



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
FRENCH
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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FRENCH
General Certificate of Education (New)
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AS UNIT 1: SPEAKING

General Comments

All candidates are required to undertake an oral test of approximate 15 minutes' duration with an external examiner. The test consists of two tasks which have different requirements. The "argument" task requires candidates to defend a viewpoint on a topic relating to French or a francophone country or community. Half of the marks for this task are awarded for AO4 "knowledge of the country/community". The second task contains a text (of approximately 50 words) and three starter questions on the topic being discussed. Understanding the text is an important part of this text (AO2). Both tasks evaluate candidates' ability to interact with the examiner orally (AO1) and the quality of their language (AO3).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Card A The "argument" card (White card)

AO1

Candidates were often very willing to engage with the examiners in defending their chosen viewpoint. Many had the language to concede points made. Many, indeed, enjoyed disagreeing with the examiner but there was a tendency to state all of their argument in one mini-monologue at the beginning of the "argument". This meant that they had little to add. This sometimes meant that examiners were obliged to ask the candidates questions. In an argument, examiners prefer to conduct the test by making statements which can then be rebutted by the candidates. Some candidates needed to be prompted to continue, with the examiner providing information points favouring the candidate's argument as well as his or her own. The ablest candidates, on the other hand, were able to challenge and question the examiner.

AO3

The ablest candidates' language was grammatically very correct. These candidates handled the language confidently and used a wide variety of structures and a breadth of vocabulary. Their pronunciation was often good. The weakest candidates' quality of language was marred by important grammatical mistakes, a lack of vocabulary and structures to maintain an argument, and poor pronunciation.

AO4

As half the marks for the argument task were awarded for "knowledge of France/a francophone country or community", it was often disappointing that candidates lacked the detailed, sustained knowledge and understanding of France/a francophone country which led to a mark in the top band. Candidates sometimes knew one or two facts or could list one or two examples but could not explain these any further. It is often more difficult to show relevant francophone justifications for certain viewpoints chosen.

Card B The “discussion” card (Green card)

AO1

This task is more familiar, as the candidate generally responds to examiner questions, though the ablest showed some initiative and were able to take a lead. There was a tendency to answer the three set questions at length. This limited interaction. Quite long answers are acceptable when candidates introduce an evaluation of the text.

AO2

Although most candidates were aware that they had to refer to the content of the reading passage, many did not explain in detail what the text said, even when prompted to do so, and could not interpret the implications of the text for the topic under discussion.

AO4 The specification is quite clear that discussions must relate to France or a French-speaking country/community. The starter questions specifically related the questions to France or a French-speaking country. Candidates needed suitable knowledge and a good understanding of the themes included under the heading “Being a young person in French-speaking society” to contribute well to the discussion. There was a danger of discussions about families, friendship, illegal drugs and youth culture becoming “generic” rather than specific to France/a francophone country. In many of the better discussions, suitable starter references were made in the texts themselves. Candidates needed to be aware that the texts themselves often gave details which would have helped with the discussion.

Summary of key points

- Centres need to ensure that candidates have detailed knowledge relating to France or a French-speaking society during the argument-based task on the general theme of “Understanding the French-speaking world” as half of the marks are awarded for this. Candidates also need to ensure that they refer continuously to the topic as it relates to France or a French-speaking country in the discussion task.
- Candidates need to have the necessary language skills to deal with two different kinds of tasks - the argument and the discussion.
- Candidates need to be able to think “on their feet”, and not be too dependent on what they have noted previously in the preparation room as they might not be answering the questions asked but what they think they have been asked.
- The specification requires the candidates to make obvious and detailed reference to the text in the discussion task.

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AS UNIT 2: LISTENING, READING, TRANSLATION AND CRITICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

General Comments

- Series 2019 of this exam has been well received by candidates
- Candidates completed all questions within the time set showing a high attempt level
- Unit 2 combined both accessibility and challenge and catered for a wide range of ability
- Candidates have shown greater skills and better preparation
- Centres have responded to advice from previous series

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A - Listening

Q.1 Multiple Choice

Most candidates coped well with this task. No active use of French was required. The challenges were as follows:

- (a) Some candidates failed to convert *une heure* into *soixantes minutes*. Some candidates did not know the meaning of *boulot*.

