

FRENCH

<p>Paper 8670/41 Texts</p>

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on three separate texts.
- Consider carefully which texts to prepare with their classes: some texts present conceptual problems that might be challenging for some candidates.
- Realise that some candidates might be better off addressing the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1**, which provide a ready-made structure for their answers and therefore offer better options for achieving reasonable to good marks than the freer option **(b)** alternatives, which provide no such inbuilt guidance on how to structure a response.

Teachers should train their students to:

- Manage their time in the examination room, ensuring that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.
- Ensure that they do not answer two questions on the same text, remembering that 'soit... soit' means 'either... or'.
- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them and plan their responses before they start to write.
- Stay on track as they write their responses by referring to the question regularly.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If passage-based questions are not properly labelled, it can look as though parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** have not been attempted.
- Start each new essay on a fresh page and take care to attach any continuation sheets in order. It is not necessary to write out the text of the question on the answer paper.
- Avoid referring to the author's background, his/her other works and the audience that he/she is addressing, unless this is specifically asked for by the question.
- Commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with an introduction, locating the extract within the text and briefly explaining what events have preceded the extract.
- Ensure that answers to the option **(b)** questions in **Section 1** and all questions in **Section 2** include:
 - An opening paragraph, acknowledging the question and giving a brief indication of how it is to be addressed.
 - A closing paragraph, which should summarise the points made in the essay.

General comments

The passage-based questions were efficiently addressed, for the most part. Stronger responses were able to deal with the detail required by the questions, while at the same time demonstrating good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text as a whole.

Some candidates still attempt to answer the passage-based questions by quoting often lengthy parts of the extract text, but then don't explain what the quotation illustrates. Quotations should be employed selectively, and candidates must provide their own interpretations.

The essay questions were generally well structured. Candidates should not waste time by describing the background to the work and its author. Narration irrelevant to the question should be avoided – remember that the Examiner has also read the text – but candidates should aim to demonstrate their knowledge of the work while remaining focused on answering the question. Most candidates now recognise the importance of writing a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how the question is to be addressed, and a conclusion to summarise the principle findings of the essay.

As always, the better responses were those which were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although these should be crossed out to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – Molière: *Le Malade imaginaire*

Many candidate answered one of the questions on the Molière text, with a clear majority selecting the passage-based **Question 1(a)**.

- (a) The question was competently answered, and the context was well explained.
- (i) Most candidates correctly identified that Thomas Diafoirus was addressing Angélique, his intended wife. Some responses provided useful summaries of the events that had led up to the extract scene, including the misunderstanding that had just arisen when Thomas – who had not previously met Angélique – had initially addressed her as if she were his future mother-in-law. Thomas delivers a flowery, ornate speech, which contains classical and botanical allusions, and references to ideals of medieval courtly love, in which Angélique is compared to a beautiful, but unobtainable statue. Thomas has clearly spent a long time practising his speech, but it is so extravagant that Toinette and Cléante find it rather ridiculous.
- (ii) Toinette's aim is to ridicule Thomas to make clear to Argan the foolishness of his choice of husband for Angélique. Most candidates acknowledged the irony used by Toinette and Cléante in their praise of Thomas' speech, and most highlighted the mockery made of the inadequate training received by those entering the medical profession.
- (iii) Part (iii) was less well answered. Thomas is entirely under his father's control and one can imagine that the elder Diafoirus has been closely involved in writing his son's speeches. Diafoirus has brought his son into the medical profession and is now using him to enhance his own rank in society by marrying him into the wealth of Argan's family. He claims to be proud of his son and of his achievements, but one suspects that even he can see that Thomas is not the ideal marriage candidate.
- (b) There were some strong responses to this question, the best of which examined the familial relationships by dealing with each of the characters in turn. Most responses began with an analysis of Argan, around whose hypochondria and bad temper the whole household revolves. Béline's motives and her hypocrisy were well covered. Though not a member of the family, Toinette is a second mother to Angélique and her sister, and most candidates justifiably decided to include her in their responses. The very best responses also dealt, albeit briefly, with the roles played by Béralde and Louison.

Question 2 – Émile Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*

Questions on the Zola work were attempted by about one third of candidates, with **Question 2(b)** being more popular than **Question 2(a)**.

