

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/01

Reading

Key comments

- Candidates need to take care to express their answers clearly and concisely.
- Candidates must always read the questions carefully to ensure that they do not omit part of the task.

General comments

The texts on this year's paper related to the life and work of two famous composers: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Bedřich Smetana.

The level of language, spelling, grammatical accuracy and style in the responses was quite good. Many candidates managed the questions in Part 1 very well and received full marks. A few candidates had difficulty understanding the texts and this had a negative impact on their marks for both parts.

There were quite a few instances where candidates seemed to know the answer to the questions, but they had trouble formulating a clear and precise answer. Future candidates may benefit from more practice with comprehension exercises and summary writing, to learn how to formulate opinions and express their thoughts in writing.

Successful candidates made sure that they always read the questions properly and did not miss out any of the requirements of the question. For example, **Questions 1(d) or 1(g)** say that candidates need to give **two** reasons; however, many candidates only stated one reason.

Candidates should heed the marks allocated to each sub-question. For example, if the question is worth two marks, e.g. **Question 1(e)**, it means that a more complex answer is anticipated rather than just a one-word answer.

It is always worth reminding candidates to take care to check their work. Examiners noted a slight increase in copying errors in candidates' responses when they were taking quotes from the texts printed on the question paper.

In general, the standard of language was high, with hardly any technical errors and the use of good, appropriate vocabulary. In spelling, minor errors persist:

- (a) the use of "y" after an ambiguous consonant,
- (b) the use of double consonants (nn),
- (c) the use of groups of consonants (mn).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Questions 1(a), 1(f), 1(j) and 1(k) dealt with the more sophisticated literary language of the author and so were more challenging than other questions, requiring candidates to show their skill in reading artistic texts. During their IGCSE course, candidates should read Czech literary texts and improve their understanding of literary texts and literary figures of speech, for example similes, metaphors, etc.

Questions 1(b), 1(d) and 1(i) related to explicit information from the text and almost all candidates achieved maximum marks.

The question that candidates found hardest was **Question 1(h)**. This question was correctly answered only by the best candidates, who were able to read the text carefully and with understanding. Many candidates invented their own answers, expressing their personal wishes and experiences, which did not relate to the text.

Question 2

In **Question 2** candidates were asked to look for similarities and differences in the two texts regarding the two artists, their lives, their personalities, their careers and their lives.

Many candidates found a good number of similarities or differences. Some candidates wrote very accurate and concise answers containing all the facts and they achieved full or nearly full marks.

Candidates should know that the marks indicated under the question (15 + 10) refer to the number of marks awardable. Teachers are advised to tell candidates that there are always 15 marks for the content of their answers (hence 15 points should be made in their answers), plus 5 marks for style and organization and 5 marks for accuracy of language. In order to succeed, candidates might keep a count of the similarities and differences they include in their response, and make sure not to repeat any.

Candidates lose time if they write in too much detail here, quote long passages from the texts or express their own opinions. A summary should be written in a concise and clear continuous text.

The linguistic level of the responses was good, and the majority of the candidates demonstrated that they had prepared carefully. However, there were a few common mistakes. For example:

- (a) the use of "y" after an ambiguous consonant,
- (b) subject-predicate agreement,
- (c) wrong cases for nouns and adjectives,
- (d) wrong relations between words,
- (e) incorrect verb forms, especially conditionals,
- (f) inflection of numbers – mainly of numbers "two", "both",
- (g) punctuation in sentences, especially punctuation of embedded subordinate clauses,
- (h) accents – comma, hook,
- (i) improper punctuation,
- (j) unnecessary use of demonstrative pronouns. Demonstrative pronouns (*ten, ta, to, tento, atd.*) are not used so much in Czech and therefore this reflects the influence of the English language ("the"),
- (k) non-standard noun endings.

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Paper 0514/02

Writing

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to write short essays on different kinds of topics during their IGCSE course: they should think through their ideas on a range of topics and learn to express them precisely so that their compositions are immediately understandable.
- They should also learn how to structure an essay so that it has an introduction, a main body divided into thematic paragraphs, and a conclusion.

General comments

The paper is in two parts and candidates must write two compositions in two styles, each of 350-500 words.

This examination rewards both linguistic accuracy (a maximum of 12 marks per composition) and the content of the response (a maximum of 13 marks per composition).

In the first section, candidates are asked to write an argumentative or polemic essay on one of the four assigned topics.

In the second section they are asked to write either a narrative or a descriptive piece, and they can choose from two narrative topics and two descriptive topics.

Generally, candidates tried hard. It was often clear that they had plenty to say about the topic, but they were sometimes hindered by their ability to express thoughts in writing. The best responses had precisely formulated ideas and were well-structured, resulting in a balanced and logically response.