Q.4 Idiomatic phrase *à partir de* caused an issue for some candidates.

Q.5 (c) A number of candidates indicated (c) as the answer making the homework last 18 hours.

Q.6 Q.7 Q.8 Answered correctly by most candidates.

Q.2 True or False

This question proved accessible to most candidates, however there was an element of challenge. In addition to choosing wrong answers, the usual reason for an incorrect answer was either French that did not convey the meaning, or an answer which was not precise enough:

- (a) Some candidates did not make the connection between *Haïti* and *haïtien*
- (b) Candidates scored well here as a number of answers were acceptable: *Canada/ Quebec/Moréal* (any phonetic spelling thereof). *Il est plus nationality* was not credited.
- (c) A number of candidates gained a mark for indicating that Creole is/remains/should continue to be important.

- (e) *Antilles* proved a challenge for a number of candidates.
- (f)(g) Proved challenging as the correct answer required a correction. A number of candidates just rendered what they heard word for word without discrimination. A number of candidates wrote the word *difficulte* for *difficile*. This was not credited.
- (j) *Écrire* proved a challenge to spell for a number of candidates.

A few candidates were able to manipulate the statements provided to formulate their own answers. A number of errors hampered clarity and failed to communicate the answers required. The challenge rests in using the given statement to construct a response to correct the incorrect statement. Some progress has been made, but there is still some work to be done.

Section B - Reading

Q.3 Summary

High level of accessibility and facility.
 Many candidates gained full or nearly full marks on this task. Candidates needed to pay close attention to the text in order to select the most appropriate answer. Statement 5 proved challenging as a few candidates stumbled on the verb *emprunter*.

Q.4 Gap Fill

Generally well done by most candidates.
 Some candidates confused meanings of the following words:
 (1) *pays/village*
 (3) *commence/construis*
 (5) *mourir/mordre/tuer*

Section C - Translation

Q.5 This is traditionally the most challenging task. Candidates did not take sufficient care when translating, although standards seem to be improving. The most common errors were:

- parts of sentences were missed out
- some tenses were wrong, particularly future, and imperfect
- context provided by Q4 was not fully utilised
- poor grasp of sentence structure in English.

Often what candidates wrote did not make sense in English or Welsh. In addition to common errors in sentence construction, common expressions and phrases such as the following were not known or were translated incorrectly:

- S 1.** *véritables* translated as various/different/veritable
soudaine translated as Sudanese/soudainian
- S 2 .** *un petit Français* translated as small French/french or French boy
par hasard as by hazard/by danger
service civil rarely translated correctly

- S 3.** *il venait* translated into he came to
niché proved a challenge for most, was omitted by some candidates
étrangement became foreign/strange
paysage became country/passage
- S 4.** *Quant à* translated correctly by a few candidates
petit à petit translated as smaller and smaller by some candidates
insensé proved a challenge for a number of candidates
- S 5.** *En dépit de* translated by the majority of candidate as “In despite of”, but the rest of the sentence generally well translated by most.

Section D - Critical Response in Writing

- Q.6** For this section the assessment objectives are AO3 (manipulating the language accurately/use of lexis and structure) and AO4 (critical knowledge and understanding of the film). The question is marked out of 36. AO3 carries twice as many marks (24) as AO4 (12).

As always, lack of accuracy means that the knowledge of the film that the candidate wishes to convey will be impaired and this will impact on the quality of the response as a whole.

It was clear that in many instances the candidates knew the story within the film studied and knew the characters well but lacked the language to convey that knowledge accurately.

While some candidates manipulated persuasive literary language well, a number of candidates lacked the constructions and necessary film-specific vocabulary to write a coherent critical response. The incorrect spelling of film-specific language i.e. names of characters, places, themes etc. and inaccurate quotations further hampered outcomes.

Many essays were marred by common grammatical errors:

- wrong (anglicised) constructions
- incorrect use of negatives
- inaccurate verb forms, tenses (overuse of and/or incorrect subjunctive)
- incorrect gender and agreements
- *cette/celle* used for *cela*
- a number of candidates (who may have been studying another language) made use of accents on random letters.

