

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/11

Reading

Key messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked and in **Section 2**, it is important to keep to the recommended number of characters.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to show that they can:

- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use language and register that is appropriate to audience and context.

General Comments

Candidates performed really well on this paper again this year, with almost all candidates demonstrating their mastery of the Chinese language as a communication tool. The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**.

Section 2 requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (ii) Candidates are clearly directed in this question to answer from the first two sentences of the paragraph. Where candidates did not find the correct answer for this part of the question, this was most commonly because they gave answers found in a later section of the reading passage. Candidates are reminded of the need to read and follow the instructions carefully.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (c) The majority of candidates managed to identify, “权衡利弊 / 为了公司的大局”. In order to gain the full 2 marks, candidates also needed to mention, “作者和同事有矛盾”, which was not managed by many.

- (d) Many candidates answered this question correctly.
- (e) (i) Candidates were asked to explain the term, “仁君”. Both the original meaning of this term and the meaning in the context of the passage were accepted.
 - (ii) Many candidates answered this question well.
- (f) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (g) There were two marks available for this question. Most candidates managed to say “最好是一笑置之”, but only a few also included, “当时是为了发泄” or “不是最好的办”.
- (h) (i) This question was found to be challenging by many, and only the stronger candidates managed to give the answers “因为是‘兽类’所以不用给凤凰贺寿” and “因为是‘鸟类’所以不用给麒麟贺寿”.
 - (ii) Almost every candidate answered this question correctly.
- (i) There were three marks available for this question. Many candidates answered this question well, but where candidates did not gain all three marks, this was often because they needed to include, “嫉妒者也需要生存” in their answer as well.

It is important that candidates read both the reading passage and questions carefully to ensure that all relevant details are included in their answer.

Question 2

In **Question 2** candidates are required to draw information from both passages and to use this information to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper. Many candidates managed to identify the key points successfully and showed that they had the linguistic ability to answer this question well. Candidates should be reminded that their answers must be drawn from the points made in the reading passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience; marks are only awarded for relevant points which have been found in the passages.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary. Excessive elaborations are discouraged, e.g. candidates were not expected to write at length on philosophical matters such as how jealousy makes a person ‘evil’. Examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Improvements could be made by spending a short amount of time planning the summary before beginning writing. This helps to ensure that ideas are well grouped and that there is good linkage between paragraphs.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/12
Reading

Key messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked and in **Section 2**, it is important to keep to the recommended number of characters.

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- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
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General Comments

Candidates performed really well on this paper again this year, with almost all candidates demonstrating their mastery of the Chinese language as a communication tool. The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**.

Section 2 requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (ii) Candidates are clearly directed in this question to answer from the first two sentences of the paragraph. Where candidates did not find the correct answer for this part of the question, this was most commonly because they gave answers found in a later section of the reading passage. Candidates are reminded of the need to read and follow the instructions carefully.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (c) The majority of candidates managed to identify, “权衡利弊 / 为了公司的大局”. In order to gain the full 2 marks, candidates also needed to mention, “作者和同事有矛盾”, which was not managed by many.

- (d) Many candidates answered this question correctly.
- (e) (i) Candidates were asked to explain the term, “仁君”. Both the original meaning of this term and the meaning in the context of the passage were accepted.
 - (ii) Many candidates answered this question well.
- (f) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (g) There were two marks available for this question. Most candidates managed to say “最好是一笑置之”, but only a few also included, “当时是为了发泄” or “不是最好的办”.
- (h) (i) This question was found to be challenging by many, and only the stronger candidates managed to give the answers “因为是‘兽类’所以不用给凤凰贺寿” and “因为是‘鸟类’所以不用给麒麟贺寿”.
 - (ii) Almost every candidate answered this question correctly.
- (i) There were three marks available for this question. Many candidates answered this question well, but where candidates did not gain all three marks, this was often because they needed to include, “嫉妒者也需要生存” in their answer as well.

It is important that candidates read both the reading passage and questions carefully to ensure that all relevant details are included in their answer.