- (a) (i) This question was quite well answered, and most candidates were able to give satisfactory summaries of the events that had led up to Camille's murder. Fewer candidates, however, mentioned that Laurent had almost killed Camille a little earlier that morning, but had decided that crushing his friend's head with the heel of his boot would have left him with no alibi.
- (ii) Part (ii) was also well dealt with. Though the murder had been carried out on the spur of the moment, Laurent had quickly formed a rational plan to conceal his guilt. He hides the bite mark on his neck and overturns the boat to make the drowning seem like an accident. He then plays the hero by diving into the water, in the pretence of seeking his lost friend. He subsequently claims that the dying Camille had called for him to save Thérèse and he feigns feelings of guilt, saying that he should not have allowed Camille to overbalance the boat by moving around.
- (iii) The rowers are the unwitting corroborators of Laurent's deceit. They believe they have observed a genuine accident and they witness Laurent's tears and anguish at his failure to find Camille. Having taken Laurent and Thérèse back to the nearby restaurant, the rowers are instrumental in spreading the story of the tragedy and of Laurent's apparent heroism.
- (b) The question was efficiently dealt with. Most candidates gave a view on who they felt was the guiltier party – most felt that Laurent and Thérèse bore equal blame – and were able to back up their opinion with good knowledge of the text. The very best responses argued both for and against Laurent/Thérèse and went on to say that perhaps neither was guilty, since they were each unwitting products of their environment.

Question 3 – Jean Anouilh: *L'Alouette*

- (a) There were too few responses to allow for meaningful comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 4 – Jean Anouilh: *La Cantatrice chauve*

The question was attempted by almost two thirds of candidates, with a clear majority in favour of the extract **Question 4 (a)**.

- (a) (i) Though some candidates dealt reasonably well with the second part of the question, most chose to ignore the first part ('Racontez le visite du pompier') and thus lost valuable marks. What was required was a simple account of the fire chief's arrival in search of a fire to extinguish, his entertainment of the Smiths and the Martins with his nonsensical anecdotes, his fleeting surprise upon meeting his long-lost love, Mary the maid, and his departure to attend to a fire that was about to start on the other side of town. Rather too many candidates tied themselves up in knots, trying to explain the fire chief's bizarre and rather torturous tale of people whose only real connection was that they all sometimes caught colds.
- (ii) Responses to part (ii) were better. Most felt that the nonsensical and rather dull responses of the Smiths to the fire chief's tale were typical. Neither has a strong opinion about anything, they communicate in clichés and non-sequiturs and they have a very weak grasp on reality. In evidence of this, several responses made useful reference to the Smiths' tale of Bobby Watson and relatives. The only occasions on which the Smiths show any individuality or backbone are when they are disagreeing with each other (viz. the doorbell scene).
- (iii) Part (iii) was also quite well answered. Mme Martin is a replica of Mme Smith (they exchange places at the end of the play) and, like her friend, she is not the 'sharpest knife in the drawer'. She has a weak grasp on reality and is even more forgetful than her husband (viz. her failure to recognise her husband when ushered into the Smiths' drawing room earlier that evening). Our astonishment is, perhaps, not that Mme Martin has failed to understand the fire chief's tale, but that she claims that the only part she has misunderstood concerns the grandmother, whom the fire chief refers to at the very end of his story.

- (b) Responses to **Question 4 (b)** were, in many cases, weakened by the inability of candidates to recall the detail of the four animal anecdotes: three related by the fire chief and one by Monsieur Smith. Nevertheless, there were some valuable commentaries on the relevance and purpose of the anecdotes, the principle effect of which was to demonstrate that language often fails to convey any real meaning.

Section 2

Question 5 – Marie-Claire Blais: *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*

About a quarter of candidates addressed **Question 5**, with responses equally balanced between the two options. This is a rather sombre text and Examiners were impressed by the maturity with which candidates dealt with some of its more difficult themes.

