by man. Jupiter wanted to enlist Égisthe to his side and destroy those amongst 'men' who wanted to exercise their freedom.

- (ii) Most candidates picked up on the causes of Égisthe's weariness, correctly describing how, after fifteen years, he was tired of his role, and it had sucked out all his enjoyment of life.

Responses to (iii) were the most successful of the three answers, with general understanding that indeed Oreste and Électre were dangerous in the eyes of Jupiter. Oreste was about to leave the town and to destroy the present order of things by exercising his freedom. Électre seemed to adhere to his views but she would eventually refuse to follow her brother. She wanted to remain in the environment with which she was familiar and she feared freedom. Some candidates brought out the vacillation of Électre. Whether Jupiter was right to consider her to be as dangerous as Oreste could be discussed in an opportunity to analyse and compare the two. The implications for both Jupiter and Égisthe if Oreste managed to convince the people that they were free were generally grasped. Many were able to explain why Oreste and Électre were physically dangerous to Jupiter, though it was more uncommon to mention that Oreste was going to demonstrate that people were actually free agents.

- (b) There was some overlap with (a)(iii) (although of course candidates did not answer both): Again the problem of choice and freedom was presented. On the threshold of freedom, Électre wished to return to what she had always known: regret and repentance, and after her rebellion she now had new reasons to repent. Oreste's prospective freedom was frightening, but he walked away, having made his choices, abandoning the vicious circle that had been generated.

Most candidates answered on a fairly simple level, noting that Oreste, unlike Électre, was feeling no remorse and that he acted as a hero and freed his people, but a few were able to display their knowledge of existentialist philosophy and the relevance of the themes of freedom and regret in relatively sophisticated answers. Some of the better answers drew good conclusions.

#### Question 4

Marguerite Duras: *Moderato Cantabile*

About one in six candidates attempted **Question 4**.

- (a) (i) This point required precise background knowledge. The magnolia tree was in Anne's garden and had been noticed by Chauvin for a long time. The flowers were a leitmotiv of the relationship, evolving slowly and fading. In the extract, a parallel was established between 'dedans' and 'dehors'. Chauvin was the outsider in the garden, surrounded by the elusive scent of the flowers. Anne was the outsider 'inside', supposed to preside over dinner, wearing a fading flower.

A good number of candidates offered acceptable answers about the significance of the magnolias and the best ones more fully exploited their ideas and made the connection between these flowers, Anne Desbaresdes' empty life and the metaphorical funeral ceremony which was the sophisticated dinner at Anne's home. Most pointed out that the magnolias bound Anne and Chauvin together sensually in some way. Some got the idea that Anne's magnolia in her corsage paralleled the downhill drift of their relationship.

- (ii) Most candidates commented on the notion of this being a high class affair with little reference to the dying and depletion of the original fish and duck and its being in some way metaphorical. Some candidates identified the disappearing salmon and the duck in its shroud as contributing to an atmosphere of morbid confinement in the passage and as representing the end of Anne's brief affair with Chauvin and the end of her freedom. The description of the dishes created a contrast between concrete reality and inner struggle within Anne's mind. The food was lavish. A hint of symbolism involved the salmon recently so fresh and alive, now disappearing for ever.

If part (iii) caused problems, it was because many did not seem to think of 'Exagérer' in the context of, 'to go too far' or that the accusation was made 'à la cuisine' at the beginning of the line. The cook and the kitchen staff who had made every effort to prepare and serve an elaborate dinner were indignant and rightly so. Anne was being unreasonable. She showed no respect for her position, and her role as lady of the house was not fulfilled. She had no consideration for the efforts of others.

The majority of candidates answered that Anne did not fulfil her duty but she had excuses for her isolation. Sympathy was expressed with varying degrees of compassion, and there were also over-judgemental expressions of disgust at Anne's unacceptable behaviour. She had arrived home late to her own dinner party, was already drunk, had had no time to make herself tidy, and refused to eat. Candidates also needed to express a clear opinion as to whether her critics were right.

**(b)** Question (b) seemed more popular than (a).

This question was generally fairly well answered. Candidates seemed to find it easier to narrate the events of the first chapter than to forge really strong links with the rest of the text and analyse the subsequent importance of those events. Better answers pointed out that the first chapter identified some of the tensions within Anne's character – regarding her uptight bourgeois background and her pleasure that her son was kicking out at this, and that these would be played out in her forthcoming relationship with Chauvin. Anne's child was a means for her to escape her monotonous life, and Chauvin exploited her curiosity in relation to the murder of the woman in the café. Candidates generally but not always commented on the killing and how this gave an excuse for Anne to contravene societal rules by having some kind of relationship with Chauvin as she came back again and again to fine tune her understanding of what had led to the murder. Again, careful planning could have helped the candidate separate out the different themes that are taken up in subsequent chapters.

Candidates who were not very sure where the first chapter ended (in particular, Anne did not meet Chauvin until later) used a 'scatter-gun' approach which started with candidates using the murder as a launch pad to describe the relationship between Anne and Chauvin, Anne's developing drinking habit and the subsequent events of the novel, without indicating how the events of the first chapter might be relevant for the rest of the novel. The best candidates had excellent recall of all the details of the piano lesson, the murder, the relationship between Anne and her son and his rebellious attitude, and could relate their significance to the rest of the text, emphasising the fascination shown by Anne for the motives of the murder. Chauvin's interest in her was shown by his attempts to explain this murder. This gave the tone of what was going to be their love story and was the key to a good answer. To say that the events of the first chapter 'completely changed', 'made sense of', 'gave a preview of' or 'enabled the reader to understand' the rest of the story was not really convincing, however.

### Question 5

André Gide: *Les Caves du Vatican*

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

### Question 6

Albert Camus: *Les Justes*

This was a reasonably popular question with about a quarter of candidates choosing it, and slightly more than half opting for **(b)**. Candidates seemed to enjoy this play.

- (a)** This question was quite well answered, with most candidates being able to recount Dora's tragic, ill-fated love affair, and the better responses describing the compassion to be felt for the terrorists who worked and killed unwillingly, reluctant to be brutal and behave indiscriminately, but solely with a view to save the people. Essays would have benefited more than most by a definition of what being 'juste' meant. Some of the clearest essays began with a simple statement of what candidates understood by the word 'pitié', which helped to set the essay on a good course.

Most candidates embarked on a character study of Dora with more or less accurate descriptions of her romantic relationship with Yanek Kaliayev. A reasonable number commented that the best she could hope for was to be hanged on the same rope as her lover, which was very much to be pitied. Most candidates focused on the sacrifice of Dora as a woman but also on the convictions of the group and the contrasting attitude of Stepan, who received sympathy from candidates because of his history. Occasionally pity for her co-conspirators was brought up in the context of sacrificing one's life for the fulfilment of an ideal.

