

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/11
Reading

Key messages

Candidates should read both passages and questions carefully before starting to write their answers. Candidates are encouraged to use their own words to answer questions in **Section 1**. Candidates should include valid points from both reading passages to answer the two bullet points in **Section 2** and should write in a summary style. Candidates should not write from personal experience or general knowledge and should write within the character limit expressed on the question paper.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the theme of the two reading passages
- understand, select and relate information from the passages to specific questions
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- be able to explain the author's perspective
- understand how the author achieves effects or uses language to influence the reader
- make accurate and effective use of grammatical structures, sentences and punctuation.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks.

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

- identify relevant points from the two reading passages
- order and present facts, ideas and opinions in their own words in response to the two questions asked
- write in a summary style with logical linkage
- use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and correct characters

General comments

Candidates generally responded well to this paper, with the majority of candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the passages and sound skills in expressing themselves in Chinese.

For **Section 1**, most candidates showed very good comprehension skills and the language used by most candidates was extremely competent. It is strongly recommended that candidates read the questions carefully before attempting to answer to ensure their answers are fully relevant. Candidates should also be reminded to use their own words to paraphrase the language given in the passage and should avoid lifting extended chunks of text. In most cases, where candidates rely heavily on lifting, it is not clear that they have understood the text and/or the question.

In **Section 2**, it was evident that most candidates were aware of the character limit and endeavoured to keep their answers within that limit. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, making sure they understand the specific focus of the task. In some cases improvements in technique could be made by working on writing summaries containing clear and informative sentences, rather than using up the character count on superfluous or irrelevant information. Part of this exercise is to show an ability to summarise, and so it is important that the points are presented clearly, precisely and succinctly.

Most candidates successfully expressed their summaries in continuous prose, whereas a few weaker responses gave a list of examples from the passages. Logical linkage and coherent writing style are necessary to achieve a high score. Candidates also need to remember that only points based on the information given in the passages can be credited; they should avoid answering from their own general knowledge or personal experience.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1, Question 1

The majority of candidates answered the questions in this section well. Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks. A question worth 3 marks will require 3 distinct points.

It is important that candidates read both the reading passages and questions carefully to ensure that all relevant details are included in their answer. Candidates are reminded to use their own words as much as possible in order to gain higher marks for Accuracy. A small number of candidates lifted the wording of their answers from the text without any attempt at rephrasing or targeting the specific demands of the question.

- (a) Almost all candidates managed to score 2 marks for this question.
- (b) (i) (ii) This question was very well answered. Most candidates were able to select and convey the information from the passage relating to the perceived value of art and its effect on human development.
- (c) (i) The majority of candidates answered this question successfully and scored 2 marks about the accessibility of the study of science. A small number of candidates only identified 1 point and needed to say that some people find science difficult as they consider it 'too abstract'
 - (ii) Most candidates answered this question very well and were awarded 2 marks. Some candidates needed to mention '艺术的魅力是无法取代的' to gain the second point in identifying the differences between art and natural science.
- (d) This question required candidates to identify two art forms as discussed by the author (绘画 and 文学: 诗词/小说/杂文). Weaker candidates only listed examples of specific books or paintings from the passage, which were not credited by themselves.
- (e) A large number of candidates successfully explained why the author had chosen particular examples to demonstrate the role of art as an educational tool. They gave detailed answers and many candidates were able to paraphrase the wording of the text. A small number of candidates did not manage to identify the *reasons* but focused instead on the effect, which did not fulfill the requirement of the question.
- (f) This was found to be the most challenging sub-question in **Question 1** as it required interpretation and explanation. Many candidates were able to analyse the author's attitude towards art to gain 3 or 4 marks; others needed to use their own words to summarise the author's attitude, which was not always successful.

Accuracy

Most candidates were aware that there are 5 marks available for Accuracy of language in **Question 1** and showed that they had an excellent grasp of Chinese grammar, vocabulary and characters. Others needed to be more careful either in their choice of appropriate vocabulary or to maintain accuracy in writing even simple characters. Candidates also need to be aware that the highest marks for Accuracy will be awarded to candidates who show they are able to use their own language to answer questions, rather than lifting excessively from the reading passages.