- (a) Most candidates gave successful accounts of the importance of Grandma's role in the novel. She is the religious and moral director of the family, she is a contrast with the weak men in the novel, she is enduring and resigned to pain and she strongly believes in the value of education (unlike le père). Although she has a hard exterior, she has a soft heart: she genuinely cares for the children and is strongly protective of Jean Le Maigre and his writings. Perversely, she is comforted by the sorrow she experiences at the death of children, and she takes pleasure in attending to the needs of a dying neighbour. She is the voice of hope at the end of the novel ('L'hiver a été dur, mais le printemps sera meilleur'), though one is left to wonder whether her optimism is justified.
- (b) There were fewer successful answers to **Question 5(b)**, but the better responses detailed the way in which Jean Le Maigre writes and romanticizes his own life in his 'œuvre posthume'. Words are of enormous importance for him, and his poetry transforms his harsh existence into something more magical and passionate. His writings reveal that he does not believe that death is for him, though he also shows that he knows he is going to die. He reveals snatches of information about the family, such as his brother Leopold's suicide, his first love at school and Le Septième's arsonist tendencies. He also exposes the hardship of life in the 'maison de correction' and accurately foretells the fate of Pomme, Le Septième, Héloïse and Emmanuel.

Question 6 – Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

- (a) There were too few responses to **Question 6(a)** to allow for meaningful comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to **Question 6(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 7 – François Mauriac: *Le Désert de l'amour*

- (a) There were too few responses to **Question 7(a)** to allow for meaningful comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to **Question 7(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 8 – Irène Némirovsky: *Tempête en juin (from Suite Française)*

This was a relatively popular text and 60 per cent of candidates addressed the question, with a majority opting for **Question 8(b)**.

- (a) Mme Péricand was well described. She is the backbone of the Péricand family: she organises the family's flight from Paris and does her utmost to hold the family together during the horrors that they experience as refugees (though she rather negligently leaves old Monsieur Péricand behind during her flight). She is something of a snob and is relieved when she is able to talk to people of similar class while on the road. She is charitable, because this is what the Church expects of women of her class, but her generosity is soon withdrawn when she realises that food shortages might threaten her own family. She is motivated by patriotic feeling: she is proud to believe that her son Philippe died doing his duty and she sees Hubert's departure to fight as a manly act. At the end of the novel, she returns to her life of privilege in Paris, largely unscathed by her adventures.

- (b) **Question (b)** was less successfully dealt with. Relatively few candidates were able to recall specific detail of food being mentioned in the novel, perhaps with the exception of Mme Pericand's refusal to allow her children to go on handing out sweets to the masses, and the theft of Gabriel Corte's food parcel. As a result, many candidates were reduced to making rather general comments about shortages of food supplies during armed conflicts, and the difficulties that such shortages might cause. For those candidates who knew the novel well, there was quite a lot to go for, including: the fine food on the Péricand's dining table at the start of the novel, reflecting the family's upper-class status; Gabriel Corte's pleasurable recollection of trout that he had fished from an Austrian river and his dreams of the good food that he had eaten previously in the city of Tours, as hunger starts to gnaw at him; Charles Langelet despising the vulgarity of the common masses that surround him as he stops for food in Montargis and the irony of his death in a road accident while on his way to dinner in Paris; Mme Pericand using her priority ration card to bypass the queues, while the common people wait in line for food.

FRENCH

<p>Paper 8670/42 Texts</p>

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on three separate texts.
- Consider carefully which texts to prepare with their classes: some texts present conceptual problems that might be challenging for some candidates.
- Realise that some candidates might be better off addressing the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1**, which provide a ready-made structure for their answers and therefore offer better options for achieving reasonable to good marks than the freer option **(b)** alternatives, which provide no such inbuilt guidance on how to structure a response.

Teachers should train their candidates to:

- Manage their time in the examination room, ensuring that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.
- Ensure that they do not answer two questions on the same text, remembering that 'soit... soit' means 'either... or'.
- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them and plan their responses before they start to write.
- Stay on track as they write their responses by referring to the question regularly.

Candidates should:

- Label questions with the number, and passage-based questions with **(i)**, **(ii)** and **(iii)**. If passage-based questions are not properly labelled, it can look as though parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** have not been attempted.
- Start each new essay on a fresh page and take care to attach any continuation sheets in order. It is not necessary to write out the text of the question on the answer paper.
- Avoid referring to the author's background, his/her other works and the audience that he/she is addressing, unless this is specifically asked for by the question.
- Commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **Section 1** with an introduction, locating the extract within the text and briefly explaining what events have preceded the extract.
- Ensure that answers to the option **(b)** questions in **Section 1** and all questions in **Section 2** include:
 - An opening paragraph, acknowledging the question and giving a brief indication of how it is to be addressed.
 - A closing paragraph, which should summarise the points made in the essay.