**(b)** Some good essays were seen covering

- the role of the Grand Duchess
- her proposition to Kaliayev
- why he was right to reject it

Candidates sometimes confused the motives of the Grand Duchess with those of Skouratov, even if her intervention was part of Skouratov's plan. A number of candidates saw the Duchess's request for Kaliayev to pray with her as an attempt to persuade him to reveal the names of his accomplices in return for his life. Many answers showed good understanding of the contrasting attitudes of the two characters. The best gave detailed reflections on the role of the Grand Duchess. Her motives in getting involved were often simplified. Her appeal to 'religion' was mentioned, but rarely analysed for its significance.

A number of good essays highlighted Kaliayev's fidelity to the socialist ideals in the name of which he had acted, as well as his refusal to co-operate in exchange for a pardon, presenting reasons for which he did not want to save his life, thus not betraying his ideals and those of his friends. Most candidates grasped the idea that Kaliayev would be negating all he had done to date if he were to repent of his deed. Some competent answers were developed, which recognised that if Kaliayev had repented, he would have been left as a mere murderer rather than a fighter for justice ('Si je ne mourrais pas, c'est alors que je serais un meurtrier').

A fair number of candidates remembered the religious and human aspect of the Duchess and acquitted themselves creditably. Her human side was described, and she was shown to be kindly and loving towards her husband. She might have gone too far in asking for repentance since Kaliayev and his friends did not regard themselves as murderers – they simply demanded justice.

Candidates needed to be careful not to confuse 'a-t-il raison' in the question with 'a-t-il une raison'.

## Question 7

Simone de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

This was a popular text with perhaps as many as seven out of ten candidates addressing it, two-thirds of whom opted for **Question (b)**. Most candidates showed a good or very good knowledge of the text and were able to support their work with quotations. This text seemed to be of particular interest to many candidates who responded in some cases in quite sensitive terms, showing some personal engagement with the issues it raised. Candidates seemed to be able to relate easily to the novel's theme and language.

**(a)** There were some sensitive efforts and good answers. The quotation was correctly identified, and a variety of other quotations were aptly included. Some candidates managed to marshal the material sufficiently well to link Laurence's job (design), her own lamentable upbringing compared with that of Catherine, her changing view of what constituted an appropriate upbringing, her mother's nature like a chameleon, and the influence of the young Greek girl. Not so many mentioned the importance of Brigitte or grasped that Laurence wrested control of her daughter's destiny from her husband, Jean-Charles, by pulling away from his opposing ideas on how to solve Catherine's problem and the aspiration of bringing up Catherine as a 'belle image' or giving in to the pressures exerted by the social circle in which the family moved. Many candidates concentrated on the attempts by Laurence and Jean-Charles to present to Catherine only comforting images of the world around her rather than their attempt to turn her into a perfect image for the rest of the world. The best answers were able to set this in the context of the materialism of their social milieu.

Most described Laurence's upbringing, saying that she was brought up by Dominique as a 'belle image' and that she now thought this had ruined her life, despite the perfect image it had produced and projected, such that she did not want this to happen to her daughter. It was widely understood that Laurence's unhappiness resulted from her upbringing but she managed to break the mould and follow a different line with her daughter Catherine. The best candidates could give appropriate treatment to the 'belle image' theme and its centrality to this question. The most focused ones contrasted Laurence, Dominique, Catherine and even Marthe, and their conclusions were acceptable in light of the characters' evolution throughout the novel. The question was done well by those candidates who confined their remarks to the text and did not use this question as a springboard for improvised philosophy on child-rearing in general.

- (b) Again, there were some very good responses, detailing Dominique's true, flawed character in comparison with the apparently confident 'belle image' that she projected at the start of the novel. Answers were, on the whole, more successful than those to (a). Most candidates grasped that Dominique, despite her outwardly strong, ruthless, self-seeking appearance and being able to stand on her own two feet financially, masked a rather pitiful character beneath – selfish, fearful and lacking in self-worth. She had a personal need to have a man around and was her own worst enemy in that respect. Despite her harsh careerism she was fundamentally dependent on the millionaire Gilbert because her self-worth was based on the need to be a 'belle image' – successful, wealthy and having a powerful man. Candidates often attributed her success to Gilbert despite her having achieved some things independently. Many candidates pointed out her shallowness and struggle to maintain a high personable profile, but only the better essays linked this with what was defined as an acceptable social norm in the novel. There were some laudable comparisons of the Dominique 'before and after Gilbert'. Most mentioned that she settled back down with her first husband, despite all the evidence of her earlier condemnation of him for his lack of ambition, and noted that her return to her husband was part of her strategy to 'fix' socially acceptable appearances after an excruciating break up with Gilbert, although not so many pointed out that this was mainly for convenience on her part. As usual, more controversial but irrelevant occurrences such as the letter to Patricia assumed higher prominence than was deserved. Candidates could be encouraged to differentiate between 'la statue' (de la Liberté) and 'le statut' (social).

### Question 8

Romain Gary: *La Vie devant soi*

At least one candidate in six had selected this text for study, with (b) being a far more popular choice than (a). Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the text, related well to it and had clearly enjoyed studying it.

- (a) It seemed tempting for candidates to use this question as a springboard for generalities about immigration and racism in France, but some who chose it made some very good points about how Jews, North Africans, Arabs, Blacks and Vietnamese co-existed in particularly close harmony in Madame Rosa's home. Youssef Kadir dropped dead upon hearing the (false) claim that his son had been raised a Jew.

Momo was remembered for his words, 'Pendant longtemps, je n'ai pas su que j'étais arabe parce que personne ne m'insultait. On me l'a seulement appris à l'école.' Yugoslavs were not so favourably portrayed, but it was when Momo unexpectedly came face to face with Nadine's native French children that he felt worst. Elsewhere in the novel the racism suffered by M. N'Da Amédée's relatives in Niger was alluded to, and Madame Rosa was haunted until her death by the Auschwitz persecution.

(b) This question was overwhelmingly the candidates' preferred choice, maybe because it was relatively easy for candidates to comment on Momo's relationship with Madame Rosa, describing how he met her needs until the end. Many candidates identified each person or group of people and their 'loving' contribution – essays tended to involve recounting episodes where love was discussed or demonstrated. Again, careful planning could have categorised the types of loving relationship:

- 'l'amour maternel' (Madame Rosa, Nadine)
- 'l'amour paternel' (Monsieur Hamil, le docteur Katz)
- 'la solidarité/les autres habitants de l'immeuble'
- 'le vol à l'étalage' (le chien, 'Super')
- 'la recherche de l'amour' (le parapluie, Arthur)

In practice, many candidates tended to base their essays on the life-story of Momo rather than on the importance of love in the novel, but Madame Lola's generous nature was praised as was the generosity of Momo's entourage generally.