Section 2, Question 2

Question 2 requires candidates to extract information from the two reading passages and use this information to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper. Many excellent responses showed examples of carefully chosen language and varied sentence structures and vocabulary as well as the correct use of characters.

Most candidates performed well in this year's examination, though this section continues to be most challenging to candidates. Some candidates managed to identify the key points successfully from the reading passages and showed a high level of linguistic competence to answer this question.

Most candidates were aware that the response should be around 250 characters in length, whilst others produced free-style and excessively long responses. Many excellent responses took the relevant points from the passages and used them to structure a focussed summary with an orderly grouping of ideas. 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 reminded that there are 15 marks for content in **Question 2**, which means that they need to include at least 15 distinct points and ideas from the two passages.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary and to plan the summary before writing. Excessive elaborations are discouraged; examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

Candidates are reminded to respond in a summary style; answers presented as several bullet points in a list are likely to be placed in the 'poor' category for Style and Organisation. Candidates need to demonstrate good linkage between sentences and avoid the repetition of content and ideas in order to score highly in this category.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/12
Reading

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Section 2, Question 2

Question 2 requires candidates to extract information from the two reading passages and use this information to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper. Many excellent responses showed examples of carefully chosen language and varied sentence structures and vocabulary as well as the correct use of characters.

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Most candidates were aware that the response should be around 250 characters in length, whilst others produced free-style and excessively long responses. Many excellent responses took the relevant points from the passages and used them to structure a focussed summary with an orderly grouping of ideas. 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.

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FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/13
Reading

Key messages

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- identify relevant points from the two reading passages
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- write in a summary style with logical linkage
- use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and correct characters

General comments

Candidates generally responded very well to this paper and showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**. The majority of candidates demonstrated their mastery of the Chinese language as a communication tool and showed a high level of linguistic competence.

For **Section 1**, most candidates showed very good comprehension skills and the language used was in general extremely competent. It is strongly recommended that candidates read the questions carefully before attempting to answer to ensure their responses are fully relevant. Candidates should also be reminded to use their own words to paraphrase the language given in the passage and should avoid lifting extended chunks of text. In most cases, where candidates rely heavily on lifting, it is not clear that they have understood the text and/or the question.

In **Section 2**, it was evident that most candidates were aware of the character limit and endeavoured to keep their answers within that limit. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, making sure they understand the specific focus of the task. In some cases improvements in technique could be made by writing clear and informative sentences, rather than using up characters on superfluous or irrelevant information. Part of this exercise is to show an ability to summarise, and so it is important that the points are presented clearly, precisely and succinctly.

Most candidates successfully expressed their summaries in continuous prose, whereas a few weaker responses gave a list of examples from the passages. Logical linkage and coherent writing style are necessary to achieve a high score. Candidates also need to remember that only points based on the information given in the passages can be credited; they should avoid answering from their own general knowledge or personal experience.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1, Question 1

The majority of candidates answered the questions in this section well. Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks. A question worth 3 marks will require 3 distinct points.

It is important that candidates read both the reading passages and questions carefully to ensure that all relevant details are included in their answer. Candidates are reminded to use their own words as much as possible in order to gain higher marks for Accuracy. A small number of candidates lifted the wording of their answers from the text without any attempt at rephrasing or targeting the specific demands of the question.