General comments

The passage-based questions were efficiently addressed, for the most part. Stronger responses were able to deal with the detail required by the questions, while at the same time demonstrating good overall knowledge of the texts, often by means of a brief introduction to explain how the extract related to the text as a whole.

Some candidates still attempt to answer the passage-based questions by quoting often lengthy parts of the extract text, but then fail to explain what the quotation illustrates. Quotations should be employed selectively, and candidates must provide their own interpretations.

The essay questions were generally well structured. Candidates should not waste time by describing the background to the work and its author. Narration irrelevant to the question should be avoided – remember that the Examiner has also read the text – but candidates should aim to demonstrate their knowledge of the work while remaining focused on answering the question. Most candidates now recognise the importance of

writing a brief introduction, to show that they have understood the question and to indicate how the question is to be addressed, and a conclusion to summarise the principle findings of the essay.

As always, the better responses were those which were carefully planned (rough notes often shown on the answer paper, although these should be crossed out to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – Molière: *Le Malade imaginaire*

Once again, questions on Molière were attempted by a clear majority of candidates. On this occasion, **Question (a)** was only slightly more popular than **Question (b)**.

- (a) The question was competently answered by many, and the context was well explained.
- (i) Most candidates were quick to identify that Angélique's surprise stemmed from the unexpected visit by her lover, Cléante, who had arrived in the guise of her music teacher. Fear also lay at the root of Angélique's reaction; she had been promised to Thomas Diafoirus and her father had forbidden her to speak to another suitor. Indeed, Argan had threatened to have his daughter committed to a convent if she failed to follow his wishes. Had Cléante arrived to seek her hand in marriage and what might this lead to?
- (ii) All candidates identified the dream that Angélique had invented to disguise her surprise, though many candidates found it necessary to quote at length from the extract, rather than explaining Angélique's subterfuge in their own words. Better responses highlighted just how inventive Angélique's response was; she had hidden the truth from her father and had, at the same time, expressed her gratitude to Cléante for arriving to save her from the distressing situation that now faced her. Cléante, in turn, plays along with this clever deception, though he is not yet aware of the cause of Angélique's distress.
- (iii) Almost all responses highlighted the irony inherent in Cléante's gracious acceptance of Argan's invitation to stay and witness Angélique's first meeting with her intended. Far from being 'honoured', Cléante is shocked to learn that his beloved has been promised to another man. Better responses went on to identify Cléante's subsequent relief when he sees what a fool his rival in love really is, and that his relief is even greater when Angélique is able to tell Cléante, during their spontaneous operetta, that she truly loves him and would rather die than follow her father's wishes.
- (b) The stronger responses to this question dealt with the relationships between the female characters in a logical fashion, (i.e. Angélique/Toinette, Angélique/Béline, Béline/Toinette) and also identified that the young Louison, though perhaps not yet 'une femme', has a role to play in these female relationships. The main points to be noted were:
- Angélique is rather weak and naïve and relies totally on support from her friend and confidante, Toinette, who is a little more worldly-wise and acts as a substitute mother to Angélique and her young sister.
 - Toinette is fully in the picture regarding Angélique and Cléante and is determined to see the two lovers united, regardless of the wishes of her master and mistress.
 - Angélique has no love for her stepmother and is aware that Béline has no love for her. Indeed, she knows that Béline would happily have her and Louison placed in a convent as part of her plans to get her hands on Argan's wealth. However, as an obedient daughter, Angélique cannot stand up to her stepmother.
 - Béline believes that Toinette is a reliable and trustworthy servant, whereas Toinette does all she can to undermine her mistress and is instrumental in bringing about her downfall.
 - Louison is supportive of her sister and tries to lie to her father when he asks about the visitor in Angélique's room, although her resistance soon crumbles.

Question 2 – Émile Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*

Questions on the Zola work were attempted by about a third of the candidates, with **Question 2(a)** being significantly more popular.