Better responses mentioned the critical theme of Momo's longing and unending search for maternal love, security and a permanent source of affection, and included the detail of the lioness protecting and watching over him as he slept. Momo was so insecure and in need of love that his imagination took over. He was taken for regular medical check-ups to kindly Dr Katz because his behaviour was irrational. His need for attention led him to make excuses, tell lies and steal. When the existence of the next best thing to a mother was threatened, he became seriously disturbed and his conduct defied reason. His despair was immense when Madame Rosa died, not because he did not expect it but because what he feared most had happened and he had lost the centre of his world.

# FRENCH LITERATURE

---

Paper 8670/42

Texts

## Key Messages

Teachers should:

- Think carefully about which texts to prepare as some present conceptual problems that are challenging for average and below average candidates.

Teachers should train their students to:

- Check carefully that they manage their time in the examination room well and answer three questions;
- Check carefully that they do not answer two questions on the same text;
- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them before they start to write;
- Refer to the question during the answer, not just at the start and the finish.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If questions have not been labelled, it can look as though **(ii)** and **(iii)** were not attempted at all, when all three of **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)** should be answered in the passage-based questions.
- Remember that 'soit ... soit' means 'either ... or' and should not be copied before question numbers
- Choose carefully either **(a)** or **(b)** and invest in providing as complete and relevant an answer to that one question as possible.
- Answer with reference to the appropriate text, even if other works by the same author have been read. Sometimes candidates wanted to write about Molière's 'Tartuffe', but 'L'Avare' was set this session.
- Note key words in the questions.
- Answer the question precisely, stating in the introduction what will be said and coming to interim and final conclusions.
- Explore all elements of questions.
- Finish with a concluding paragraph.
- Start each new essay on a fresh page.
- Be careful to attach continuation sheets in order.

## General Comments

Candidates need to find a 'happy balance' between 'assuming that the examiner knows nothing' and 'remembering that the examiner has also read the text'. Although narration irrelevant to the question is not required, candidates should begin to answer the question at the beginning, but should not hold back from showing knowledge of the texts, not just retelling the story, but also making a point.

Candidates should not write an opening paragraph which addresses in rather general terms the author, his or her works or the audience that he or she was addressing. Candidates should just answer the question.

It was evident that Centres had used past questions when training their candidates, and detailed knowledge was shown in those areas. Candidates should select the question they choose to answer carefully, though, and ensure that their material is relevant. Sometimes the material was tailored efficiently and relevantly to this session's questions, but at other times, there were resounding echoes of previous years' questions.

The language used was on the whole appropriate but some essays contained colloquialisms. The best responses were those that were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although it is helpful if these are crossed through to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1**

Molière: *L'Avare*

This was an extremely popular text, chosen by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates referred to events which occur in films of the play but which are not in the text, which was a concern. While it is good to watch film interpretations of the texts and to remember that the plays have been written for performance, the content of the texts should take precedence. Both maître Jacques and Cléante were occasionally confused with Valère.

- (a) (i) Most candidates had little problem identifying the context of the passage and the situation, but some answers were more perceptive and showed that the text had been well understood. 'Emportements et colère' had to be explained and the precise context given, however some candidates felt that Cléante's 'emportements' were solely the result of his quarrels with his father over money. It was clear that some candidates were unsure of the exact meaning of 'emportements' (line 3). A small minority of stronger candidates noted that these 'emportements' were generated by Harpagon's successful attempt to hoodwink Cléante into confessing his love for Mariane in Act IV, scene iii. Harpagon had played a trick on Cléante, pretending that he might look favourably on his union with Mariane, letting him reveal his love, probing into his courtship and then announcing that she was the lady he intended to marry himself. Cléante was irate because his father had been deceitful, though relatively few were able to relate the 'emportements et colère' back to Harpagon's deceit. Of course Harpagon's anger was justified in his view, because Cléante was rebellious and remained firm in his intentions. Harpagon's language was unrestrained. He regarded his point of view as legitimate, and his anger was uncontrolled.
- (ii) There were two parts to this question, so it was unfortunate that some candidates answered, 'Commentez le comportement de maître Jacques dans cette scène', but not, 'et dites dans quelle mesure ce comportement est typique de lui', particularly as this would have been a good moment to show knowledge of the rest of the text. The behaviour of Jacques was analysed satisfactorily. Responses varied, but more important than whether the behaviour was judged typical or not was the illustration of that judgement.

#### **Typical**

Whilst most candidates who identified that maître Jacques' behaviour was typical because of his desire to ingratiate himself with his master, few identified maître Jacques' williness, although some explained well that his position in the household had been challenged by the arrival of Valère, and that he would very soon show an aptitude for telling fibs when he accused Valère of stealing the 'cassette'. Some candidates recalled maître Jacques' handling in Act III, scene i of his dual role, 'cocher et cuisinier', likening it to taking alternate roles while with Cléante and Harpagon respectively.

Few showed that they had grasped that this behaviour was falsely conciliatory, or showed understanding of maître Jacques' true nature and intent to 'get his own back' for his previous unjust treatment by Harpagon. Many candidates had too rosy a view of maître Jacques' motives, tending to see him rather as a benevolent, anxious to please factotum with warm affection for his employer.

## Untypical

About a quarter of candidates got the idea that maître Jacques was untypically trying out deceitfulness on this occasion as he had been frank in what he had said to his master in Act III, scene i, leading to beatings. Even when they mentioned this however, they usually also said, 'so his conduct was typical', rarely highlighting his difference in approach. Not many were able to see his lying as a response to having been reprimanded for telling the truth on that earlier occasion – he had not had much luck telling Harpagon the truth, so why not attempt a few diplomatic lies? He was an old retainer and had admitted to Harpagon that he had some affection for him, in spite of everything, but he needed to re-establish his credit.

- (iii) This question was often answered in the affirmative but then candidates back-tracked to give a more or less correct response. Even when candidates identified that maître Jacques was wrong to say 'vous êtes d'accord', many also felt a need to say that at that point in time he was correct, since he had created a temporary cessation to hostilities. Candidates generally struggled to explain why maître Jacques was wrong unless they showed knowledge of the following events: when the truth was revealed, the anger of both father and son would explode, more bitter than ever.
- (b) Candidates had clearly enjoyed watching the Louis de Funès version of the film, but mentioning, sometimes at length, the costumes, or the part where Harpagon avoids the collection plate, illustrated the dangers of relying on film versions, since they are different from Molière's play as well as from other representations of it.

The key points in the question were

- Harpagon's inhumanity/faults
- how Molière succeeds in making a comic character of him, despite them.

