



A-level
French

7652/2 Writing

Report on the Examination

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General introduction

There was ample evidence this year of effective preparation for this paper, and of some very real engagement with, and interest in, the literary works and films that had been studied. Essays in the excellent and good ranges for their critical and analytical response demonstrated the ability to address the specific focus of the chosen questions, to make points succinctly and with clarity, and to justify those points with well-chosen and appropriate evidence and knowledge. Such answers had the additional feature of having been carefully and thoughtfully planned. Less successful responses were those in which the question set had not been dealt with but where some element of the questions had been mistakenly seen as an opportunity to rework a previously written answer.

Students are reminded that it is generally unhelpful to learn and use quotations in their answers and that the use of quotations is not rewarded within the mark scheme. There was evidence again this year of answers that were structured according to a sequence of quotations without any regard for the relevance or appropriateness of these, where the student clearly was making the inclusion of pre-learnt quotations a greater priority than presenting a logically structured response to the questions chosen. There was ample evidence too, sadly, of incorrect and inaccurate quotations, or of single-word quotations lifted from a text or film that really had no value or significance. In the main, quotations detracted from rather than added to the overall quality of a piece of writing and so the message remains that they are best avoided.

The vast majority of students opted to answer on one text and one film. The most popular literary texts were *No et moi*, *L'étranger*, and *Un sac de billes*. *La Haine* remained by far the most popular film, followed by *Au revoir les enfants* and *Entre les murs*. Comments on individual works are given in the following sections.

Section A : Books

Le Tartuffe

Question 1.1.

Many answers here were not very successful in outlining how characters within Orgon's family contribute to building up a picture of the character of Tartuffe prior to his actual appearance on stage. Those that were successful documented very clearly how the audience gains insight into Tartuffe's character and influence from the moment the play opens.

Question 1.2.

This question was more confidently dealt with and many answers demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of how Orgon's infatuation with Tartuffe isolates him from the rest of his family and household, creates hostility between himself and his children, and generally causes conflict.

Candide

Question 2.1.

Students generally showed a good understanding of what motivated Voltaire to write this work and of the philosophical importance of the story as an attack on Optimism. Students had been well prepared in their understanding of the background to the work.

Question 2.2.

This question proved slightly more challenging than the first: while there was good evidence of examples of exaggeration from the story, the purpose of this stylistic device was not always well understood or clearly explained. There were nonetheless some very creditable answers.

Boule de suif et autres contes de la guerre**Question 3.1.**

The question was intended to elicit some detailed knowledge and understanding of Boule de Suif's different companions on the journey and some students successfully delivered such a response. There was, however, in some answers, only a very superficial understanding of the attitude and behaviour of her companions and too much emphasis on Boule de Suif herself.

Question 3.2.

This was well handled by a good number of students. The stories to illustrate the differences between the Prussian soldiers and their officers were thoughtfully chosen and those differences well documented and developed.

L'étranger**Question 4.1.**

This was by far the more popular of the two questions and the most successful answers here dealt very succinctly and coherently with those aspects of Meursault's life and character that justify the view of him as an outsider. This was one question where careful planning really paid off. Answers that were less on target were those in which students focused too much on the philosophy of the Absurd and where background knowledge got in the way of a relevant answer to the specific question.

Question 4.2.

Again this was a more challenging question, but it was well answered by a significant number of those who opted to do it and who showed an appreciation and understanding of the portrayal of the Arab community within the story.

Bonjour Tristesse**Question 5.1.**

Successful responses here addressed the two sets of values represented in the novel and how they related to the quotation in the question. Most answers concluded that Sagan is not necessarily promoting an immoral lifestyle even if some of her characters embrace such a lifestyle.

Question 5.2.

Cécile's treatment of the other female characters in the work was generally well-balanced and addressed her treatment of Elsa and Anne Larsen. This was an opportunity to explore aspects of Cécile's manipulative and self-interested character and many students responded well to this.

Elise ou la vraie vie**Question 6.1.**

There were no responses to this question.

Question 6.2.

This question allowed for some personal interpretation in terms of which injustices from the novel to include in the answer and the main focus was on Elise's relationship with Arezki and the working conditions in the factory.

Un sac de billes

Question 7.1. This was the less popular of the two questions, but many students who opted to answer it made a creditable attempt at dealing with the idea of Joffo's detachment, many arguing that the autobiographical nature of the work and the first-person narrative voice mean he is far from detached.

Question 7.2.

This attracted about ten times more responses than the other question on this work. Those students who kept to the question set provided detailed and well-evidenced points outlining how the boys, at different paces, adapt to their new life, how they develop the ability to fend for themselves in order to survive, how they mature in the course of their journey, how they become independent. This was one question where previous essays were recycled and much was said about the boys having to tell lies and distrust people.

Kiffe kiffe demain**Question 8.1.**

While the best answers here analysed in detail those aspects of community life that could be judged to be positive (families helping each other out, support from social services, community festivities and celebrations) and negative (racism, misogyny, lack of educational opportunities), many did not really get to grips with these aspects and concentrated instead on the positive and negative aspects of Doria's life, overlooking the community aspect.

Question 8.2.

This question was more successfully answered even though far fewer students opted to tackle it. There were some good examples of how the dual meaning of the title of the work signals a development in Doria towards greater maturity and understanding.

Un secret**Question 9.1.**

The best answers here documented very clearly how the Jewish characters in the novel represent and illustrate the difficulties and challenges the Jewish community experienced in Occupied France. Weaker answers, unfortunately, almost overlooked the content of the novel itself and concentrated more generally on the fate of the Jews during World War 2, giving, in a sense, too much background and not enough foreground.

Question 9.2.

