



A-level **French**

7652/2

Report on the examination

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General

There was ample evidence this year of thorough and targeted preparation for questions on this paper. Essays evidenced real engagement with and interest in the literary works and films that had been studied. Essays in the excellent and good ranges for their critical and analytical response showed an ability to address the specific focus of the chosen questions, to make points concisely and with clarity, and to support points with well-chosen and appropriate evidence and knowledge. Such answers had the additional feature of having been carefully and thoughtfully planned. Less successful responses were those in which the question set had been misinterpreted or where some element of the questions had been mistakenly seen as an opportunity to rework a previously written answer.

The vast majority of students opted to answer on one text and one film. The order of popularity for the literary texts was *No et moi* (1805 responses), *L'étranger* (1101), and *Un sac de billes* (742).

Kiffe kiffe demain attracted 328 answers, *Bonjour Tristesse* 326, *Un secret* 131 and *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre* 150. The other works were chosen by fewer than a hundred students.

La Haine remained by far the most popular film with 3096 essays seen on this work; *Au revoir les enfants* was the chosen film of 768 students, while *Entre les murs* attracted 278 responses. The remaining films were studied as follows: *L'auberge espagnole* (122), *Les 400 coups* (157) and *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (111).

Comments on individual works are given in the following sections. Percentages in brackets relate to the percentage of students achieving a mark for AO4 in the top two bands of marks i.e. where the critical and analytical response was judged to be either excellent or good.

Section A : Books

Le Tartuffe

Question 1.1. (55%) The best answers here dealt successfully and in detail with the two parts to the question, providing a very accurate analysis of Elmire's character and assessing her importance in the play especially in terms of her interventions to expose the true nature of Tartuffe to her husband Orgon. Less successful answers focused only on aspects of her character.

Question 1.2. (58%) This question was dealt with very confidently and many answers demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of Tartuffe's contribution to the comic elements of the play. The quotation was designed to invite general disagreement and was successful in allowing students to analyse in detail Tartuffe's importance as a comic character.

Candide

Question 2.1. (50%) The best answers here dealt in a balanced way with the nature of the relationship between the two characters of Candide and Cunégonde, their separations and reunions, the trials they each endured and how this affected them as individuals and their relationship as a couple. In this way, the development of their relationship was addressed and analysed. Less successful answers relied too much on narration with little or no evaluation of how events and incidents affected the relationship.

Question 2.2. (70%) This question proved more accessible than the first in terms of the quality of the critical and analytical response. Students demonstrated a very good working knowledge of the philosophy of Optimism and how Voltaire set out to ridicule this through the story.

Boule de suif et autres contes de la guerre

Question 3.1. (50%) Significantly fewer students opted for this question. Some dealt with Maupassant's stylistic mastery of the short story genre quite effectively, but the question also prompted some to simply narrate the events of *Boule de Suif* with little analysis that was relevant to the question.

Question 3.2. (61%) This was well handled by a good number of students with well-argued responses that outlined very clearly how Maupassant presents ordinary people as victims. The stories to support the points made were well chosen. In a small number of cases, students attempted to rework a previous essay by arguing rather unconvincingly that German soldiers and officers were the ordinary people Maupassant depicts as victims.

L'étranger

Question 4.1. (61%) This was by far the more popular of the two questions and the most successful answers here dealt very succinctly and coherently with the importance of Meursault's trial both as a critique of the judicial system and an illustration of the main points of Camus's philosophy. Less effective answers recounted the trial itself but did not address its importance.

Question 4.2. (58%) This was a more challenging question, but it was well answered by a significant number of those who opted to do it, many arguing that Meursault's character has both philosophical and psychological interest and defending their arguments with well-chosen evidence. There were some excellent responses at the top end of the range here.

Bonjour Tristesse

Question 5.1. (68%) Successful responses here addressed the two elements of the question of Cécile's lack of discipline and her being out of control as separate aspects. The understanding of her upbringing with few, if any, boundaries was explained with clarity as was her reaction to Anne's attempts to bring discipline into her life. The most convincing answers illustrated how Cécile's successful manipulation of others showed that she was very much in control.

Question 5.2. (76%) This question was very successfully handled with a detailed understanding of how opposing values create the conflict and drama in the novel, and with a clear appreciation of how division and discord are generated by the clash of characters, lifestyles and moral codes.

