

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2007**

FRENCH

FRENCH**CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS****MAY/JUNE 2007****GENERAL COMMENTS**

The candidate entry for French continues to increase. The 2007 examination had a combined 501 candidates sitting the examination compared with 360 in 2006. This represents an increase of 39 per cent. Performance in Unit 1 compared favourably with that of 2006, while for Unit 2 performance surpassed that of 2006. Teachers are encouraged to continue exposing students to situations in which they can develop their four language skills.

DETAILED COMMENTS**UNIT 1****Paper 01 – Listening Comprehension**

This paper required candidates to respond, in English, to a series of questions based on five short selections and one extended interview. The selections and interview were recorded in French. For the first time, the passages were recorded on compact disc instead of on audio cassette. Candidates were able to listen to individual CDs or to one CD for the entire class.

Candidates attempted to answer most questions and there were very few cases of the last question being left undone because of insufficient time.

Section A - Short SelectionsSelection 1

Topic: *A visit to an old lady in Accra, Ghana*

Candidates found this selection challenging. Many were unable to recognize “*ghanéenne*” as the adjective from Ghana, and so “Guinea” was given as the country in many cases. The spelling of “Accra” was problematic. The description of the physical and mental condition of the old lady had candidates guessing that she was “weak”, “dirty” and “senile”. Many did not understand “*édentée*”, but a pleasing number knew “*aveugle*”. Surprisingly, “*mais alerte*” was sometimes given as the opposite, “not alert”, a tendency that was repeated later in the examination.

Relatively few candidates got “lying on a mattress in a (small) room” for question (c), with answers ranging from “in the Ministry” to “in a rocking chair”. The word “*parents*”, (“relatives”) was not understood, nor was the preceding section “*sa fille et sa petite – fille sont décédées avant elle*”.

Selection 2

Topic: *The fate of French language in Lebanon*

The majority of the candidates were able to get the numbers right in question (b) “25 or 26 years” and (e) “26 per cent”. Many were misled, however, by the phrase “*il y a un demi-siècle*”, and mention of the year “1946” in answering question (b).

Question (a) posed quite a challenge: “*Liban*” was often given instead of “Lebanon”, as well as many other countries as “France, Morocco, Bolivia...”

Candidates were able to score marks for (c) but few knew “*arabe*”. Although the word “*engouement*”, was not familiar to many, candidates were still able to grasp the idea that English was extremely popular throughout the world. However, many candidates missed the point about the lack of a French presence, opting for answers such as “politics”, “war in the country” and even the contradictory answer “the presence of the French language”.

Selection 3

Topic: *M. Poubelle’s invention of metallic garbage bins*

Generally, this section was satisfactorily done. Questions (a) and (b) were understood by many candidates, although several were unsure of the meaning of “*boîtes métalliques*” in (a), referring to “bottles” and “mechanical devices”. In Question (c), candidates did not understand “*d’insalubrité de la capitale*” but were able to score marks by referring to “a dirty capital”, “pollution”, or other representations of insanitary conditions.

In Question (d) many understood that the vehicles had limited space, but “*difficile d’accès*” was interpreted as “access to the city” instead of to the vehicle. The vast majority of candidates did not understand “*ouverts à tous les vents*”.

Selection 4

Topic: *Pollution in China*

Although many candidates did not understand “*s’extasiant*” and “*essor économique*”, they were able to grasp the contrast between the economy in China and the pollution there. The following answer gained full marks: “Although the economy is booming, pollution continues to harm the country and gases affect them.”

Not many candidates were able to grasp the comparison between China and the United States in question (b), that is, that pulmonary or liver disease would affect or kill five times as many people in China than in the United States. A number of candidates introduced extraneous ideas such as population control into their answers for both questions (b) and (c).

Selection 5

Topic: *The paper industry and the environment*

This selection required candidates to place a tick next to the four correct sentences out of eight. **In spite of clear instructions which were highlighted in capital letters that only FOUR sentences should be ticked, a number of candidates exceeded that number.**

Candidates performed very well in this section. Errors occurred most often in the selections of (a) instead of (b) and (e) instead of (f).