- (a) The majority of candidates responded well to this question, taking into account both features (ancient ‘古老’ and emotional impact ‘感情震撼’). Most candidates were able to spell out the keyword ‘感情’ before ‘强烈的震撼’.
- (b) (i) This question required candidates to use skills of inference to specify the overarching human characteristics which are influenced by music. The best answers to this question cited ‘品行’, ‘品性’, ‘待人处世’ etc., summarising the overall effect of the music, rather than detailing positive traits. Candidates needed to provide a considered summary of the examples rather than merely listing out some or all the illustrations given in the text.
- (ii) The question required candidates to select two examples (from the paragraph) to show how music influences people. Most candidates were able to identify and quote two or more examples from the text and some were able to elaborate on the effects using their own words. ‘听到羽声人会变得更加有礼貌’, ‘善待别人’, ‘恭敬待人’ etc. In some cases candidates ‘invented’ situations not covered in the original text and gave imagined responses, e.g.: ‘听到战歌我觉得情绪高昂’. Others gave examples from their own personal experience; neither of these could be credited.
- (c) Most candidates answered this question successfully and scored 4 marks. In cases where answers did not gain full credit, candidates often missed out ‘帮助/辅助’ and claimed that music could ‘治病’.
- (d) Most candidates picked up at least 1 of the 2 marks available. Weaker answers often relied heavily on lifting from the passage and did not show understanding of the question, or fully answer the question asked.
- (e) The majority of candidates answered this question well and were able to provide the keyword ‘减少枯燥感’.
- (f) This question was generally well answered by the full range of candidates, who were able to select the types of songs that may influence different groups of people.
- (g) (i)(ii) A large number of candidates were successful in answering these questions. In some instances candidates wrote down ‘海’ or ‘悔’ instead of ‘侮’ in **Question (g)(i)** which was not credited.
- (h) Many candidates answered this question well. The least successful responses came from those who did not use their own words to paraphrase the information given in the text.

Accuracy

Most candidates were aware that there are 5 marks available for Accuracy of language in **Question 1** and showed that they had an excellent grasp of Chinese grammar, vocabulary and characters. Others needed to be more careful either in their choice of appropriate vocabulary or to maintain accuracy in writing even simple characters. Candidates also need to be aware that the highest marks for Accuracy will be awarded to candidates who show they are able to use their own language to answer questions, rather than lifting excessively from the reading passages.

Section 2, Question 2

Most candidates performed well in this year's examination, though this section continues to be most challenging to candidates. **Question 2** requires candidates to use the information in the two reading passages to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper. Some candidates managed to identify the key points successfully from the reading passages and showed a high level of linguistic competence. Many excellent responses showed examples of carefully chosen language, varied sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary as well as the accurate use of characters.

Most candidates were aware that the response should be around 250 characters in length, whilst others produced free-style and excessively long responses. Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary and to plan the summary before writing. Excessive elaborations are discouraged; examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

Many excellent responses took the relevant points from the passages and used them to structure a focussed summary with an orderly grouping of ideas. These candidates managed to demonstrate good linkage between sentences and avoid the repetition of content and ideas. 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.

As there are 15 marks for content in **Question 2**, candidates should be reminded that they need to include at least 15 distinct points and ideas from the two passages to gain full credit.

The best responses were written in a summary style; answers presented as several bullet points in a list are likely to be placed in the 'poor' category for Style and Organisation.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/21
Writing

Key messages

The eight questions in this paper are divided into two sections: argumentative or discursive writing in **Section 1** and descriptive or narrative writing in **Section 2**. Candidates need write in the appropriate style according to the question chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the question in order to produce a focused and relevant response;
- demonstrate original thinking;
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately;
- express what is thought, felt or imagined clearly and effectively;
- avoid clichés and articulate genuine personal experience, when appropriate;
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures and punctuation.

Candidates should also strive to achieve the following in each essay genre:

- in an argumentative piece candidates need to present a clearly stated view with supporting ideas and evidence in the form of facts or examples. These should be structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity;
- in a discursive piece candidates need to present a balanced view with opinions from more than one perspective. The arguments should be developed with supporting evidence from all sides and structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity;
- in a descriptive piece candidates need to describe a vivid scene in an effective manner and with sufficient detail;
- in a narrative piece candidates need to tell a story (real or imagined) which includes complexity, tension and climax.