- (a) (i) The question led to some confusion. Although most candidates identified that 'le modèle' was the woman who had posed in the studio of one of Laurent's acquaintances, with whom Laurent had subsequently started a relationship, a few candidates felt that what was being referred to was the 'model' or style of life that Laurent had adopted following the murder of Camille. Laurent had taken up with the model because she offered an easy, uncomplicated relationship, and she satisfied his needs. Most candidates felt that Laurent had not harmed Thérèse by starting up this relationship: she was unaware of the affair and, indeed, was beginning to enjoy her freedom and, for a short while, had become attracted to a young candidate. It certainly never crossed Laurent's mind that he was doing any wrong.
- (ii) There were some stronger responses to **Part (ii)**. Most candidates recognised that "cette femme qui le troublait" was Thérèse and went on to describe the start of their adulterous relationship and the events that led to Camille's murder and its immediate aftermath. Regrettably, several candidates went into far too much detail and spent too long on this question, perhaps leaving insufficient time to deal with part (iii) adequately.
- (iii) Still shocked by the horror of the murder they have committed, neither Thérèse nor Laurent is prepared to commit to a permanent relationship and marriage is far from their minds. However, Laurent is starting to think how pointless the murder had been if he was not going to go back to Thérèse. He also fears that Thérèse might betray him to the authorities if he leaves her to her own devices. The unexpected departure of the model suddenly deprives him of his creature comforts and causes him to consider rekindling his physical relationship with Thérèse.
- (b) The question was quite well answered. What was required was a simple account of the novel, starting with the commencement of Laurent's adulterous relationship with Thérèse; the murder of Camille; Laurent's successful attempts to pass off the incident as an accident and how he succeeds presenting himself as the tragic hero; the manner in which he re-ingratiates himself into the Raquin household; his marriage to Thérèse; the steady decline of the lovers' relationship and, finally, their suicide under the hate-filled gaze of Mme Raquin. Those candidates who spent so much time addressing **Question 1(a) part (ii)** might have been better advised to address themselves to this alternative question.

Question 3 – Jean Anouilh: *L'Alouette*

Relatively few candidates addressed **Question 3(a)** and only a handful attempted **3(b)**.

- (a) Many candidates stopped short of developing their answers beyond the detail required by the questions. The answers to all three parts of the question were often very short and did not demonstrate adequate knowledge of the text. As in previous years, there were rather too many examples of candidates providing often irrelevant, pre-learnt material about the author and his works.
- (i) Warwick is impatient. He cannot see why Jeanne should be allowed to tell her story and delay proceedings. As the representative of the English king, his interest is a purely political one: he wants to see Jeanne condemned and the trial concluded as quickly as possible. After all, he knows that Jeanne is going to be burned.
- (ii) Warwick knows that the best outcome for him would be to have Jeanne condemned as a heretic and a 'camp-follower', since such a judgement will be easier for his soldiers to understand. The remark is typical of him: he is a military man and a pragmatist, and he is under pressure to achieve his aims quickly. As several candidates pointed out, Warwick's comments about propaganda and how it is created are probably an allusion by the author to the use of disinformation by the Nazis during the World War that had ended shortly before the play was written.
- (iii) Unlike Warwick, Cauchon is concerned for Jeanne's soul and his approach is more humane. Throughout the play, his principal wish is to allow Jeanne to be given adequate time to tell her story in the hope that she can be persuaded to recant and thus be welcomed back into the Church. Warwick, despite his desire to see the maid burned, is impressed by Jeanne's wit and natural

intelligence, and by the way she has been able to persuade some very powerful people (Charles, Beaudricourt) to bend to her will. Not a lot of candidates grasped this point. Warwick admits that, had Jeanne been of his class, he would have happily gone foxhunting with her.