Some essays were poorly presented, unclear and very difficult to read with large sections crossed out; for some candidates it was unclear where the essay started, as often a plan was provided as well. Length/word count of essays proved to be an issue for some.

These are issues to be addressed by centres for future series.

However, there has been progress in tackling this question. Fewer essays tended to be descriptive; there has been a clear attempt by most candidates to respond to the question asked, steering away from pre-learnt material.

Introductions and conclusions have seen the biggest improvement; they are much shorter and concise. Centres have clearly addressed issues raised in previous series regarding the above. Centres have also addressed the need to respond critically in this section as candidates have shown greater use of appropriate critical language i.e. *on voit que/cela montre que* etc. Finally most candidates attempted to personalise their response which is to be commended. All the above improvements are to be celebrated and consolidated.

- **Un long dimanche de fiançailles:** fewer candidates answered questions on this film. These essays tended to be generally of a good quality.
- **Le Havre:** again fewer candidates opted for this film, however some excellent responses were produced on Q2b.
- **La classe:** Q3b proved popular, however generally better responses were produced for Q3a.
- **La Rafle:** by far the most popular option with both options being chosen. The candidates knew the film well and had a clear understanding of both questions. In Q4b most candidates referred to the children in the film; some candidates commented upon the innocence of various adults in the film to very good effect.

A greater number of candidates produced essays of good to excellent quality. It is equally encouraging to note that there has been an increase in the number of fair to good quality responses.

Summary of key points

- Series 2019 proved both accessible and challenging
- Translation skills need further refining
- Progress has been made by centres in relation to Question 6
- Grammatical accuracy is key to improving responses to Question 6 but also overall performance

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A2 UNIT 3: SPEAKING

General Comments

The Principal Examiner's report on the 2018 examination of this unit provides information on the guidance which WJEC offers centres submitting candidates for this test, the administrative requirements, the IRP form, centre/candidate declaration and possible models of a good presentation. That report also explains how centres can give candidates general advice without giving individual candidates specific help on their projects.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The presentation (20 marks) and the discussion of the IRP (52 marks) form the whole of the marks awarded for the oral test. There is no preparation time.

(A) The presentation

The presentation is evaluated according to three assessment objectives: AO2 (4 marks), AO3 (8 marks) and AO4 (8 marks). The timing is strictly limited to two minutes. There is no need to spend time stating the IRP title during the presentation as the examiner will have a copy of the IRP document and is likely to check the title with the candidate.

AO2 is the candidate's ability to respond to written material from a variety of sources. Many candidates did show that they had undertaken extensive first-hand research for the presentation and the IRP. As only two minutes are allotted to the presentation, there was no time to go into detail of the sources but suitable short references to the sources - where and when found, or quotations from whom - did strengthen the examiner's evaluation of the amount and quality of research. The greatest indicator of the quality of research undertaken, however, was from the content of the presentation itself rather than any oblique reference to a source.

AO3 is the quality of the language. This includes grammatical accuracy, the range and appropriateness of structures, vocabulary and idioms and the quality of the pronunciation and intonation.

The candidates had pre-prepared their presentation themselves and many had learnt it off by heart. Accuracy was good on the whole as most candidates used constructions with which they were familiar.

The third criterion is AO4. Here, the candidate needed to show knowledge and understanding of different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken which was relevant to topic to the subject chosen. Even a short presentation did show the extent and depth of understanding, analysis and evaluation of issues raised by the topic under discussion.

Some candidates had learnt their presentation by heart and delivered it at a fast pace. This made comprehension difficult at times. In some instances, candidates became nervous or forgot parts of their presentation. Candidates were able to bring a copy of their IRP pro-forma into the examination as a memory aid. Using an aide-memoire made the presentation sound more natural and spontaneous.

The presentation serves as a springboard for the discussion that follows as it is likely to provide the examiner with possible lines of enquiry. It needs to be well-ordered and self-contained.

(B) The discussion

The discussion lasts 9-10 minutes. The examiner will have made notes during the presentation of the possible questions that arise from it. The examiner will also have a copy of the completed IRP pro-forma.