General comments

The majority of candidates performed well in this year's examination. Many candidates were able to present a complex argument or a balanced view on their chosen question. Candidates choosing to write narrative or descriptive essays were often very original or imaginative in their description of a specified scene or in their account of an experience or a story. Many candidates demonstrated an assured use of language throughout, with a high level of fluency and sophisticated used of language. Nearly all candidates were able to produce a complete piece between 400 and 600 characters within the allotted time.

Candidates should be reminded to read all the titles carefully before choosing the one on which they wish to write. Writing out the task title and underlining key words will help candidates focus on the question being asked and avoid writing irrelevant material. Before writing the essay, candidates should spend time planning their essay to avoid repetition and achieve a logical structure.

Many excellent argumentative compositions contained the use of sophisticated structures and appropriate expressions, and the presentation of well-structured and convincing views. The strongest responses of a descriptive nature presented a vivid moon-lit scene with lots of carefully chosen details. The strongest responses of a narrative nature were able to avoid cliché and told touching stories with a surprising ending or a well-managed climax.

Style and Accuracy

Style: Many candidates were able to produce sophisticated pieces of writing, with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions.

Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions.

Candidates could improve by being more careful and precise in their use of expressions to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner, for example: 我紧绷着身体 用迅雷不及掩耳之势用完早餐.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register. Weaker answers sometimes featured 'spoken language written down', (e.g. 我依然是同自己吃饭.) which should be avoided.

Some candidates' use of Chinese structure showed interference from English grammar. For example, 和 was incorrectly used to link clauses, as in this sentence: 我觉得新潮的服饰能够代表我的个性, 和我每年都会去韩国买最流行的衣服。

There were many good examples of confident use of punctuation and most candidates knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homophones / homonyms). For example, 事实证明 (instead of 证明 钻研 (instead of 钻研) 知识; 像海绵班的 (instead of 般) .

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

Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their script and fully credit them for that has been written.

Content and Structure

Content: The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective.

Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 3**: 服饰对年轻人很重要. Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in the case of **Question 6**: 那一幅定格在我记忆中的画面.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, story line or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. In a small number of cases candidates had written excessively long essays, including material irrelevant to the question. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Discussion and Argument

Question 1

条条大路通罗马

Candidates needed to explain the meaning of the idiom 'All roads lead to Rome' and discuss the idea that different ideas and courses of action can produce the same results. Most candidates who chose to answer this question were able to produce a convincing argument that there are many different ways to success in life.

Question 2

世上无难事，只怕有心人

This was the most popular choice in **Section 1**. Candidates wrote about the well-known saying 'nothing is impossible in the world' and many well-organised responses were seen, showing a clear progression of the relevant arguments before the conclusion was reached.

Question 3

服饰对年轻人很重要

Many candidates chose this question as they felt strongly about the topic. Some handled the question well, focusing the discussion on the importance of appearance to young people. Occasionally candidates forgot to link their discussion to *young people*, which was a key word in the question.

Question 4

传统应该保留

This question was very broad and required the candidates to write with a focus in mind. Some candidates wrote about the importance of preserving Chinese tradition from the perspective of a young Chinese person living overseas. Such answers managed to convey their strong feeling on the topic in a convincing manner. Weaker answers often featured clichéd responses and needed to show a deeper level of consideration.

Section 2: Description and Narrative

Question 5

皓月生辉的夜晚

Those candidates who chose to describe a moon-lit night did very well in producing a beautiful piece of descriptive writing about the moon and the happenings in the moonlight. In many cases, the use of language was sophisticated with ambitious and appropriate expressions creating vivid images. Some candidates needed to emphasise description rather than narrative.

Question 6

那一幅定格在我记忆中的画面

This was a popular title and gave rise to some imaginative responses. Many candidates described a touching scene when something remarkable happened. Most answers were relevant and effective, and used fluent language.

Question 7

我一睁开眼，已经九点了... ..

Many candidates chose this question and told the experience of waking up late. Some candidates managed to create suspension and managed a climax well while others produced a very predictable account of their day with a late start. Weaker answers contained simple language and a straightforward list of everyday events.