Examiners acknowledge that it is difficult to analyse comedy, but this question generally elicited a string of examples of Harpagon's behaviour, sometimes with comments on the comic effects, or candidates spent the first half of their essays recounting Harpagon's inhumanity/faults and the second half (or less) mentioning comic incidents from the play, even those that had little or nothing to do with Harpagon. Candidates sometimes found themselves confused by whether it was actually Molière or Harpagon who was responsible for the comedy. The question obviously asked how Molière succeeded in making his character, Harpagon, comic. It was necessary to explain how Harpagon was funny in each incident or feature mentioned. Stronger candidates began by saying what the faults of Harpagon were, and continued to give a detailed analysis of the techniques Molière used to make a comic character of him despite those faults. Occasionally candidates successfully argued that the play is funny in spite of and even because of Harpagon's inhumanity and faults.

## Successful examples

- Harpagon, La Flèche and 'les deux autres' mains in Act I, scene iii
- Harpagon's avarice and exchanges with other domestic staff in Act III, scene i
- the analysis of excess, the study of a miser who denies that he is rich, who wears a diamond ring whilst starving his horses, would have a motto (the reverse, a comic confusion, of what Valère had just said!), written in gold letters, in his dining room, yet inviting his dinner guests to sobriety and serving them plebeian food
- exaggeration and the evolution of his obsession into paranoia presented with touches of comedy in the monologue concluding Act IV, scene vii: 'Où courir? Où ne pas courir?'

## Successful examples if handled with care

- incidents such as Harpagon beating his servants raised a laugh, but were not intrinsically funny; explanation of slapstick and the unexpected were required, without forgetting that farce can also be different from comedy

### Unsuccessful examples

#### Because they were not good examples of inhumanity/faults:

- choosing one's children's future spouses (not untypical for the era)

#### Because the comedy did not arise from Harpagon's inhumanity/faults in these cases:

- 'sans dot' (Act I, scene v) – the comedy did not result from Harpagon's inhumanity/faults, but from repetition as well as the fact that Valère was temporarily floored by the force of the significance of the phrase, so was stopped in his tracks and rendered powerless instantly to overcome the additional hurdle it represented, threatening to prevent him from marrying Élise

Clearly candidates are exposed to technical information such as types of comedy or terms such as 'quiproquo', but simply listing them does not answer the questions set for this paper. Candidates should put into words what actually causes the laughter. The following type of sentence, about Act I, scene iv, was rare in scripts seen, 'En rédigeant un dialogue entre Harpagon et Élise où celle-ci contredit systématiquement l'affirmation de son père au négatif, Molière fait rire le public devant l'audacité de cette jeune femme aux idées modernes ; la répétition et les dialogues en parallèle sont en effet un outil indispensable du dramaturge qui correspondent avec le comportement obsessionnel du protagoniste'. It would be best for candidates to say what they find funny about different things as this would be more convincing than repeated generalisations about how hilarious the play has been widely acclaimed to be for centuries.

'Tragedy' always seems to be a favourite topic among candidates answering on Molière, but it was irrelevant to this question. Even if an individual did not think that Harpagon was especially funny, it was indisputably Molière's intention with this play to make us laugh.

### Question 2

Guy de Maupassant: *Bel-Ami*

This text also seemed to have been enjoyed and appreciated by candidates, almost half of the total cohort, who generally understood it well, despite its complexities. Answers typically showed very good knowledge of the text.

- (a) (i) Candidates needed to comment specifically on the relations between the two men as they were depicted in the extract. Some candidates thought that 'Forestier' meant 'Mme Forestier', but she was consistently referred to as 'Mme' elsewhere in the question. Most answered quite well, pointing out the animosity and that the protagonists' relationship was breaking down by this stage. Duroy was lacking in gratitude to Forestier and in understanding of his colleague's condition. It would have been nice to have seen more candidates who were able to highlight the aggressive ingratitude of Duroy in his massive overreaction to a slight from a dying man. Although some contrast was useful between this situation and the strength of the men's renewed friendship upon their chance encounter at the beginning of the novel, too much retelling of the story was not welcome, as always. Some candidates took the opportunity to recount at length the history between Duroy and Forestier, leading up to Duroy's appointment to the newspaper staff, some even going on to explain what happened after this, but this was not to be recommended. Some thought that Charles was jealous of Duroy's success, but that did not communicate a good understanding of the context.

There were some good answers to part (ii). Candidates needed to show that they knew about Duroy's relationship with Mme de Marelle and the nickname given to him by her daughter, Laurine – the background to Madeleine's reference to 'Bel Ami'. They also needed to point out that it meant that the two women had talked about him.

Some candidates did not recognise why Duroy was thrown by the reference. That he was wrong-footed by Madeleine and wondered whether she knew more than he would have liked her to know was not always stated clearly. Candidates offered 'confident' or 'at ease' for Duroy's initial reaction rather than 'surprised', presumably inspired by the later 'il se rassura' (line 18), although that was relevant too, and, could have provided an opportunity to analyse and compare 'la sensation d'un soufflet reçu' (line 13).

- (iii) Although many candidates recognised Mme Forestier's jealousy, few acknowledged her malice, mocking tone, superior intelligence, sang-froid or that she was flirting with Duroy as she adeptly controlled the dialogue in this scene. Madeleine's attitude was sometimes wrongly seen as 'angry', or candidates overlooked the inferences of the last few lines of the passage.

- (b) This was an equally popular question.

It was tempting only to discuss Duroy, but the best candidates found other characters who could be brought into the discussion. For most candidates, the concept of 'le pouvoir' was never really tackled, the notion being quickly overtaken by sexual conquest or, less commonly, money. It was advisable for candidates to pause to think, and to stand back from the question and try an introduction such as, 'L'histoire se déroule à un moment où les journaux connaissent une influence croissante dans tous les aspects de la vie politique et sociale ; c'est dans ce monde où Georges Duroy pénètre, se lançant dans une poursuite acharnée du pouvoir. Examinons ce qu'est le pouvoir et comment on l'atteint en focalisant sur le périple du protagoniste.'

Most candidates relied too heavily on a list (with varying amounts of detail) of Duroy's conquests, producing essays which simply launched into paragraphs detailing his ambition and bed-hopping exploits, repeating how each jump moved him up the ladder, sometimes in chronological order and sometimes not. A fair number of candidates noticed that the women in the book, particularly Madeleine, were strong and supporting the men's progress without getting much by way of thanks for it.

There was a general understanding of Duroy's 'arrivisme' and his use of women to achieve his ends, but many candidates wrote an essay on Duroy-the-womaniser who reached the top thanks to women, developing one point only, which was Duroy's personal charm, and disregarding other sorts of power. Only stronger candidates went on to identify and analyse, in any significant way, politics, journalism and money as linked with power. The best answers made an articulate connection between types of power and also mentioned the struggles for power of Duroy's rivals.

