
GCSE FRENCH

Unit 2 Reading
Report on the Examination

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Foundation Tier

General

The paper proved slightly more challenging than last year's. This was probably because there were more questions requiring answers in English, but also because a significant number of individual items of vocabulary were not known, despite being tested in previous papers. Some students again lost marks because over-written letters were illegible. There were a few more answers written in French than has been seen previously at this tier.

Question 1

This was a suitably accessible opening question, with a huge majority of students gaining all four marks. Only Part (d) caused problems, as a number of students did not know *montre*.

Question 2

Parts (a) – (c) were well answered in this new question type. In Parts (d) and (e), students often failed to include the moderators *less/fewer* sweets and *more* vegetables. This is a good example of the importance of learning this sort of little but important words. It is a good idea for teachers to compile a list of such words for students to learn, as they occur annually in questions which require precision in responses.

Question 3

All parts were successfully answered.

Question 4

Parts (a) and (d) were answered in line with expectations, with about two-thirds of students gaining both marks. In Part (b), about half of students construed *car* wrongly. Part (c) proved surprisingly inaccessible, *hôtel de ville* being largely unknown, despite appearing in previous papers and, of course, in the vocabulary list in the specification. Only a tiny minority of students gained this mark, the lowest number for any item in the paper.

Question 5

This true/false/not in text question was largely well answered. As in previous years, there was a reluctance to use the question mark option, so that Part (b) was less well answered than most others. Only about half of students knew *meubles*, making Part (d) the most demanding.

Question 6

The majority of students were able to identify special occasions from the definitions provided.

Question 7

This question required answers in English. In many cases it was not clear what message the student intended to convey, and the lack of precision often led to marks not being awarded. In some cases it appeared that students did not understand the meaning of the words positive and negative, leading to the most unlikely responses.

7(a) In both parts students tended to seize upon the word *stupide* to provide their answer. Some gained the first mark for liking to be scared, and the mark scheme generously allowed the mark for shorter answers, such as 'scary' or 'frightening'. The second mark was rarely achieved, largely because of the predilection for 'stupid'.

7(b) A large number of students scored the mark for the negative ‘unrealistic’, although this was also supplied as a positive. Few managed to identify happy endings as the positive.

7(c) Although many students clearly understood the gist of the text, they often failed to phrase their response precisely enough for the mark. For the positive answer they needed to indicate help in learning the foreign language rather than liking to learn, confusing *aide* with *aime*. The difficulty in reading the subtitles, preferably with reference to the lack of time, was better identified, but still proved demanding at this level. Many students wrote about not liking subtitles, which was incorrect.

Question 8

As anticipated, this closing question proved very demanding, as it tested grammar as well as comprehension. Only about a third of students gained the mark in each of the four parts. As this question type is featured regularly, teachers are advised to give students more practice in breaking down the component parts of sentences.

Higher Tier

General

The paper proved slightly more demanding than last year’s. Students performed significantly better on the overlap questions, but many failed to answer questions requiring the use of English precisely enough. Unlike the foundation paper, there were very few answers in English, but over-writing of letters in boxes again sometimes meant no mark could be awarded where the content of the box proved indecipherable. Students need to be encouraged to write alongside the box where they change their mind, as well as crossing out their original answer.

Question 1

This was an overlap question. Responses improved significantly on those at foundation, indicating greater awareness of the grammatical content of the linked sentences. However, parts (b) and (d) still caused problems, with slightly fewer than half of students gaining these marks. Since this question type occurs regularly, teachers are encouraged to provide more practice in class by creating their own versions.

Question 2

Also an overlap question. This question on special occasions proved very accessible, with nearly all students gaining all four marks. Part (c) was marginally less well answered, perhaps because *arbre* was not known by some students.

Question 3

These extra C/D questions were well answered, apart from Part (d). Many students thought that Chantal’s attitude to her grandparents was positive because they did not absorb everything stated, instead seizing upon the fact that they gave her presents and missing that fact that she did not appreciate them.

Question 4

Parts (a) to (c) were very well answered. Parts (d) and (e) required students to recognise that the wording applied to both Léonard and Arnaud. In this sort of question type students are often reluctant to choose the third alternative (see Question 7). Given the clarity of the statements in the text, it was surprising that in part (d) less than half of students identified the good support they had in their work experience.