(b) Question 3 (b) was attempted by only a handful of candidates and very few were successful in describing why '*L'Alouette*' might (or might not) be a fitting title for the play. Examiners were looking for themes such as:

- Like the skylark that sings at the break of day, Jeanne flutters above the heads of Charles and the Angevins, offering hope and optimism for the future.
- She is innocent and carefree and has no ulterior motive beyond that of completing her divine mission.
- Like a small bird, occupying only a very minor place in the animal kingdom, Jeanne has no pretensions to glory and status. The philosophical arguments used against her by the Promoter and Inquisitor go way over her head. But, led by her voices, she has no fear of standing up to nobility, bishops and princes.
- She has no doubt that she is one of God's creatures and that God is directing her actions, but, like a small bird, she is now caught in a cage from which she cannot escape

Question 4 – Jean Anouilh: *La Cantatrice chauve*

The question was attempted by some 15% of candidates, almost all of them dealing with **4(a)**.

- (a) (i)** Candidates dealt with this question quite efficiently, describing the 'theory' (that someone must be at the door when the doorbell rings) which is supported by the men, and the 'reality' (that in practice nobody is there when Mme Martin goes to the door) which the women support. All of the characters attempt in vain to use logic to describe what is happening, but, to the Absurdist, the world is unknowable and any attempt to apply logic to interpret it is doomed to failure.
- (ii)** The women are strongly united against the men, who are slightly less unanimous in their views. There is far less loyalty between the married couples: there is no proper communication at all between M. and Mme Smith, who talk in clichés and non-sequiturs and seem entirely isolated. As for the Martins, they had not even been able to recognise one another, let alone act as man and wife when ushered into the Smith's living room. Although the Martins subsequently 'rediscovered' one another, their joy was superficial, and they remain as distant as they ever were.
- (iii)** Part **(iii)** was well answered: all candidates identified that it was the Capitaine des Pompiers who was at the door. (He had been there for three quarters of an hour, so knew that no one had been there when the bell had been rung on the first two occasions. He had then rung the doorbell, but had hidden...just for a laugh!). He had come on the off-chance that there might be a fire to extinguish in the property. He stays and recounts several bizarre anecdotes to entertain the two couples, before meeting the maid, Mary, who – it transpires – is his long-lost lover. The fire chief leaves to attend to a fire which is shortly to break out on the other side of town.
- (b)** There were too few answers to allow for meaningful comment.

Section 2

Question 5 – Marie-Claire Blais: *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*

This is a rather sombre text and Examiners were impressed by the maturity with which candidates addressed some of its more difficult themes.

- (a)** Most candidates gave successful accounts of Héloïse's progress from religious aesthete, to her expulsion from the convent, to her installation at the brothel. The majority felt that this progression represented an improvement for her. After all, just like at the convent, she finds peace and satisfaction, good food and comfort, but here she could give vent to her urges without fear of criticism, and she was also able to send money home to help pay for Pomme's medical fees.
- (b)** There were fewer successful answers to **Question 5(b)**, but the better responses referred both to the hardship of the bitter Canadian winter and to the severity of the environment in which Emmanuel and his brothers and sisters had to live. As Jean Le Maigre comments: "C'est l'hiver partout". The author creates an oppressive picture of a family that is as hard as the winters it

endures; desperate poverty, overcrowding, dirt, disease, death; all of these form the day to day background in a household where casual violence is commonplace and where education has no place. Can anything justify Grand-mère's optimism at the end of the novel: "Oui, ce sera un beau printemps..."?

Question 6 – Jean-Marie Gustave le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

There were comparatively few attempts at **Question 6**, but responses were equally divided between **6(a)** and **6(b)**.

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer satisfactory portraits of Mam and Laure, but found it difficult to compare and contrast the two. Mam is calm and comforting. She is responsible for the education of the two children and represents safety and stability in their lives (unlike Papa, whose financial recklessness ultimately causes the family's downfall). It is Mam's soothing voice that remains with Alexis after his mother's death. Laure and Alexis have a very close, almost telepathic relationship. Alexis can feel what his sister is thinking. It is to her that he dedicates his search for treasure and it is about her (not Mam or Ouma) that he thinks when he is facing death in the trenches at the Somme. Though their characters are different, both Mam and Laure are similarly affected by the family's ruin and the death of Papa. Sharing a life of poverty in Forest Side, Mam becomes taciturn and sombre before her death. Laure becomes embittered and withdrawn.
- (b) Though most candidates recognised the importance of nature as a theme within the novel, relatively few were able to provide specific detail of the several ways in which this was conveyed by the author. The better responses covered: the importance of the sea for Alexis, both as a source of comfort, and as a beacon of hope and adventure (the novel starts and ends with the sound of the sea); the nostalgic landscape of Boucan Bay, with its rock pools and cane fields; the hurricane that brought about the family's downfall and precipitated Alexis' departure to search for treasure; the gradual decline from the rugged landscape of Rodrigues to the desolation of the trenches at the Somme and the storm that shipwrecks the Zeta, signalling the end of Alexis' dream. It was particularly disappointing that so few candidates mentioned the importance of the descriptions of the stars, constellations and shooting stars, the latter signalling not optimism, but impending tragedy for Alexis and his father.