Elise ou la vraie vie

Question 6.1. The number of scripts for this work means that any statistical analysis is invalid. This question was the more successful of the two and the treatment of and attitudes towards the Arab immigrants was well documented.

Question 6.2. Responses here dealt with a character study of Henri but did not address the second, and really the more significant, aspect of his importance in the work.

Un sac de billes

Question 7.1. (66%) This was the more popular of the two questions and those students that concentrated on just the character of Jo, his gains, his losses, scored very well. There was plenty of accurate and detailed evidence to support the points made. Some students lost their way somewhat with this question and allowed themselves to recount Jo's and Maurice's adventures, which clearly brought in the wrong focus.

Question 7.2. (60%) This question involved some element of choice in terms of the analysis of the importance of characters that do not share the Joffo family name. All such characters were acceptable provided the student addressed the importance of the characters chosen. A minority of students tried to switch the focus of the question, arguing that the important characters were the family members and then proceeding to present an analysis of them. This alternative response was not convincing.

Kiffe kiffe demain

Question 8.1. (52%) Though this was the less popular of the two questions, there were some very good responses to this question with clear and detailed documentation of how Yasmina changes, not just in terms of what happens to her but, more significantly, how she responds and reacts to these events, so that by the end of the novel, she and her life are very different.

Question 8.2. (60%) In most answers, students agreed with the quotation and did so with sound arguments and solid evidence, concentrating on the plight of Yasmina, Doria and Tante Zohra, and how their abandonment showed them to be victims. Some argued that not all male members of the community were chauvinistic, and not all female members of the community allowed themselves to be dominated.

Un secret

Question 9.1. (59%) Most students opted for this question. The best answers here showed a sound understanding and appreciation of the chronological structure of the novel and this was well-explained. The significance and impact of the narrator's discoveries about his family's life under the Occupation were well-documented.

Question 9.2. (34%) This was less successfully dealt with. The key element of this question was the growing threat the Germans represented for the Jewish population and an effective answer relied on an understanding and explanation of the incremental nature of the threat and the character's changing and varied reactions to it. Such an answer therefore had to explore beyond the mere presence of the Germans in the novel.

No et moi

Question 10.1. (62%) About two thirds of students opted for this first question and there were some excellent and good answers that explored fully how de Vigan evokes sympathy for the homeless, primarily, though not exclusively, through the character of No. Some students did not see beyond the word *sympathie* in the question and dealt with how the reader feels sympathy for characters such as Lou, Lucas and even Lou's mother and father. Such answers were clearly off-target.

Question 10.2. (51%) There were clearly two aspects to this question, namely Lou's intelligence and her naivety. The first of these aspects was far more successfully dealt with than the second: there was ample evidence offered to support the view that Lou is intelligent and the best answers outlined equally convincingly how Lou can be seen to be naïve; how unaware she appears to be of the dangers of undertaking her research and how she believes she can

change No's life for the better. A lack of balance between the quality of the evidence offered in respect of these two aspects characterised many answers here.

Section B : Films

Les 400 coups

Question 11.1. (69%) This was by far the more popular of the two questions on this film and was dealt with very well. Most agreed with the quotation that Antoine can be considered a prisoner in all aspects of his life and used sound evidence from the film to support their arguments and opinions. Many made the point that even at the end of the film when Antoine has escaped and found his freedom, it is questionable whether he is, in fact, truly free.

Question 11.2. (69%) In response to this question there were some very good and good answers that showed a clear understanding of those aspects of the film that account for its realism. This question was tackled on both a thematic and technical level and many answers combined the two aspects. Many students treated this question in the context of the wider *Nouvelle Vague* movement of which Truffaut was a leading exponent.

Au revoir les enfants

Question 12.1. (59%) This was the more popular question with about two thirds of students opting to tackle it. Many responses treated the two boys' experience of the loss of their childhood as being very similar but the case they made for Julien was not as convincing as that made for Jean. Only the very best answers drew a distinction between the loss of childhood as experienced by Jean and that experienced by Julien.