### Question 3

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Les Mouches*

A smaller number of candidates, perhaps one in seven, opted for one of the questions on this text, with probably a little over half choosing the passage-based question over the essay. The play seemed to be generally well liked. It is recommended that teachers focus their input on the impact that remorse has over characters rather than on the political hints of the text. A lot of candidates were keen to state that Jupiter represents the government of Vichy and that Oreste represents the power of people to determine their own pathway in life in (a), or promoted the analogy of spurring the French people to resist and react to their subjugation under Nazi plus Vichy oppression in (b), but it is extremely difficult to explain Sartre's philosophy and the symbolism of the play while fully answering the question at the same time, without losing cohesion and clarity.

- (a) (i) Most candidates picked up on Jupiter's lassitude and dismay at his immortality, and many showed understanding that he wanted to stop individual members of the population from realising that really they were free. He had confided in Égisthe and needed the king to keep backing him up. Sartre depicted a god who was a weak, dependent creature, and there was recognition of Jupiter as doomed to carry out his role for ever, thus his freedom was limited and he was completely powerless without Égisthe as his enforcer. This extract showed how Jupiter was leading an artificial existence, given that he was condemned to play his role as a god when confronted by man. Jupiter wanted to enlist Égisthe to his side and destroy those amongst 'men' who wanted to exercise their freedom.

- (ii) Most candidates picked up on the causes of Égisthe's weariness, correctly describing how, after fifteen years, he was tired of his role, and it had sucked out all his enjoyment of life.

Responses to (iii) were the most successful of the three answers, with general understanding that indeed Oreste and Électre were dangerous in the eyes of Jupiter. Oreste was about to leave the town and to destroy the present order of things by exercising his freedom. Électre seemed to adhere to his views but she would eventually refuse to follow her brother. She wanted to remain in the environment with which she was familiar and she feared freedom. Some candidates brought out the vacillation of Électre. Whether Jupiter was right to consider her to be as dangerous as Oreste could be discussed in an opportunity to analyse and compare the two. The implications for both Jupiter and Égisthe if Oreste managed to convince the people that they were free were generally grasped. Many were able to explain why Oreste and Électre were physically dangerous to Jupiter, though it was more uncommon to mention that Oreste was going to demonstrate that people were actually free agents.

- (b) There was some overlap with (a)(iii) (although of course candidates did not answer both): Again the problem of choice and freedom was presented. On the threshold of freedom, Électre wished to return to what she had always known: regret and repentance, and after her rebellion she now had new reasons to repent. Oreste's prospective freedom was frightening, but he walked away, having made his choices, abandoning the vicious circle that had been generated.

Most candidates answered on a fairly simple level, noting that Oreste, unlike Électre, was feeling no remorse and that he acted as a hero and freed his people, but a few were able to display their knowledge of existentialist philosophy and the relevance of the themes of freedom and regret in relatively sophisticated answers. Some of the better answers drew good conclusions.

#### Question 4

Marguerite Duras: *Moderato Cantabile*

About one in six candidates attempted **Question 4**.

- (a) (i) This point required precise background knowledge. The magnolia tree was in Anne's garden and had been noticed by Chauvin for a long time. The flowers were a leitmotiv of the relationship, evolving slowly and fading. In the extract, a parallel was established between 'dedans' and 'dehors'. Chauvin was the outsider in the garden, surrounded by the elusive scent of the flowers. Anne was the outsider 'inside', supposed to preside over dinner, wearing a fading flower.

A good number of candidates offered acceptable answers about the significance of the magnolias and the best ones more fully exploited their ideas and made the connection between these flowers, Anne Desbaresdes' empty life and the metaphorical funeral ceremony which was the sophisticated dinner at Anne's home. Most pointed out that the magnolias bound Anne and Chauvin together sensually in some way. Some got the idea that Anne's magnolia in her corsage paralleled the downhill drift of their relationship.

- (ii) Most candidates commented on the notion of this being a high class affair with little reference to the dying and depletion of the original fish and duck and its being in some way metaphorical. Some candidates identified the disappearing salmon and the duck in its shroud as contributing to an atmosphere of morbid confinement in the passage and as representing the end of Anne's brief affair with Chauvin and the end of her freedom. The description of the dishes created a contrast between concrete reality and inner struggle within Anne's mind. The food was lavish. A hint of symbolism involved the salmon recently so fresh and alive, now disappearing for ever.

If part (iii) caused problems, it was because many did not seem to think of 'Exagérer' in the context of, 'to go too far' or that the accusation was made 'à la cuisine' at the beginning of the line. The cook and the kitchen staff who had made every effort to prepare and serve an elaborate dinner were indignant and rightly so. Anne was being unreasonable. She showed no respect for her position, and her role as lady of the house was not fulfilled. She had no consideration for the efforts of others.

The majority of candidates answered that Anne did not fulfil her duty but she had excuses for her isolation. Sympathy was expressed with varying degrees of compassion, and there were also over-judgemental expressions of disgust at Anne's unacceptable behaviour. She had arrived home late to her own dinner party, was already drunk, had had no time to make herself tidy, and refused to eat. Candidates also needed to express a clear opinion as to whether her critics were right.

**(b)** Question (b) seemed more popular than (a).

This question was generally fairly well answered. Candidates seemed to find it easier to narrate the events of the first chapter than to forge really strong links with the rest of the text and analyse the subsequent importance of those events. Better answers pointed out that the first chapter identified some of the tensions within Anne's character – regarding her uptight bourgeois background and her pleasure that her son was kicking out at this, and that these would be played out in her forthcoming relationship with Chauvin. Anne's child was a means for her to escape her monotonous life, and Chauvin exploited her curiosity in relation to the murder of the woman in the café. Candidates generally but not always commented on the killing and how this gave an excuse for Anne to contravene societal rules by having some kind of relationship with Chauvin as she came back again and again to fine tune her understanding of what had led to the murder. Again, careful planning could have helped the candidate separate out the different themes that are taken up in subsequent chapters.

Candidates who were not very sure where the first chapter ended (in particular, Anne did not meet Chauvin until later) used a 'scatter-gun' approach which started with candidates using the murder as a launch pad to describe the relationship between Anne and Chauvin, Anne's developing drinking habit and the subsequent events of the novel, without indicating how the events of the first chapter might be relevant for the rest of the novel. The best candidates had excellent recall of all the details of the piano lesson, the murder, the relationship between Anne and her son and his rebellious attitude, and could relate their significance to the rest of the text, emphasising the fascination shown by Anne for the motives of the murder. Chauvin's interest in her was shown by his attempts to explain this murder. This gave the tone of what was going to be their love story and was the key to a good answer. To say that the events of the first chapter 'completely changed', 'made sense of', 'gave a preview of' or 'enabled the reader to understand' the rest of the story was not really convincing, however.