Question 2

In **Question 2** candidates are required to draw information from both passages and to use this information to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper. Many candidates managed to identify the key points successfully and showed that they had the linguistic ability to answer this question well. Candidates should be reminded that their answers must be drawn from the points made in the reading passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience; marks are only awarded for relevant points which have been found in the passages.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary. Excessive elaborations are discouraged, e.g. candidates were not expected to write at length on philosophical matters such as how jealousy makes a person ‘evil’. Examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Improvements could be made by spending a short amount of time planning the summary before beginning writing. This helps to ensure that ideas are well grouped and that there is good linkage between paragraphs.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/13
Reading

Key messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked and in **Section 2**, it is important to keep to the recommended number of characters.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to show that they can:

- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use language and register that is appropriate to audience and context.

General Comments

Candidates performed really well on this paper again this year, with almost all candidates demonstrating their ability to understand the reading passages in detail. The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**.

Section 2 requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question well, and understood that specific examples from the passage were required. Weaker candidates gave the simple response, “根据作者回忆，五岁时，正是中国历史上一个艰难的岁月，可以看出当时的生活很艰苦。”， which could not be credited.
- (b) Most candidates answered these questions well. A number of candidates could not tell the difference between 辛苦 / 劳作 and 艰难 / 艰苦。快乐 is different from 乐观。
- (c)-(d) Most candidates answered these questions well.
- (e) This question required candidates to use the information given in paragraph four (about the situation of one family) to extrapolate what life may have been like in China at that time. Candidates needed to use what was written in the reading passage to explain and collate the implicit meanings and attitudes. Some candidates found this challenging, and merely copied

sentences from the passage or wrote about personal issues encountered by the family, rather than extending this to the general situation in China, giving responses such as “混乱” and “诬陷”. Others answered from outside the information given in the passage, using their own general knowledge, which could not be credited. It is important that candidates read both the passage and questions carefully to ensure that all relevant details are included in their answer.

- (f) Candidates needed to analyse the reason and give an explanation for two reasons to gain two marks.
- (g) Most candidates answered this question well. However, few candidates did not seem to understand “阎王爷”.
- (h)-(i) Most candidates answered these questions well.

Section 2

Question 2

In **Question 2** candidates are required to draw information from both passages and to use this information to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two texts carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary. These points should then be used to construct an answer around the two bullet points given in the question. Examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

Most candidates showed that they had the linguistic ability to answer this question well, but candidates need to understand that their answers must be drawn from the key points made in the passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience. Excessive elaborations are discouraged, e.g. candidates were not expected to write at length on philosophical matters such as how to overcome ‘the difficulties’.

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Improvements could be made by spending a short amount of time planning the summary before beginning writing. This helps to ensure that ideas are well grouped and that there is good linkage between paragraphs.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/21

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a descriptive or narrative piece of writing, depending on the topic chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner and with complexity in an argumentative piece
- describe a person, an object, a scene, or an image in an effective manner and with sufficient details in a descriptive piece
- tell a story of an event or an incident, be it real or imagined, with complexity, tension and climax in a narrative piece
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Candidates should be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, a small number of candidates answered two questions rather than one. It was evident this year that candidates managed their time well and completed their essay in the given time.

Content & Structure

Content: Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. In particular, a small number of candidates chose **Question 7** 透过窗户, 我看到..... and produced very vivid descriptions that are touching and effective, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing arguments when they felt very strongly about a topic, as in the cases of **Question 1** about honesty and **Question 3** which asked if university was the only way to success. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant and convincing examples. Most candidates were able to consider the questions from both sides.

For some candidates, relevance is an area that needs more attention. For example, **Question 5** 一处我最熟悉的地方 expected candidates to write a descriptive piece about a place he or she was most familiar with. In one instance, the candidate wrote about his family members, mostly focusing on his dog, without bringing everything back to his home space.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short, with two or three very short paragraphs of less than 100 characters in total. When the answers are excessively short, there is not enough material to show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a person, an object or event.

Style & Accuracy

Style: A number of examples of sophisticated pieces of writing were seen, with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas.