Question 8

一场激动人心的体育比赛

Many candidates chose this topic and a variety of performance was seen. Occasionally candidates wrote a commentary like piece, creating tension and excitement. Candidates frequently included either themselves or friends in the game and related their answer to a personal experience.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Style and Accuracy

Style: Many candidates were able to produce sophisticated pieces of writing, with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions.

Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions.

Candidates could improve by being more careful and precise in their use of expressions to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner, for example: 我紧绷着身体 用迅雷不及掩耳之势用完早餐.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register. Weaker answers sometimes featured 'spoken language written down', (e.g. 我依然是同自己吃饭.) which should be avoided.

Some candidates' use of Chinese structure showed interference from English grammar. For example, 和 was incorrectly used to link clauses, as in this sentence: 我觉得新潮的服饰能够代表我的个性, 和我每年都会去韩国买最流行的衣服。

There were many good examples of confident use of punctuation and most candidates knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homophones / homonyms). For example, 事实证明 (instead of 证明 钻研 (instead of 钻研) 知识; 像海绵班的 (instead of 般) .

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

Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their script and fully credit them for that has been written.

Content and Structure

Content: The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective.

Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 3**: 服饰对年轻人很重要. Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in the case of **Question 6**: 那一幅定格在我记忆中的画面.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, story line or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. In a small number of cases candidates had written excessively long essays, including material irrelevant to the question. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Discussion and Argument

Question 1

条条大路通罗马

Candidates needed to explain the meaning of the idiom 'All roads lead to Rome' and discuss the idea that different ideas and courses of action can produce the same results. Most candidates who chose to answer this question were able to produce a convincing argument that there are many different ways to success in life.

Question 2

世上无难事，只怕有心人

This was the most popular choice in **Section 1**. Candidates wrote about the well-known saying 'nothing is impossible in the world' and many well-organised responses were seen, showing a clear progression of the relevant arguments before the conclusion was reached.

Question 3

服饰对年轻人很重要

Many candidates chose this question as they felt strongly about the topic. Some handled the question well, focusing the discussion on the importance of appearance to young people. Occasionally candidates forgot to link their discussion to *young people*, which was a key word in the question.

Question 4

传统应该保留

This question was very broad and required the candidates to write with a focus in mind. Some candidates wrote about the importance of preserving Chinese tradition from the perspective of a young Chinese person living overseas. Such answers managed to convey their strong feeling on the topic in a convincing manner. Weaker answers often featured clichéd responses and needed to show a deeper level of consideration.

Section 2: Description and Narrative

Question 5

皓月生辉的夜晚

Those candidates who chose to describe a moon-lit night did very well in producing a beautiful piece of descriptive writing about the moon and the happenings in the moonlight. In many cases, the use of language was sophisticated with ambitious and appropriate expressions creating vivid images. Some candidates needed to emphasise description rather than narrative.

Question 6

那一幅定格在我记忆中的画面

This was a popular title and gave rise to some imaginative responses. Many candidates described a touching scene when something remarkable happened. Most answers were relevant and effective, and used fluent language.

Question 7

我一睁开眼，已经九点了... ..

Many candidates chose this question and told the experience of waking up late. Some candidates managed to create suspension and managed a climax well while others produced a very predictable account of their day with a late start. Weaker answers contained simple language and a straightforward list of everyday events.

Question 8

一场激动人心的体育比赛

Many candidates chose this topic and a variety of performance was seen. Occasionally candidates wrote a commentary like piece, creating tension and excitement. Candidates frequently included either themselves or friends in the game and related their answer to a personal experience.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/23
Writing

Key messages

The eight questions in this paper are divided into two sections: argumentative or discursive writing in **Section 1** and descriptive or narrative writing in **Section 2**. Candidates need write in the appropriate style according to the question chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the question in order to produce a focused and relevant response;
- demonstrate original thinking;
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately;
- express what is thought, felt or imagined clearly and effectively;
- avoid clichés and articulate genuine personal experience, when appropriate;
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures and punctuation.