### Question 5

André Gide: *Les Caves du Vatican*

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

### Question 6

Albert Camus: *Les Justes*

This was a reasonably popular question with about a quarter of candidates choosing it, and slightly more than half opting for **(b)**. Candidates seemed to enjoy this play.

- (a)** This question was quite well answered, with most candidates being able to recount Dora's tragic, ill-fated love affair, and the better responses describing the compassion to be felt for the terrorists who worked and killed unwillingly, reluctant to be brutal and behave indiscriminately, but solely with a view to save the people. Essays would have benefited more than most by a definition of what being 'juste' meant. Some of the clearest essays began with a simple statement of what candidates understood by the word 'pitié', which helped to set the essay on a good course.

Most candidates embarked on a character study of Dora with more or less accurate descriptions of her romantic relationship with Yanek Kaliayev. A reasonable number commented that the best she could hope for was to be hanged on the same rope as her lover, which was very much to be pitied. Most candidates focused on the sacrifice of Dora as a woman but also on the convictions of the group and the contrasting attitude of Stepan, who received sympathy from candidates because of his history. Occasionally pity for her co-conspirators was brought up in the context of sacrificing one's life for the fulfilment of an ideal.

**(b)** Some good essays were seen covering

- the role of the Grand Duchess
- her proposition to Kaliayev
- why he was right to reject it

Candidates sometimes confused the motives of the Grand Duchess with those of Skouratov, even if her intervention was part of Skouratov's plan. A number of candidates saw the Duchess's request for Kaliayev to pray with her as an attempt to persuade him to reveal the names of his accomplices in return for his life. Many answers showed good understanding of the contrasting attitudes of the two characters. The best gave detailed reflections on the role of the Grand Duchess. Her motives in getting involved were often simplified. Her appeal to 'religion' was mentioned, but rarely analysed for its significance.

A number of good essays highlighted Kaliayev's fidelity to the socialist ideals in the name of which he had acted, as well as his refusal to co-operate in exchange for a pardon, presenting reasons for which he did not want to save his life, thus not betraying his ideals and those of his friends. Most candidates grasped the idea that Kaliayev would be negating all he had done to date if he were to repent of his deed. Some competent answers were developed, which recognised that if Kaliayev had repented, he would have been left as a mere murderer rather than a fighter for justice ('Si je ne mourrais pas, c'est alors que je serais un meurtrier').

A fair number of candidates remembered the religious and human aspect of the Duchess and acquitted themselves creditably. Her human side was described, and she was shown to be kindly and loving towards her husband. She might have gone too far in asking for repentance since Kaliayev and his friends did not regard themselves as murderers – they simply demanded justice.

Candidates needed to be careful not to confuse 'a-t-il raison' in the question with 'a-t-il une raison'.

## Question 7

Simone de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

This was a popular text with perhaps as many as seven out of ten candidates addressing it, two-thirds of whom opted for **Question (b)**. Most candidates showed a good or very good knowledge of the text and were able to support their work with quotations. This text seemed to be of particular interest to many candidates who responded in some cases in quite sensitive terms, showing some personal engagement with the issues it raised. Candidates seemed to be able to relate easily to the novel's theme and language.

**(a)** There were some sensitive efforts and good answers. The quotation was correctly identified, and a variety of other quotations were aptly included. Some candidates managed to marshal the material sufficiently well to link Laurence's job (design), her own lamentable upbringing compared with that of Catherine, her changing view of what constituted an appropriate upbringing, her mother's nature like a chameleon, and the influence of the young Greek girl. Not so many mentioned the importance of Brigitte or grasped that Laurence wrested control of her daughter's destiny from her husband, Jean-Charles, by pulling away from his opposing ideas on how to solve Catherine's problem and the aspiration of bringing up Catherine as a 'belle image' or giving in to the pressures exerted by the social circle in which the family moved. Many candidates concentrated on the attempts by Laurence and Jean-Charles to present to Catherine only comforting images of the world around her rather than their attempt to turn her into a perfect image for the rest of the world. The best answers were able to set this in the context of the materialism of their social milieu.

Most described Laurence's upbringing, saying that she was brought up by Dominique as a 'belle image' and that she now thought this had ruined her life, despite the perfect image it had produced and projected, such that she did not want this to happen to her daughter. It was widely understood that Laurence's unhappiness resulted from her upbringing but she managed to break the mould and follow a different line with her daughter Catherine. The best candidates could give appropriate treatment to the 'belle image' theme and its centrality to this question. The most focused ones contrasted Laurence, Dominique, Catherine and even Marthe, and their conclusions were acceptable in light of the characters' evolution throughout the novel. The question was done well by those candidates who confined their remarks to the text and did not use this question as a springboard for improvised philosophy on child-rearing in general.

- (b) Again, there were some very good responses, detailing Dominique's true, flawed character in comparison with the apparently confident 'belle image' that she projected at the start of the novel. Answers were, on the whole, more successful than those to (a). Most candidates grasped that Dominique, despite her outwardly strong, ruthless, self-seeking appearance and being able to stand on her own two feet financially, masked a rather pitiful character beneath – selfish, fearful and lacking in self-worth. She had a personal need to have a man around and was her own worst enemy in that respect. Despite her harsh careerism she was fundamentally dependent on the millionaire Gilbert because her self-worth was based on the need to be a 'belle image' – successful, wealthy and having a powerful man. Candidates often attributed her success to Gilbert despite her having achieved some things independently. Many candidates pointed out her shallowness and struggle to maintain a high personable profile, but only the better essays linked this with what was defined as an acceptable social norm in the novel. There were some laudable comparisons of the Dominique 'before and after Gilbert'. Most mentioned that she settled back down with her first husband, despite all the evidence of her earlier condemnation of him for his lack of ambition, and noted that her return to her husband was part of her strategy to 'fix' socially acceptable appearances after an excruciating break up with Gilbert, although not so many pointed out that this was mainly for convenience on her part. As usual, more controversial but irrelevant occurrences such as the letter to Patricia assumed higher prominence than was deserved. Candidates could be encouraged to differentiate between 'la statue' (de la Liberté) and 'le statut' (social).

### Question 8

Romain Gary: *La Vie devant soi*

At least one candidate in six had selected this text for study, with (b) being a far more popular choice than (a). Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the text, related well to it and had clearly enjoyed studying it.