While most candidates produced writing with sufficient clarity, a few had less clear thinking or logic in their writing so the result sometimes became confused. For example: 中国毛笔艺术家王羲之不分日夜坚持练习毛笔字, 就算练了八个水缸的水也没有停止, 最终使得我们中国艺术文化传承后代。Another such example is: ……因为坚持, 因为勤奋, 我们才能收获初春甘甜的雨露, 打湿刚苏醒的小苗。Such candidates should try to avoid run-on sentences by expressing one idea in each sentence.

The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding repetition of content and ideas, and trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

The best candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effectively. Weaker candidates tended to use expressions which were too simple and plain or they struggled in their attempts to use sophisticated expressions appropriately, for example, 一眨眼的工夫, 平安(小乌龟的名字)已经在我家两年有余, 长得膘肥体壮的。In this case, 膘肥体壮 clearly cannot be used to describe a little tortoise.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of Chinese grammar and a wide range of vocabulary.

The word order of some candidates' writing showed significant interference from English. For example, 我的父亲决定去年暑假带我去河南乡下的老家。(meaning "my father decided last year that he would take me to our hometown in the countryside in Henan") which is the wrong word order for Chinese. It should read 我的父亲去年决定暑假带我去河南乡下的老家。

Some candidates' use of Chinese structure also showed interference from English grammar. For example, 我对香港十分之熟悉和有着浓厚的感情。Unlike the English "and", the Chinese "和" is not used to link clauses or verbal phrases. "和" should be replaced with "而且" in this case.

Punctuation was used very well this year with hardly any errors.

The incorrect use of characters can be reduced in some cases with more careful checking of work. Some errors included either the wrong radical, e.g. 跟警察对待 (should be 对峙) ; 疾正错误 (should be 纠正) ; 倍养 (should be 培养) ; 历史 (should be 历史) ; or confused homophones, e.g. 豪無利益 (should be 毫無) ; 朋友被掉去上海公司 (should be 调去) ; 没来的急脱大衣 (should be 没来得及) .The mis-use of characters that have the same pronunciation but different meaning remains the largest area of inaccuracy in this paper.

Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

Candidates are also reminded to follow the convention and be consistent in writing down figures. For example: 我家有3房二厅。In this case, 三房两厅 would be more commonly used.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on the importance of honesty. This was a popular choice. Stronger essays managed to illustrate how honesty leads to success, giving examples of their own experience or using historical figures as examples. Weaker answers were characterised by under-developed and repetitive arguments.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on diligence. Relatively few candidates chose this question but the answers were competent and the arguments convincing. Stronger candidates also quoted famous sayings and used them effectively.

Question 3

This question required candidates to discuss if going to university is the only way to succeed in life. This is a topic that candidates clearly felt very strongly about and most of them were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Weaker candidates tended to be repetitive and their argument lacked the progression of ideas.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to discuss if there was such a thing as perfection. This was not answered by many, but the few candidates who chose this question provided a satisfactory answer that was coherent and logical.

Section 2

Question 5

This was a popular choice, and produced a variety of responses. Candidates were expected to write about somewhere that they were very familiar with. Many candidates wrote about their home town, their school or their grandparents' house. Some answers were original and convincing with details and complexity. Weaker answers were characterised by being simple and highly predictable.

Question 6

Candidates were expected to write about the morning sunlight. Only a small number of candidates chose this question but the standard was high. The best candidates produced beautiful images with lots of details and human interest.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to write about their first experience of performing on stage. This was a very popular question, and produced a wide variety in the quality of answers. At the top end, the answers were very interesting, touching with vivid details leading to a climax. The reader was made to feel the anxiety before he/she went on stage and the joy of overcoming the stage fright.

At the weaker end, the answers tended to be flat and straightforward without the build-up of tension and such answers used very simple language and limited ideas.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to imagine that they were a scientist. A few candidates chose this question and produced clear and imaginative answers, usually about solving some of the problems the world currently faces.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/22

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a descriptive or narrative piece of writing, depending on the topic chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner and with complexity in an argumentative piece
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- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Candidates should be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, a small number of candidates answered two questions rather than one. It was evident this year that candidates managed their time well and completed their essay in the given time.