In **Section 1**, the vast majority of candidates chose either topic **1(a)** or **1(b)**.

The remaining two topics, **1(c)** and **1(d)**, were not as popular and were answered by only a small number of candidates.

In **Section 2** this year, the vast majority of candidates chose either topic **2(c)** or **2(d)**.

The remaining two topics, **2(a)** and **2(b)**, were not as popular and were answered by only a small number of candidates.

In general, the more successful responses were rooted in real situations rather than imaginary or unrealistic ideas. By constructing a story's intrigue on plausible situations, candidates might free themselves to put more effort into their linguistic and stylistic approach than on inventing a plot.

Language

This year it was noticeable that more candidates were having difficulties with vocabulary. For example:

nářadí / náčiní / nástroje,
přírodní / přirozený,
naskytnout / poskytnout,
záchranný / záchranařský,
mistr / ministr.

There were a few grammar mistakes which appeared in many candidates' responses:

- (a) the use of "y" after an ambiguous consonant,
- (b) subject-predicate agreement – (especially in **Question 1a**) ("Mlád'ata měla / zvířata měla),
- (c) wrong cases for nouns and adjectives,
- (d) incorrect declension (especially in *instrumental case*), and non-standard noun endings, very often colloquial forms,
- (e) wrong relations between words,
- (f) incorrect verb formation – especially in conditionals - (*bych, bychom, byste*),
- (g) the use of double consonants (nn) - (in **Question 1c**) - *záchranný*)
- (h) the use of groups of consonants (mně, mě) - (*zapomněl, uměl*),
- (i) voicing assimilation - (in **Question 1c**) *sníh*),
- (j) spelling of foreign words in Czech - (in **Question 1c**) – *skútr*),
- (k) incorrect or missing punctuation in sentences,
- (l) improper punctuation - the use of English punctuation rules in Czech (*for example – čárka za slovy nicméně, zaprvé, na začátku, nejprve, avšak*),
- (m) forgetting bars and the hooks above the letters,
- (n) unnecessary use of demonstrative pronouns. Demonstrative pronouns (*ten, ta, to, tento, atd.*) are not used so much in Czech language and therefore this shows the influence of English language ("the"),
- (o) using vulgar or colloquial words..
- (p) use of possessive pronouns "*svůj*", "*svoje*": candidates often missed these, yet made excessive use of "*jeho*", "*její*" (influence of English).

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

1(a)

The topic of the zoo and the lives of the animals within captured the attention of most candidates. They wrote about both the positive aspects and the negative. Altogether, they tried to write a balanced essay and seriously think about and argue the topic.

Some candidates, in order to try to add impact to their work, included statements and facts that seemed improbable or exaggerated.

1(b)

This topic was also very popular because it related to the personal experience of many candidates.

The best candidates remembered to look at the theme in general instead of only writing about their own personal experience. Less successful responses went off topic into the debate about the role of computers and the Internet in the lives of teenagers, which was not what was required.

1(c)

There were too few responses to this question for a comment to be made.

1(d)

A small number of candidates selected this topic. They tended to discuss personal sacrifices in sport, or their family moving because of a better job or better education. There were interesting responses, but again the best responses included ideas related to the theme in general as well as specific examples from the candidate's own experience.

Section 2

2(a)

Although this was not a popular question, the very best responses were seen here. Candidates used their imagination and wrote very engaging descriptions. The responses were very impressive.

2(b)

Candidates tried very hard to portray the atmosphere inside a hospital, but they often described the hospital as a whole; they mixed information from different wards, exaggerated the actions of doctors and nurses as well as patient hardships. The negative aspects of hospitals (odours, food, etc.) were also described with some exaggeration.

Some candidates wrote about their own experiences of hospital stays at great length. Descriptions are not supposed to contain stories; and if they do, only in a limited way to reinforce the description.

2(c)

This topic was the most popular. Many interesting works were written here: well-constructed stories including suspense, plot ascent, an appropriate conclusion and, at the same time, using all the possible linguistic and stylistic figures of speech, for example rich vocabulary, direct speech, phrases or one-word sentences intensifying the suspense, etc.

On the other hand, quite a lot of candidates deviated from the topic. Many candidates moved their story into a bizarre dream full of ghosts and incomprehensible phenomena. This did not result in a very successful composition as the candidates had not met the requirements of the question as set.

2(d)

There were some good responses here. They were typically very simple stories, written in the "introduction, body and conclusion" style. It was rare that something dramatic happened, and the stories did not contain suspense, ascent, direct speech or more interesting linguistic features.