All four assessment objectives are used to evaluate the IRP discussion. The weighting for each assessment objective is also shown below.

AO1 (12/52). Candidates did show that they could answer questions and they showed that they could “understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face-to-face inter-action”, especially if they were prepared for a question, which they might well have “cued” in their introduction or IRP form.

AO2 (8/52). This was a further opportunity for candidates to show the outcomes of their research and to refer in greater detail to research done both by themselves and others. Sometimes candidates had conducted their own surveys to which they referred. Many of these, however, were superficial.

AO3 (16/52). In this part of the test, the ability to manipulate the language accurately in its spoken form is evaluated. AO3 is worth just under a third of the marks awarded for the discussion. As the candidates responded spontaneously to questions, the level of accuracy did suffer, but in the majority of instances the language was accurate enough to ensure understanding. In many instances, both the quality of the grammar and the knowledge of topic-related technical terms were good. Nevertheless, the usual mistakes in verb forms, tense formation (where relevant), genders, agreements (where audible) were evident, as was the inability to form more complex sentences correctly. Lack of accuracy did affect understanding of what was being said (AO4) in some cases.

The weighting for AO4 (16/52) i.e. “showing knowledge and understanding of and respond critically to aspects of the culture and society of the countries/communities where the language is spoken” made it imperative that candidates gave relevant information, analysed and evaluated it properly.

It is important to note that if candidates chose to discuss any films or books, they needed to concentrate on the film or book’s contribution to AO4 - knowledge of country etc. of the language studied. For example, when discussing *La Haine*, the picture of French society at the time and of life in the *banlieue* was relevant and character studies of Vinz and others or discussion of the plot did not contribute actively to AO4.

Similarly, when a certain famous French person, e.g. Dior or Marie Curie, was the topic of the IRP, then the contribution of that person to France or French society was required, not a factual biography or a “generic” account of that person’s contribution to science, sport, fashion etc. to the world in general. Louis Pasteur’s contribution to medicine is important, for

example, and his contribution to French agriculture and the French wine industry is something specific to France.

Summary of key points

- Candidates' responded well to the IRP task which gave them a very good opportunity to discuss a topic related to France or a French-speaking country or community which was of particular interest to them. This often helped the production of good quality presentations and discussions.
- The most successful candidates had acquired a great deal of knowledge about their topic and were able to select and include relevant elements into the discussion.
- The presentation was important because it gave many candidates an opportunity to supply the examiner with "hooks" for possible questions.
- The IRP task required the candidate to have the wide range of skills which were outlined in the conclusions of the 2018 Principal Examiner's report on this unit.
- Although the individual research project must be the candidate's own work, centres still have an important general support role.

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A2 UNIT 4: LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

General Comments

Most candidates attempted all seven questions although some did not answer every part of every question, in particular question 3 and 6. There were a few instances of candidates not attempting whole questions, in particular questions 3, 4(a) and 6.

Candidates generally coped well with the variety of ways used to test listening and reading comprehension used in this specification. The specification encourages the use of different methods of testing comprehension and these will vary from year to year.

As in 2018, more traditional style of questions that demanded active production of continuous French i.e. Q3 (question and answer on a listening passage), Q6 (question and answer on a reading passage) and Q7 (translation from English/Welsh into French) were those that proved more difficult. A 'summary' type question (4a) used for the first time in this paper this year, posed problems only for those who had not understood the source passage.

Centres need to be aware that when answering the questions where productive knowledge of French was required (3, 4(a), 6), candidates needed to provide an answer which conveyed understanding of the listening or reading passage. Although accuracy of language was not assessed in these questions, correct relevant French was helpful in conveying understanding. Assessment objective 3 (AO3), which assesses accurate manipulation of language, however, is used for assessing the quality of the translation from English/Welsh into French.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A – Listening

Q.1 (multiple choice)

Many candidates scored high marks i.e. 8-10 marks out of 10 in this multiple-choice question.

Q.2 (matching exercise)

Many candidates also did well on this question and scored 7 or more out of 10.

Q.3 This is a traditional "question and answer" question-style on a listening passage. This proved to be the most challenging question on the paper. A few candidates did not attempt this question. Some omitted answers to one or more sub-questions.