Content & Structure

Content: Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. In particular, a small number of candidates chose **Question 7** 透过窗户, 我看到..... and produced very vivid descriptions that are touching and effective, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing arguments when they felt very strongly about a topic, as in the cases of **Question 1** about honesty and **Question 3** which asked if university was the only way to success. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant and convincing examples. Most candidates were able to consider the questions from both sides.

For some candidates, relevance is an area that needs more attention. For example, **Question 5** 一处我最熟悉的地方 expected candidates to write a descriptive piece about a place he or she was most familiar with. In one instance, the candidate wrote about his family members, mostly focusing on his dog, without bringing everything back to his home space.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short, with two or three very short paragraphs of less than 100 characters in total. When the answers are excessively short, there is not enough material to show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a person, an object or event.

Style & Accuracy

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The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding repetition of content and ideas, and trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

The best candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effectively. Weaker candidates tended to use expressions which were too simple and plain or they struggled in their attempts to use sophisticated expressions appropriately, for example, 一眨眼的工夫, 平安(小乌龟的名字)已经在我家两年有余, 长得膘肥体壮的。In this case, 膘肥体壮 clearly cannot be used to describe a little tortoise.

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Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

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Comments on specific questions

Section 1

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Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on diligence. Relatively few candidates chose this question but the answers were competent and the arguments convincing. Stronger candidates also quoted famous sayings and used them effectively.

Question 3

This question required candidates to discuss if going to university is the only way to succeed in life. This is a topic that candidates clearly felt very strongly about and most of them were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Weaker candidates tended to be repetitive and their argument lacked the progression of ideas.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to discuss if there was such a thing as perfection. This was not answered by many, but the few candidates who chose this question provided a satisfactory answer that was coherent and logical.

Section 2

Question 5

This was a popular choice, and produced a variety of responses. Candidates were expected to write about somewhere that they were very familiar with. Many candidates wrote about their home town, their school or their grandparents' house. Some answers were original and convincing with details and complexity. Weaker answers were characterised by being simple and highly predictable.

Question 6

Candidates were expected to write about the morning sunlight. Only a small number of candidates chose this question but the standard was high. The best candidates produced beautiful images with lots of details and human interest.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to write about their first experience of performing on stage. This was a very popular question, and produced a wide variety in the quality of answers. At the top end, the answers were very interesting, touching with vivid details leading to a climax. The reader was made to feel the anxiety before he/she went on stage and the joy of overcoming the stage fright.

At the weaker end, the answers tended to be flat and straightforward without the build-up of tension and such answers used very simple language and limited ideas.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to imagine that they were a scientist. A few candidates chose this question and produced clear and imaginative answers, usually about solving some of the problems the world currently faces.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/23

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a descriptive or narrative piece of writing, depending on the topic chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner and with complexity in an argumentative piece
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- tell a story of an event or an incident, be it real or imagined, with complexity, tension and climax in a narrative piece
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

Content & Structure

Content: The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. Although relatively few chose **Question 1** 师傅领进门，修行在个人， the work produced was of a good standard, reflecting a firm grasp of argumentative writing on the part of these candidates.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing arguments when they felt very strongly about the topic, as in the case of **Question 3** about the goods or evils of money, and **Question 2** about the relationship between competition and progress. Most candidates were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant examples.

Some weaker candidates opted for descriptive or narrative writing, perhaps perceiving **Question 5** 我的偶像 and **Question 6** 乡村一日 as being easier options. However, such questions needed to be handled well to score highly, as complexity, originality and detail were required, and were achieved by some candidates. The work of weaker candidates answering these questions was characterised by flat story lines full of clichés with little detail and no complexity.

Some candidates could improve their essays by ensuring that they produce work that is highly relevant to the given essay title. For example, in **Question 6** 乡村一日 one candidate spent a large proportion of their essay describing the scenery seen at dusk, instead of talking about the whole day or at least the best part of a day.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately.

Most essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short. In one extreme case, the candidate only wrote only one sentence, which could not address

the question in full. When answers are excessively short, there is not enough material to show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a person, an object or event. In contrast, there were also a few cases where candidates had written far too much, including material that was irrelevant to the question. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

While most candidates were able to structure their writing appropriately, occasionally some candidates did not present their ideas in suitable paragraphs. Instead they used a very short opening and closing paragraph, with everything else in the middle paragraph.