- (a) It seemed tempting for candidates to use this question as a springboard for generalities about immigration and racism in France, but some who chose it made some very good points about how Jews, North Africans, Arabs, Blacks and Vietnamese co-existed in particularly close harmony in Madame Rosa's home. Youssef Kadir dropped dead upon hearing the (false) claim that his son had been raised a Jew.

Momo was remembered for his words, 'Pendant longtemps, je n'ai pas su que j'étais arabe parce que personne ne m'insultait. On me l'a seulement appris à l'école.' Yugoslavs were not so favourably portrayed, but it was when Momo unexpectedly came face to face with Nadine's native French children that he felt worst. Elsewhere in the novel the racism suffered by M. N'Da Amédée's relatives in Niger was alluded to, and Madame Rosa was haunted until her death by the Auschwitz persecution.

(b) This question was overwhelmingly the candidates' preferred choice, maybe because it was relatively easy for candidates to comment on Momo's relationship with Madame Rosa, describing how he met her needs until the end. Many candidates identified each person or group of people and their 'loving' contribution – essays tended to involve recounting episodes where love was discussed or demonstrated. Again, careful planning could have categorised the types of loving relationship:

- 'l'amour maternel' (Madame Rosa, Nadine)
- 'l'amour paternel' (Monsieur Hamil, le docteur Katz)
- 'la solidarité/les autres habitants de l'immeuble'
- 'le vol à l'étalage' (le chien, 'Super')
- 'la recherche de l'amour' (le parapluie, Arthur)

In practice, many candidates tended to base their essays on the life-story of Momo rather than on the importance of love in the novel, but Madame Lola's generous nature was praised as was the generosity of Momo's entourage generally.

Better responses mentioned the critical theme of Momo's longing and unending search for maternal love, security and a permanent source of affection, and included the detail of the lioness protecting and watching over him as he slept. Momo was so insecure and in need of love that his imagination took over. He was taken for regular medical check-ups to kindly Dr Katz because his behaviour was irrational. His need for attention led him to make excuses, tell lies and steal. When the existence of the next best thing to a mother was threatened, he became seriously disturbed and his conduct defied reason. His despair was immense when Madame Rosa died, not because he did not expect it but because what he feared most had happened and he had lost the centre of his world.

# FRENCH LITERATURE

---

Paper 8670/43

Texts

## Key Messages

Teachers should:

- Think carefully about which texts to prepare as some present conceptual problems that are challenging for average and below average candidates.

Teachers should train their students to:

- Check carefully that they manage their time in the examination room well and answer three questions;
- Check carefully that they do not answer two questions on the same text;
- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them before they start to write;
- Refer to the question during the answer, not just at the start and the finish.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If questions have not been labelled, it can look as though **(ii)** and **(iii)** were not attempted at all, when all three of **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)** should be answered in the passage-based questions;
- Remember that 'soit ... soit' means 'either ... or' and should not be copied before question numbers;
- Choose carefully either **(a)** or **(b)** and invest in providing as complete and relevant an answer to that one question as possible;
- Answer with reference to the appropriate text, even if other works by the same author have been read. Sometimes candidates wanted to write about Molière's 'Tartuffe', but 'L'Avare' was set this session;
- Note key words in the questions;
- Answer the question precisely, stating in the introduction what will be said and coming to interim and final conclusions;
- Explore all elements of questions;
- Finish with a concluding paragraph;
- Start each new essay on a fresh page;
- Be careful to attach continuation sheets in order.

## General Comments

Candidates need to find a 'happy balance' between 'assuming that the examiner knows nothing' and 'remembering that the examiner has also read the text'. Although narration irrelevant to the question is not required, candidates should begin to answer the question at the beginning, but should not hold back from showing knowledge of the texts, not just retelling the story, but also making a point.

Candidates should not write an opening paragraph which addresses in rather general terms the author, his or her works or the audience that he or she was addressing. Candidates should just answer the question.

It was evident that Centres had used past questions when training their candidates, and detailed knowledge was shown in those areas. Candidates should select the question they choose to answer carefully, though, and ensure that their material is relevant. Sometimes the material was tailored efficiently and relevantly to this session's questions, but at other times, there were resounding echoes of previous years' questions.

The language used was on the whole appropriate but some essays contained colloquialisms. The best responses were those that were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although it is helpful if these are crossed through to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1**

Molière: *L'Avare*

- (a) (i) Candidates had no difficulty explaining Valère's circumstances at the beginning of the play. Some responses were more detailed than others, but most mentioned that Valère had humbled himself to take up service in Harpagon's household in order to be near Élise, his beloved, while biding his time to seek the miser's blessing on their marriage.

The two most often cited examples of Valère's theories put into practice in (ii) were:

- Act 1, scene 5, in which he spontaneously, wholeheartedly agreed with Harpagon, before he understood the situation – he wanted to gain favour with his master. Upon discovering that he was inadvertently agreeing that Élise should marry Seigneur Anselme, Valère changed tack: Harpagon must be right, but Élise was not entirely wrong and deserved time 'pour voir si son inclination pourra s'accommoder'; and
- Act 3, scene 1, in which Valère commiserated with Harpagon that it was impertinent to ask for money (to buy food for dinner), thus antagonising maître Jacques.

- (iii) Candidates did not hesitate to agree with Valère's words at the end of the extract, 'La sincérité souffre ... mais, quand on a besoin des hommes, il faut bien s'ajuster à eux, et, puisqu'on ne saurait les gagner que par là, ce n'est pas la faute de ceux qui flattent, mais de ceux qui veulent être flattés'. Those answering this question sympathised unreservedly with Valère and accepted his denial of fault in sacrificing sincerity to flatter Harpagon as the only way of 'getting him on side'.

- (b) **Question (b)** was probably more challenging than (a), so perhaps it was surprising that responses outnumbered those to the passage-based question by two to one.

Although opportunities for discussion were not fully exploited, some candidates were thoughtful enough to point out that Harpagon could wield his power to threaten the well-being of others, but was also vulnerable to them because they knew his avarice and that he was susceptible to give in for financial gain, such as when he relinquished his aspirations to marry in order to regain his money, when Seigneur Anselme arrived prepared to pay the entire wedding bill.

It was not always so pertinently linked to the question, but some candidates enjoyed recalling Harpagon's helplessness as he watched Cléante give away his diamond ring and was not able to do anything about it, or as he discovered that his money had been stolen.

#### **Question 2**

Guy de Maupassant: *Bel-Ami*

- (a) (i) Candidates seemed to find it easy to express Du Roy's general anger that other people seemed to have an easier and more prosperous life than he did. Fewer answers were more thoughtful about the 'envious' aspect of the question. The question did not specify that responses had to be limited to the extract, but even without referring to the novel as a whole, the following points could be gleaned from the passage. Du Roy was envious of:

- the Walters, lines 1–2;
- Madeleine, line 2, although it is stated that she had been deceived by Laroche, so was undeserving of this judgement;
- Laroche, lines 3–10. Although 'Laroche avait le succès modeste' and 'ne laissait pas deviner qu'il était gonflé d'or', 'Du Roy le sentait', lines 7–8.