Candidates obtained marks for questions when they fully understood the question asked, and when they answered the question correctly, in sufficient detail and clearly enough to show that they had understood what was required.

Section B – Reading

Q.4 (a) (summary)

This is the first time that a summary has been used to test meaning on this paper. Many candidates answered this question well. Some candidates failed to understand that the answer to the first paragraph referred to the visitors not what they saw. Although a few candidates understood that the German soldiers had photographs taken, they did not specify where.

(b) (cloze test)

A wide range of marks were awarded, and a very small number of candidates failed to gain more than one or two marks. Candidates need a good understanding of grammar as well as an understanding of the passage to ensure that the correct word is chosen rather than a “distractor”.

Q.5 This question was in three sections and tested understanding in three different ways. This question was generally understood, and all three sections were answered well, though the third section with its multiple-choice options was answered slightly less well.

Q.6 In this exercise, intensive reading comprehension was tested by means of a detailed traditional question and answer type question. Although AO2 rather than AO3 was the assessment objective applied when assessing this question, the French had to be clear enough to be understandable.

Candidates needed to understand what the question asked and locate that part of the text containing the correct answer. Their answer had to be complete enough to convey all the information required.

Section C – Translation

Q.7 Accuracy (AO3) is the key assessment objective used in evaluating this task. Only a few candidates scored high marks. Many candidates displayed a lack of vocabulary and also grammatical mistakes were very frequent.

There were the usual problems of incorrect syntax when combining more than one clause, dependent infinitives, verb forms/tenses, pronouns and possessive adjectives, genders, adjective agreements and so on.

As the passage dealt with mostly abstract notions, there were similar cognates between the French and the English, but this was not realised. Often, however, it was simple vocabulary such as “boys” and “sons” incorrectly translated which lost marks.

Summary of key points

- Centres need to be aware that candidates need to time their examination so that they can complete this “busy” paper which has seven questions.
- Almost every sub-theme in the A level specification is tested in some part of the examination.

- The two most challenging tasks, as in 2018, proved to be extended listening (Q3) and the translation into French (Q7), though the summary (Q4a) and gap-fill (Q4b) also proved difficult for some candidates.
- AO1 and AO2 are the assessment objectives used for evaluating performance in Q1-Q6, but if the candidate has answered the question fully and correctly, accurate French will ensure that examiners understand the answers.
- AO3 is used for Q7 - the translation into French specifically challenged the candidates' knowledge of French grammar and its correct application in constructions and morphology. Common items of vocabulary needed revision.

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A2 UNIT 5: CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

General Comments

This paper offered four novels for analysis. As was the case last year, by far the most popular choices were *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *Un secret*. *Le bal* was studied by fewer centres. Unfortunately, only one candidate chose *Les Amants d'Avignon*. Candidates had a choice of two titles for each novel and they all proved accessible. Knowledge of the novels is very good. The enthusiasm of the candidates is also obvious with many voicing strong opinions. It is pleasing to see a definitive improvement in candidates addressing the title directly in the introduction. Most candidates this year kept closer to the word limit. Some responses were outstanding and a pleasure to read. Using the knowledge to analyse critically and to the point was, however, problematic to varying degrees. Writing accurately remains a challenge for many candidates.

Assessment Criteria

AO4

- The candidates know their novel very well. However, to gain high marks on this assessment objective the information must be chosen selectively and critically to respond to the title. The choice of the most appropriate evidence to justify the ideas and conclusions is also crucial. Some candidates write excellent analytical responses, but most candidates do not sustain the critical angle or the relevance to the title.
- It is pleasing to see that most candidates this year did not stray too far from the novel itself into the social or historic context of the text. At times there is too much extraneous information that is not relevant to the title set. Successful reference to the context of the novel is achieved when it is brief and supported by the evidence from the text: the social conditions in the *banlieue*, the superficiality of the 20s or the persecution of the Jews, for example.
- This year many candidates were drawn away from the title and fell into a character study, perhaps one already prepared. This was the case for Mme Kampf in *Le bal*, Louise and Maxime in *Un secret* and Doria in *Kiffe kiffe demain*. The material must remain pertinent to the title and sustain a critical point of view.