Question 7 – François Mauriac: *Le Désert de l'amour*

Just under 30% of candidates attempted **Question 7**, with most candidates opting for **7(a)**.

- (a) There were some very strong responses to this question. Maria Cross is, of course, the central character in the novel and it is around her that the stories of Paul Courrèges and his son develop. Maria's refusal to reciprocate Paul's feelings causes Dr. Courrèges to rededicate himself to a life of hard work, though not to any meaningful reconciliation with his wife and family. By contrast, Maria's rejection and humiliation of Raymond Courrèges leads him to a life of lonely debauchery in Paris, where his overriding aim is to meet with and take his revenge on Maria. Maria is, nevertheless, instrumental in bringing about a partial reconciliation between father and son at the end of the novel.
- (b) Responses to **7(b)** were also satisfactory, though fewer in number than **7(a)**. Father and son are unable to talk to each other. Dr. Courrèges has genuine affection for his son, but is unable to communicate this to him. Indeed, he fears that his son hates him. Perhaps owing to the lack of affection at home, Raymond has become a sullen, difficult teenager, who is reviled as a bully at School. Nevertheless, it is Maria, rather than Dr. Courrèges, who has the greatest impact on Raymond's life. As he falls for the lady on the trolleybus, Raymond grows in maturity and starts to take greater care of his appearance. His humiliating rejection by Maria sends Raymond on a downward spiral. It is only towards the end of the novel, when Raymond is once again dismissed by Maria, that he comes to understand the pain of unrequited love that his father has suffered for so many years.

Question 8 – Irène Némirovsky: *Tempête en juin (from Suite Française)*

A relatively popular text, with most candidates opting for **Question 8(a)**.

- (a) Most candidates gave an opinion on whether Mme Péricand had been correct in her assessment of Hubert's 'évasion', although rather too many candidates based their opinion on a personal reaction,

rather than using the content of the text to justify their view. Was his action 'irréfléchi, indiscipliné'? In many ways it was. Hubert's decision to leave was at least in part a reaction to his mother's refusal to let him go, a desire to stand up to her and show that he could go it alone. He was, however, totally unprepared for the horrors that met him and was relieved to find his way back to his family. And yet, he had been burning with patriotic fervour and a desire to go and fight for his country long before the family fled Paris. And his action was probably also 'digne d'un homme', at very least by comparison with many of the men fleeing Paris with him (Gabriel Corte, Charles Langelet, for example), whose only thought was for personal safety and the protection of their assets.

- (b) **Question (b)** was attempted by fewer candidates. Better responses dealt with the theme of isolation by examining in turn the characters who had been forced to flee Paris. The Péricand family were never truly isolated; they travelled by car, with domestic staff, and had relatives to stay with along their route. Nevertheless, Mme Péricand's charity is severely tested on the road; Hubert is isolated as he leaves to fight the enemy; and old M. Péricand is forgotten and left to die on his own as the family flees. Philippe Péricand is isolated in several senses; he has no relation whatsoever with the troupe of savage orphans that he leads; he dies alone, isolated from family and friends; and he is also isolated from God, whose grace he is unable to bring to his young protégés. Gabriel Corte is isolated and horrified amidst the mass of teeming humanity that surrounds him. Charles Langelet isolates himself, focussing solely on his art treasures and shunning human company. M. Corbin isolates himself from his workers, believing he has special rights based on his position of power. The only characters who do not suffer from isolation are the Michauds, who are supported by their love for each other; Jean-Marie Michaud, who is supported by the farming family as he recovers in the country; and Arlette Corail, who tends always to fall on her feet.