This was successfully tackled by many of those who opted to answer the question, and there was clear and detailed understanding of how the narrator's discoveries affect him, his understanding of his past and so of his identity as well as his knowledge of his family and what they endured.

No et moi**Question 10.1.**

About twice as many students opted for this first question than for the second one and there were some excellent and good answers that explored fully the themes of marginalisation and vulnerability, and how they are represented by both No's and Lou's life-experiences. Some students opted to disagree with the quotation in a short introduction, arguing that these themes were not important and then reworking a previous answer about friendship or loneliness. These were not deemed to be relevant answers.

Question 10.2. Again, there were some detailed and relevant insights provided in responses here as to why the friendship develops between Lou and No. There were also some very perceptive insights into how each of the two characters values and benefits from the friendship differently. Surprisingly, there was quite a lot of confusion between the two characters, with No being referred to by a significant number as Lou, and vice versa.

Section B : Films***Les 400 coups*****Question 11.1.**

This first question was answered very impressively by many who tackled it, with a good understanding demonstrated of Truffaut's place and contribution as a *Nouvelle Vague* director and with a good understanding of both the thematic and technical aspects that made this film so innovative when it first came out. The best answers balanced the technical and thematic aspects, but this was by no means a requirement for a response to be judged excellent.

Question 11.2.

Responses here were less successful, with many students opting to narrate the various events and incidents in Antoine's life without really relating these to the focus of the question. The more successful answers cited Antoine's troubled relationships within his family and his negative experience of school life as reasons for his wanting to escape and find freedom. Many here likewise pointed to the ambiguous ending of the film where Antoine is free but also seemingly lost and confused.

Au revoir les enfants**Question 12.1.**

The aim of this question was to elicit an understanding particularly of how the friendship between Julien and Jean develops in the course of the film, what the significant discoveries and experiences are, and how this friendship affects the two boys. Some answers achieved what was intended, but others just took this question to be the opportunity to write about the two characters with little regard for the relationship between them.

Question 12.2.

There were some excellent responses here that documented very clearly and with plenty of evidence those aspects of the film that made it a realistic work. Again, students used this question to demonstrate both thematic and technical aspects, the latter concentrating on how Malle recreates the atmosphere of Occupied France and its trials and tribulations.

La Haine**Question 13.1.**

Only about one fifth of those who studied this film opted for this first question and, while there were some excellent and good answers that linked the presentation of the film in black and white to themes of deprivation, racism, lack of hope and aspiration, for example, there were many responses where the question was not addressed and where students simply wrote everything they knew about the film. Essays on this film would be more successful if they were planned to address the specific focus of the question and if knowledge was targeted at this.

Question 13.2.

Responses here were more successful: many students engaged well with this question and presented examples of scenes where viewing the film is challenging and difficult, and it was clear that this was a genuinely personal reaction to the violent and aggressive content. Likewise, there was an appreciation that this is not gratuitous violence and aggression and an understanding of the director's intentions.

L'auberge espagnole**Question 14.1.**

The reference points in this question (Xavier's arrival in and departure from Barcelona) prompted many to narrate the events and incidents throughout his year in Spain without linking this to any development or change in Xavier's attitudes and outlook on life. The more successful responses documented how Xavier changes through his growing familiarity with the characters he encounters.

Question 14.2.

Only a very small number opted for this question. The focus was again on the narration of the separation, the reunion in Barcelona, the subsequent breaking-up of the relationship, and the short reunion in Paris rather than on the effects of the separation in the first place. The question was designed to elicit an understanding of how one person in the relationship, Xavier, changes while the other, Martine, remains static.

Un long dimanche de fiançailles**Question 15.1.**

Generally, this question prompted some high-quality responses, with students showing a detailed understanding of Jeunet's treatment of life in the trenches. There was reference to the characters and the fate of the condemned soldiers, obviously, but also to technical aspects that conveyed the horror of life in the trenches, and the butchery of the war.

Question 15.2.

Again this was well-answered generally with detailed and well-documented contrasts between the two female characters and, again, a genuinely personal appraisal of their different roles. There was clearly sympathy, and even a certain degree of admiration, for both Tina and Mathilde.

Entre les murs**Question 16.1.**

Fewer opted for this question than for the second one. Monsieur Marin's role as a teacher prompted a range of reactions and opinions and the general view was that he does have a somewhat confused idea

about his role. His lack of discipline and control was cited by many but there was also an appreciation of the difficult context in which he is working.

Question 16.2. The main feature of answers to this question – and a rather disappointing one – was that, in terms of the problems the students face in the film, most answers did not look beyond the school context and so the problems were concentrated exclusively on relationships and behaviours within the classroom rather than on the wider social environment and issues.

Assessment Objective 3

In most cases, knowledge of language and range of vocabulary enabled responses to be understood, but concentrating on some priority language points would improve the overall quality of language, and so the mark for AO3, and the overall quality of the essay. Such points would include:

Knowledge of subject pronouns relevant to the works. There were many instances where Lou and No, or Doria and her mother, or Tina and Mathilde, or indeed any combination of female characters were referred to as *ils*.

Similarly the correct use of direct and indirect object pronouns

The correct use of possessive adjectives, linking this again to characters so that accurate distinctions are made between *son, sa, ses*, and *leur, leurs*

Not using incorrect shortened forms of possessive adjectives (*s'* before a vowel)

Understanding the differences and so sorting out confusion between *et / est* and *ces / c'est*

Concentrating on accurate verb formations, especially in the Present Tense

Targeting key Irregular verbs in the Present Tense

Getting the names of characters right

Related to all of this, an appeal to address poor handwriting and the excessive use of asterisks linking something mid-paragraph to an additional point at the end of the essay, which can be difficult for examiners to mark. Essay planning would significantly reduce the need for crossings out and asterisked after-thoughts.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.