AO3

- In parallel, the AO3 assessment objective assesses the accuracy, range and variety of the language. The language must communicate the critical line of argument. Language and ideas are closely linked. Both must be relevant to the title to gain high marks.
- Some candidates write with impressive control, language and style. Many candidates, however, lack the exact vocabulary to communicate their ideas and the complexity of the issues discussed. Some resort to English.

- Poor control of the grammar is a great impediment to candidates reaching high marks. Grammatical errors are still very frequent and sometimes impede comprehension. There is no need to artificially introduce a range of different tenses. English structures and idiom are often evident.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 *Le bal*

Option (a) proved to be the most popular choice.

- This question asks for an analysis and a justification of Antoinette's act of ripping up the invitation cards. Some excellent responses critically examined the factors leading to the act and the justification element was very strong. It is pleasing to see such robust opinions so well argued and articulated. But often there was a loss of focus drifting into an extensive character study of Mme Kampf without linking her character traits to the treatment of her daughter and the impact on her. Some candidates just described events without making an analysis or introducing the element of justification.
- The analysis of the theme of social appearance attracted a lot of candidates, many of whom wrote very good essays. The focus was clearly on the reasons for the ball and the dubious moral calibre of those invited. Some analysed Mme Kampf's physical presentation of herself very successfully. There was also a creative examination of the idea of a theatrical set. The less successful answers did not analyse with precision or included too much extraneous information on the era and the novelist.

Q.2 *Kiffe kiffe demain*

Option (a) was by far the most popular choice.

- The examination of the impact on Yasmina and Doria of the father's departure attracted many candidates. There were a lot of good answers and different interesting angles offered. The best essays assessed the personal, economic and social impact, both positive and negative, on mother and daughter and their fragile family unit. The weaker candidates tended to analyse Doria in detail with Yasmina included at the end as an afterthought. Balance was essential. The knowledge of the book was good but often the evidence was poorly chosen or misunderstood.
- The title on the *banlieue* attracted fewer candidates. Some essays were outstanding with coherent analysis supported by references to the difficult socio-economic conditions dealt with in the novel. They also highlighted the positive intervention of the State. Some candidates chose to go through the positive and negative feelings of Yasmina and Doria. This was a difficult way to analyse the title and it couldn't be sustained. There were some long, irrelevant descriptions of the riots in the *banlieue*, the history of North African immigration or the current levels of violence, crime and unemployment.

Q.3 *Un secret*

Both options proved equally popular.

- (a) The choice of analysing the consequences of the secret being revealed appealed to many candidates who produced some very good responses. The best essays analysed the complex effects on the narrator and his relationships. The weaker candidates focused too much on why the secret was revealed, the effects of the secret on the narrator or gave a detailed character analysis of Louise. This material was not relevant unless used briefly and linked to the consequences. Some candidates did not have enough material and repeated their ideas. There was a drift towards narration of events. Candidates had to avoid a simple list.
- (b) The theme of identity led to quite a few outstanding answers that linked past and present, the personal and the historical relevant to identity. There was some lovely work done on the release from the corrosive physical and mental effect on the narrator who cannot recognise himself in his parents. Very few analysed the importance of the Jewish identity and the persecution in the war. Maxime's attitude to his Jewish origins was analysed by most candidates but not always successfully. Too many offered a very detailed character study of Maxime.

Q.4 *Les Amants d'Avignon*

Unfortunately, only one candidate chose this novel and answered option (b).

Summary of key points

- Planning is vital. The better and more detailed the plan the better the essay. Noting the evidence to back up the ideas improves the structure and clarity of the essay.
- Questions on characters proved the most popular. However, candidates must take care to note the exact task set and angle their knowledge critically.
- Accuracy requires urgent attention. Tenses, especially the perfect, negatives, gender, agreement and pronouns must be used accurately. The effect of poor accuracy on the AO3 mark can be seen in CPD material.
- To improve performance and gain AO4 marks in the top 2 bands the difference between analysis and description is crucial. Evidence from the novel. This is pointed out in the CPD and OER material.

Conclusion

The hard work of teachers and candidates is very much appreciated. It is always a pleasure to assess the work of candidates responding to French literature.



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