Style & Accuracy

Style: There was an increase this year in the number of examples of sophisticated pieces of writing, with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas.

The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding clichés, repetition of content and ideas, and by trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated the linguistic competency of a first language user of Chinese with a good grasp of Chinese grammar and a wide range of vocabulary.

The strongest candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effectively. Others had difficulty in this area and used sophisticated words inappropriately, for example, “只要有恆心，鐵柱磨成針”，這一句家喻戶曉、膾炙人口的俗語想必大家都略聞一二。In this case, 略聞一二 contradicts the earlier two phrases of 家喻戶曉、膾炙人口。In another example: 爸爸妈妈说我今年的圣诞礼物会比较特别。我就不禁想会是什么礼物：玩具车？雪人？我简直是无从入手。The wrongly used 无从入手 shows the candidate has not really grasped the meaning of the phrase.

Another area for improvement is in the clarity of thought, logic and expression. For example, (in a description of Mother) 当我做错了什么事，她一定会纠正你的错误, there is a mis-match between the Mother correcting “you” when it is “me” who makes mistakes. In another case, 虽然平时总是羞涩的将父爱与对他的感激藏在心底，我却能在这时大声的告诉别人：“我的偶像是我的父亲”。父爱 should not be confused with 我对父亲的爱。

Punctuation occasionally presented a problem for some candidates. Improvements could be made with the use of commas and full stops; these cannot be used at the beginning of a line.

The incorrect use of characters remains an area where improvements could be made. These could be reduced in some cases with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homonyms). For example, 体谅 (not 量); 充分 (not 份); 幻想 (not 幼); 目标 (not 表).

Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

Candidates should also be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, a small number of candidates answered two questions rather than one. It was also evident this year that candidates managed their time well and completed their essay in the given time.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write about their views on the statement that while having a good teacher is important at the beginning of one’s learning, success relies on the effort of the individual. This was not answered by many, but most who attempted it did well. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts of either their own experience or of famous people. They also used counter arguments effectively.

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education
0509 First Language Chinese June 2014
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss the link between competition and progress. This was a popular question and the overall standard was good. Many candidates were able to develop the topic with some good examples. Some candidates also used examples to show how vicious competitions led to failure for all parties.

Question 3

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on money. This proved to be a very popular topic. All candidates produced a very balanced view on the best and the worst money can bring. Some explicitly stated money itself is neutral, it is the way people use money and the means people use to gain money that make the difference. They were able to use examples effectively to support their views. The work of weaker candidates usually contained many irrelevant facts or excessive examples of how money corrupts people and society, without bringing the answer back to the topic.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to write about perseverance being the key to success. Many candidates chose this question. In general, candidates did quite well on this topic by providing strong examples and arguments. Many candidates produced a well-supported view that perseverance in the face of difficulty is crucial to success. Occasionally candidates discussed how being born into a family with power and wealth was the key to success. Such candidates tended to make sweeping generalisations referring to extreme cases reported in the media as the norm, and denying the importance of self-effort.

Section 2

Question 5

This was one of the most popular topics, and most candidates managed the topic well, producing stories or descriptions that were touching and convincing. In this question, the majority of candidates wrote about their parent or grandparent whilst others wrote about a pop group. The weaker answers tended to be too straightforward without sufficient detail.

Question 6

This was also a popular choice and produced a wide range of performance. Candidates were expected to write about a day in the countryside. Stronger candidates produced very vivid descriptions and moving accounts of the day, usually a happy experience with some nostalgia. Weaker answers tended to contain empty and clichéd descriptions of idyllic country life.

Question 7

Candidates were expected to write about an unexpected visitor. Performance was again varied. The best candidates presented highly imaginative and carefully balanced stories with well-managed climaxes. One candidate wrote about a visit by an Extra-Terrestrial, with excellent details and a very moving story line. Weaker answers were characterised by a flat narrative, using very simple language and with limited details, with poor attempt in creating any atmosphere or climax.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write about the most valuable thing in the world. This was another popular question and most candidates produced satisfactory answers. Many wrote about friendship or their mother's love and care for them. Weaker responses contained descriptions and examples that were highly predictable.