Question 12.2. (65%) What distinguished the good and very good responses from the more reasonable or limited ones here was the attention paid, in the question, to the **effects** of the presence of the Germans in France. Many answers dealt with the evidence of the presence of the enemy, and did so with accuracy and in some detail, but then overlooked the question of the effects.

La Haine

Question 13.1. (60%) There were some excellent responses to this question where students showed a full understanding of the similarities and differences between Hubert and Vinz, and appreciation of their different values and attitudes, aspirations and ambitions, and of their shared experiences as *banlieusards*. Not all students answering this question kept to a focus on these two characters but misused this as an opportunity to write in more general terms about *notre trio*.

Question 13.2. (64%) Answers here provided generally well-documented evidence of the tension and friction, hostility and violence between the police and the *banlieusards* which was the focus required of the question. Reference was made to representatives of the police who show a more sympathetic and supportive attitude. There were cases where various representatives of the police were misnamed, and this led to confused answers.

L'auberge espagnole

Question 14.1. (54%) Successful answers addressed in a thoughtful and balanced way the two elements of the question namely an analysis of the characters of Jean-Michel and Anne-Sophie **and** their importance in Xavier's life. The characters were often depicted for their individual traits as well as for the relationship that exists between the two of them. Reference was made to the effects of the affair between Xavier and Anne-Sophie on all parties concerned.

Question 14.2. (61%) This question was generally well-answered, and responses offered a carefully thought through answer that dealt both with the importance of the setting of the apartment, the interaction between characters, and the day-to-day dramas within that small community, but also with the interest of events and relationships happening beyond the confines of this setting. Such a reaction to the quotation allowed for some very detailed and accurate analyses of the film.

Un long dimanche de fiançailles

Question 15.1. (70%) Fewer than a quarter of students opted for this question but those who did were generally successful in dealing with the significance of each of the elements identified in the question – the letters MMM, the German boots and the red glove. This involved some quite complex explanations and these were handled well.

Question 15.2. (64%) This was well-answered generally. There was evidence of a real appreciation of some of the technical features of Jeunet's treatment of images of the war and life in the trenches. In some cases, the importance of this historical context was overlooked or dealt with in less detail and with less conviction.

Entre les murs

Question 16.1. (56%) This was the more popular of the Cantet questions and where evidence had been carefully thought out, answers were well argued and well supported with reference to the friction, tension and conflict in evidence in Monsieur Marin's classroom. In some cases, however, too much attention was given to petty squabbles between students and so some of the drama of the classroom was overlooked.

Question 16.2. (55%) Many of the answers here dealt with individual students and their characters and behaviour, and some were successful in relating this to the socio-economic *milieu* of children of immigrants. The situation of Wei's parents and of Souleymane's family was well documented.

For future reference, teachers and students are reminded that it is generally unhelpful to learn and use quotations in answers, and that the use of quotations *per se* is not rewarded within the mark scheme. There was evidence again this year of answers that were structured according to a sequence of quotations without any regard for the relevance or appropriateness of these, where the student was obviously making the inclusion of pre-learned quotations a greater priority than presenting a logically structured response to the questions chosen. There was ample evidence too, sadly, of incorrect and inaccurate quotations, or of single-word quotations lifted from a text or film that really had no value or significance.

Assessment Objective 3

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

- Knowledge of subject pronouns relevant to the works. There were many instances where Lou and No, or Doria and her mother, or indeed any combination of female characters were referred to as *ils*.
- Similarly, the correct use of direct and indirect object pronouns.
- The correct use of possessive adjectives, linking this again to characters so that accurate distinctions are made between *son, sa ses*, and *leur, leurs*.
- Not using incorrect shortened forms of possessive adjectives (*s'* before a vowel).
- Understanding the differences and so sorting out confusion between *et / est* and *ces / c'est*.
- Concentrating on accurate verb formations especially in the Present Tense.
- Targeting key Irregular verbs in the Present Tense.
- Getting the names of characters right.

Related to all of this, an appeal to address illegal handwriting and the excessive use of asterisks linking something mid-paragraph to an additional point at the end of the essay. Examiners no longer mark hard-copy scripts where a page can be quickly turned to track such additional points. On-screen marking means using 'PgDn' to find the relevant point and then moving back to the point reached in the script. Essay planning would significantly reduce the need for crossings out and asterisked after-thoughts.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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