Candidates should also strive to achieve the following in each essay genre:

- in an argumentative piece candidates need to present a clearly stated view with supporting ideas and evidence in the form of facts or examples. These should be structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity;
- in a discursive piece candidates need to present a balanced view with opinions from more than one perspective. The arguments should be developed with supporting evidence from all sides and structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity;
- in a descriptive piece candidates need to describe a vivid scene in an effective manner and with sufficient detail;
- in a narrative piece candidates need to tell a story (real or imagined) which includes complexity, tension and climax.

General comments

The majority of candidates performed well in this year's examination. Many candidates were able to present a complex argument or a balanced view on their chosen question. Candidates choosing to write narrative or descriptive essays were often very original or imaginative in their description of a specified scene or in their account of an experience or a story. Many candidates demonstrated an assured use of language throughout, with a high level of fluency and sophisticated used of language. Nearly all candidates were able to produce a complete piece between 400 and 600 characters within the allotted time.

The full range of performance was seen across all four types of writing but answers in **Section 1** scored on average higher marks than those in **Section 2**.

Candidates should be reminded to read all the titles carefully before choosing the one on which they wish to write. Writing out the task title and underlining key words will help candidates focus on the question being asked and avoid writing irrelevant material. Before writing the essay, candidates should spend time planning their essay to avoid repetition and achieve a logical structure.

The best argumentative compositions were characterised by the use of sophisticated structures and appropriate expressions and the presentation of a well-structured and convincing argument. The strongest responses of a descriptive nature presented a vivid picture and included lots of carefully chosen details and sensory information.

Weaker narrative responses were often characterised by very bland accounts of everyday activities, such as getting up, having breakfast, putting on a new uniform, catching the school bus etc. In order to reach the higher marking bands, candidates need to produce a more sophisticated story, including the building up of tension and some plot and character development.

Candidates should be reminded to read the questions carefully and produce an answer that deals with the main points in the question. For example, answers that did not score highly for **Question 5** often only described a beach scene, neglecting the context of the scorching heat. Some excellent responses to **Question 2** were able to give insightful interpretations of the image of a “Tiger Father” as more than just being strict. Such answers also included discussion of other important qualities like mental strength and an extraordinary capacity to achieve in their chosen field.

Style and Accuracy

Style: Many candidates were able to produce sophisticated pieces of writing, with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions.

Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions.

Candidates are encouraged to be consistent and follow convention, for example, when writing numbers in a composition. The usual convention is to use Chinese characters for numbers less than 10, and to use Arabic numerals for numbers larger than 10 – these should not be mixed randomly.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register.

Weaker answers showed strong signs of interference from English grammar. For example, 下午我和我的朋友去海边 when 我的 is not needed in Chinese; 他们就可以有话题关于追星 (instead of 他们就可以谈论关于追星的话题).

There were many good examples of confident use of punctuation and most candidates knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of different components of characters, so that homophones or characters with similar pronunciation can be distinguished. Some common errors of this type were: 近 (instead of 进) 了校园; 受外人齿笑 (instead of 耻笑); 不同的观点碰撞在一起必然会产生分析 (instead of 分歧).

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Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their script and fully credit them for what has been written.

Content and Structure

Content: The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective.

Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 4:** 如何看待追星. The most successful compositions also presented arguments with a high level of complexity and maturity. Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in **Question 7:** 当掌声响起的时候……. One example contained an account of the candidate having the courage to give a speech of her own on stage while rejecting the script prepared by her mother. **Question No 8** 开学的第一天 described a situation familiar to all candidates, but the best answers were focussed and selective in the details they included, whilst weaker answers often lapsed into a list of simple everyday tasks which did not retain the attention of the reader.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, story line or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. In a small number of cases candidates had written excessively long essays, including material irrelevant to the question. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Discussion and Argument

Question 1

退一步海阔天空

The majority of candidates who wrote about this topic agreed with the saying given in the essay title and the philosophy that if you are too focussed in solving a particular problem, it helps to step back from it and new solutions will often present themselves. Some well-developed arguments were produced from different perspectives, and included discussion of the use of compromise, looking for alternative solutions, and tolerance. Many excellent responses included several examples and went on to bring them all together, using them to effectively support their view.