Question 5

This was another overlap question. A vast majority of students gained one mark for each part, but most failed to gain the second mark. This was either through not understanding the whole text (for example in Part (a) seizing upon the word ‘stupid’) or through not being precise in their English responses. As an example, in Part (c), many students stated ‘learn a language’ as the positive response. The mark scheme insisted on ‘helping’ to learn a language, as in the text. In Part (b), students referred to the ending making you happy, as opposed to happy endings in the film. The negative aspect here was the fact that love stories are unrealistic, or not real, but a small minority of students did not appear to know these words, and concocted words such as ‘unrelateable’. In Part (c), the negative aspect was the lack of time to read subtitles. Examiners accepted that this could be phrased as difficult/hard to read the subtitles, but this is different to not liking subtitles, a frequent imprecise response. The advice to teachers, once again, is to encourage students to consider all the information in the text, rather than building their answer around a word or words that they quickly recognise.

Question 6

Parts (b) and (d) were very well answered. In Parts (a) and (c), it was clear that students grasped what the text was about, but in both cases they appear to have disregarded the word *Non*, which completely changed the thrust of the two texts. In Part (a) in particular, the presence of the word ‘recycling’ in the options led students to give wrong answers. Again, the whole text needs to be taken into account.

Question 7

The general success in answering these questions on a long text was rather unexpected, given the intended level of demand. Many students scored at least five of the seven marks. The exceptions were Parts (d) and especially Part (g). In part (d) the probable problem was not knowing the word *drôle*. In Part (g) the least popular choice was the correct answer, the question mark, although there was no evidence in this section of the text of a positive or negative attitude. As already indicated, the third alternative is often shunned. Many students were unaware of the significance of *on verra*, suggesting an incomplete knowledge of the future tense. Some students may also have been influenced by the exclamation mark into thinking the answer was positive.

Question 8

This cloze test was better answered this year. While some of the answers were more accessible than in previous years this also suggests that teachers are providing more practice in basic grammatical awareness, which is very pleasing. The least well answered was part (a), with answer B often selected, instead of C. Though these two words (*étaient/été*) sound the same, students should be able to distinguish between them in writing. Part (c) was simply very demanding if students did not know *avoir tort*.

Question 9

Too many students failed to gain a single mark on this question. The text was extended and demanding, but not more so than in previous years. Many answers were again unrelated to the text and reflected students’ own experience, or were simply the product of their imagination in regard to the subject content. Consequently the failure to gain marks did not so much depend on imprecise wording, but rather what were sometimes wildly wrong ideas. As intended, this question was a true test for more able students and very demanding for those unlikely to gain A/A* grades.

9(a) Most responses focused on Emma's success, for instance her CDs and television appearances. This did not answer the question, which called for a contrast to her successes. Only a small number of students recognized that she could now go out/go shopping without having to talk to people she does not know. Many students, not understanding *faire les courses*, wrote about lessons or courses.

9(b) Many answers had no justification in the text, rather too many to list here. The correct answer was that Emma's friend had only discovered her husband's true character after two years of marriage. The negative *ne... que* was the key here. The notion that she has not discovered what her husband was like is therefore incorrect.

9(c) Again there were many rather fanciful responses, sometimes loosely connected to the text but romanticised beyond recognition. The simple answer 'like her sister's' was enough to gain the mark. Quite a lot identified the wrong person, for example younger sister/friend, or Caroline without reference to sister.

9(d) This proved very demanding. Very few grasped the notion that she no longer has to believe everything that is promised. Most students tried to construe *s'associer avec mon succès plutôt qu'avec moi*, but failed to understand the significance of the reflexive verb. This led to incorrect answers about being associated with her success, which was close, but not precise enough. Many wrote about her being able to appreciate her family and friends, which is in the text but does not answer the question.

9(e) The correct answer, given in the final sentence, was that Antoine did not have to put up with what Emma had to, the consequences of her fame/success. This proved surprisingly demanding, with many sticking to romanticised notions, for example that they would not have met otherwise. There was also considerable conjecture about who would have won the contest, nowhere supported by the text. *Au premier tour* was poorly understood, leading to answers about touring after the competition. Once again, this shows the folly of using one word recognised in the text to build an answer, rather than taking in the whole text before responding.

Teachers are encouraged to use the advice in this report to help prepare students for this paper in future years.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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