- (ii) Basic answers used the material in lines 11–15, but more qualified responses recalled that, until his death, le comte de Vaudrec had dined regularly with Madeleine, on the same two days each week, and Laroche had slipped into this ‘vacancy’. Not only did he speak ‘aux domestiques ainsi qu’aurait fait un second maître’ (lines 12–13), but, ‘Georges lui servait de secrétaire, d’agent, de porte-plume, et ... il écrivait sous sa dictée’ (lines 5–6). It was in mentioning Du Roy’s later exposure of his wife’s adultery with Laroche that candidates really put the answer in context, though.
- (iii) The question used the relatively ‘personal’ phrase, ‘partagez-vous l’opinion...?’, but candidates seemed, understandably, unwilling to be so subjective in their answers as to use the first person, ‘je’, although it would have been equally acceptable. Responses successfully communicated that Du Roy was doing well, that he had gained much more financially than he had started with, and more than he deserved, given his lack of natural ability in journalism and his dependence on Madeleine to write for him.
- (b) Fifty percent more responses to this question were seen than to (a). Occasionally candidates gave a history of Du Roy and his women without much reference to the question, but it was pleasing to see some thoughtful responses considering the varying circumstances of the different women. Generally the older women were seen as less innocent and more responsible for their own actions and exploitation, Suzanne was identified as the most innocent, and opinions were mixed with regard to Rachel.

### Question 3

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Les Mouches*

- (a) There were only half the number of answers to **Question (a)** as to **Question (b)**, but it was pleasing to see some thoughtful responses. Candidates were inevitably limited to the material in lines 1–11 of the passage when answering (i), but they always found plenty to comment on in the lively scene.

Part (ii) was probably found most challenging overall. A comparison of lines 14–16 with lines 22–25 was one possible approach, particularly lines 15–16, ‘il [Égisthe] n’avait pas le courage de ses actes’, and the implication that Oreste was at variance with that. Candidates did not restrict themselves to quoting the extract, however, so some referred to Oreste’s insistence as a response to the crowd’s opposition, in which he highlighted that they had not opposed Égisthe fifteen years earlier. Others explained it as Oreste’s reaction to the people’s lack of recognition that he considered himself to be in a stronger position than Égisthe had been.

- (iii) invited candidates to give their opinion of Oreste’s statement, ‘c’est pour vous que j’ai tué’. The majority view was that Oreste had been accomplishing something for himself rather than for the people, but this might have been more successfully offset by a greater emphasis on his desire to liberate them as he himself grasped freedom, admitting that they did not accept that they could be liberated or that it would be advantageous to be free.
- (b) On the whole, responses gave a thorough picture of the controlling power and fear-inducing oppression of Jupiter and Égisthe in the play. More thoughtful answers pointed out that it was the people’s perceptions that were really key as their own reluctance to grasp their freedom was ultimately the most paralysing aspect of the imposed order. Oreste and Électre’s experiences were used to illustrate discussions successfully, particularly that Oreste was free and impervious to ‘l’ordre imposé’, and Jupiter and Égisthe’s weariness in maintaining this order was mentioned.

Candidates sometimes began, ‘l’ordre imposé est une farce’, but this did not always prove successful as ‘farce’ could become too prominent, and other possible impressions given by ‘l’ordre imposé’, such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph, could be neglected.

#### Question 4

Marguerite Duras: *Moderato Cantabile*

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

#### Question 5

André Gide: *Les Caves du Vatican*

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

#### Question 6

Albert Camus: *Les Justes*

- (a) Almost without exception, candidates could establish the contrast between the two men, observing that their differences were not so significant at the end of the play. It was typically pointed out that all that Stepan had meant was that Kaliayev was a poet, loved life and beauty, that he had 'un sens d'humanité' or 'peace of mind' associated with not harming the children, and that the revolutionary ideals were as though of religious significance to him. It was certainly helpful when 'l'âme religieuse' was 'defined', even if not all definitions ('l'âme religieuse' improves the lives of others, or believes that life is sacred and must be protected) were convincing, but where candidates referred to 'l'âme religieuse' and the Grand Duchess, the essays were usually developed into fuller responses to the question.
- (b) The roles of various characters in interpreting the events of the play were appropriately exploited by candidates. There were some well-constructed answers charting Dora's unwavering commitment to the cause, but nevertheless the poignant struggle of her love for Kaliayev amid their agreement that they must sacrifice their love for the cause was also sensitively conveyed. After his death by hanging for the death of the Grand Duke, Dora had already lost everything and aspired to be next to take action so that she could be 'reunited' with Kaliayev: 'Tout sera plus facile maintenant'.

#### Question 7

Simone de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

- (a) There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- (b) Some good answers to this question were seen. Candidates could readily draw on a wide range of material from the novel, so, although they needed to resist the temptation simply to retell the story, on the whole they were able to analyse Laurence's attitude to her mother in some detail as well as comparing the probably rather better relationship with her father, also touching upon the unexpected reconciliation that took place between them at the end.

**Question 8**

Romain Gary: *La Vie devant soi*

- (a) Candidates pointed out that Momo sometimes perceived 'les lois de la nature' as beneficial, and his dreams of lionesses defending him as they defended their young was a source of strength to him. They were also great levellers – the Frenchman from the flat downstairs grew old, declined and died just like the elderly people around Momo whom he loved, such as Madame Rosa, although allowing euthanasia could have overcome some of the threat posed by 'les lois de la nature'. Momo admired Madame Lola for resisting masculinity, but children could still not be borne since 'les lois de la nature' ultimately triumphed.
- (b) There were twice as many answers to (b). Candidates typically began with comments about how well portrayed the prostitutes were in the novel. Romain Gary depicted people, including prostitutes, who were driven to extremes by their financial poverty, yet who also acted generously towards each other, not only through purchases made but also with acts of friendship and goodwill.

The transvestite prostitute, Madame Lola, did not fit neatly into traditional categories, but showed great kindness to Madame Rosa's household during the former prostitute's illness. Earlier Madame Rosa had helped the police with their enquiries in defence of Madame Lola.

When Momo's father visited, he explained his long silence as owing to a prison sentence, revealing that he had murdered Momo's prostitute mother, Aïcha. Madame Rosa, for her own reasons, did not want to let Momo go with him, so claimed, among other lies, that she had raised his son as a Jew. He dropped dead from the shock, which might also have been construed as one of natural justice's own defences of prostitutes.