Question 2

论“虎父无犬子”

This was the least chosen question this year. Some candidates produced strong arguments to support their view of the idea “like father, like son”. Weaker responses were characterised by too narrow a discussion of the importance of being strict. Some interesting compositions were seen which opposed the saying and presented a convincing case of “nature versus nurture”.

Question 3

烹饪应该列为必修课

Some very good compositions were seen in which candidates were able to present their views in a clear, logical manner and produced convincing arguments on the benefits of learning cooking in school. Some candidates covered a range of issues including food safety, independent living and the creative and relaxing side of cooking, before reaching their conclusion. Others focused exclusively on the brilliance of the Chinese culinary tradition, but needed to remember to address the question asked, and include reference to whether cooking skills should be developed within the school curriculum.

Question 4

如何看待“追星”

This was by far the most popular choice in **Section 1**. The question was relevant to many candidates' own experience, and so candidates tended to have a range of opinions and arguments to express. The most

successful candidates organised their ideas in a clear and logical way. Most candidates managed to give a balanced view before coming to the conclusion that within reason and available resources, 追星 was beneficial to their own personal growth.

Section 2: Description and Narrative

Question 5

烈日下的海滩

This was the least answered question in **Section 2**. Candidates were expected to describe a beach scene in the baking sun. The most successful responses conjured images of a lively and busy beach and included detailed descriptions by using an effective range of vocabulary. The descriptions were vivid, conveying the heat convincingly.

Candidates need to be careful to read the question carefully, as a small number of candidates misread the keyword “烈日下的” and wrote about the peace and tranquillity of a moon-lit beach rather than a sun-drenched beach. Candidates should also try to maintain focus. Occasionally candidates described a whole day on the beach from sunrise to sunset, which included a lot of irrelevant material.

Question 6

那一场突如其来的暴雨

This was a popular question and some detailed and imaginative responses were produced. The question asked for a description of an unexpected or sudden storm. There were many excellent responses that showed well-developed ideas and images. Most candidates were able to produce relevant responses about a storm with the emphasis on the suddenness and the impact of its unexpectedness on the people in the area. Some responses described touching scenes happening in the storm or used figurative, powerful language as a tool to create the atmosphere. Some responses managed to link the storm of life to the literal storm in a sophisticated manner.

Weaker answers were characterised by the use of simple storytelling, rather than description, and often included the main character being caught in the rain and their parent or grandparent delivering an umbrella to them as an indication of their love.

Candidates should be aware that this question should focus on description, not storytelling and candidates should avoid repetition.

Question 7

当掌声响起的时候... ..

Most candidates who chose this title handled the question satisfactorily. Many wrote about how they worked hard in preparation for the event and the excitement they felt when they delivered the successful performance. There were some brilliant descriptions of the lighting, the emotion, the applause. Weaker responses were characterised by lengthy introductions describing their nervousness before the event and needed to focus more heavily on when they were on stage or when the performance ended, as this was the focus of the question.

Question 8

开学的第一天

This was a popular choice and candidate performance on this question varied greatly. Some compositions were very creative. One candidate wrote about the evening self-study time on the first day of the new school year and described an incident where a bumble bee invaded the classroom and the candidates tried to drive it away and eventually captured it. The story ended with the bonding of this group of youngsters in the new school, brought about by the shared experience. The story took a unique perspective and maintained the interest of the reader. Successful narratives like this example were written with flair and developed ideas using fluent language and interesting imagery.

Weaker answers tended to start with more mundane details of the morning routine; getting up, having breakfast, putting on the uniform, catching the school bus, school assembly etc. Most candidates made some mention of being shy or nervous because they had no friends but the best narratives managed an effective description of their anxiety and also attempted to create a climax.