Section B – Extended Interview

Selection 6

Topic: *A presentation on Hindu Gods*

The performance on this selection was varied, ranging from excellent to poor. The vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions. Although the topic may have been unfamiliar to many candidates, a satisfactory number of them were still able to understand to a fair degree.

In question 6 (a), many candidates misinterpreted “*créateur par excellence*” to mean that Brahma represented excellence. The phrase “*grand discriminateur*” appeared in several forms, but many candidates wrote the opposite – “he does not discriminate”.

In question 6 (b) no candidate was able to get “the Sikhs call him the Nameless One” – “*les Sikhs l’appellent le Non*” but marks were gained from several other possible answers, “the divine principle”, “neutral”, “has no form... .” Candidates were required to say that Vishnu and Shiva represented aspects of Brahma, but their origin “*d’origine dravidienne, du sud de l’Inde*”, proved challenging.

Most candidates, for question (d), were able to name three of several phenomena with which Shiva is associated, for example, “flames”, “birth”, “life and death”, “destruction”, “inaccessible things”, but (e) was more difficult. A common error was to interpret “*jeu de la vie*” as “joy of life”. Many candidates understood however, that Vishnu represented love, feelings, sensations, things that are understood by mankind.

Question (f), the description of Rama, proved challenging for candidates. In question (g), candidates often omitted that Krishna was a model in his relationship with men/women/nature. The last question, (h), was well answered.

It is recommended that students practise listening to French programmes and speaking in French on a regular basis as this type of exercise is new to most Unit 1 candidates. Students should also try to broaden their vocabulary and their general knowledge of francophone culture.

Paper 02 – Reading and Writing

Section A – Reading Comprehension

Candidate performance on this paper was satisfactory, considering that for the most part, candidates are just one year advanced on their CSEC French examination.

Passage 1: *Sueurs Froides*

While this passage was challenging for some of the candidates, many were able to understand and extract information from the text. The vocabulary used was generally well understood. The words “*badauds*” a synonym for “*passant*” and the verb “*trinquer*” – “to take the rap,” proved the most problematic for candidates.

Many candidates were able to supply an adequate response for questions (b) “How does the author use the case of the consumption of wine to support the idea of moderation?” and (d) “What psychological and social reasons are given to justify physical training?” but could only provide an acceptable response to the first half of question (c) “What are the general benefits and limitations of physical activity in terms of fitness?”. They were able to provide the benefits but were not as successful in understanding the limitations. Question (e) “In what way can physical training become a case of social irony?” was also a challenge for many candidates. However, questions (f) – (j), which required candidates to find synonyms, were generally answered correctly. The overall performance was satisfactory.

Passage 2: *L’évaluation environnementale au Québec méridional*

The majority of candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. The questions that indicated exactly where answers were to be located in the passage [(a), (d) and (f)] were answered more correctly than the others. Several candidates repeated the same answers for different questions.

It is recommended that teachers extend the variety of passages used for reading comprehension practice so that students may be able to perform more competently when responding to passages based on different topics from the content section of a specific Module.

Section B - Essays

This section required candidates to write an essay, in French, of 250-300 words on one of five topics. This section tested candidates' ability to express themselves in French in a thoughtful, reasonably mature and well structured way on a theme related to current issues as outlined in the syllabus.

Examiners were looking for essays with a brief general introduction, three – five paragraphs focusing on the different angles of the topic and a brief conclusion. Candidates' performance on this section was satisfactory.

Question 3

Very few candidates opted to answer this question. Those who attempted it, however, for the most part, performed satisfactorily. Candidates' main weakness in this essay is that they failed to make a proper link between "Le chômage" and "le racisme".

Question 4

The majority of candidates answered this question and performed reasonably well. In most cases they were able to give appropriate answers to the topic dealing with reasons for poverty. Nevertheless, there were those candidates who failed to develop their ideas fully.

Question 5

This topic was rather challenging for those who attempted it. Candidates generally focused on one aspect of the question (*la religion*) rather than on the passivity of religious leaders and how this might relate to corruption.

Question 6

Candidates generally misinterpreted this question. However, many discussed what education or a good education entails, but did not necessarily respond to the demands of the question which required them to link the system of education in developing countries to the needs of society.

Question 7

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. Many failed to explain their concept of the child and what was needed for their protection.

It is recommended that teachers place greater attention on getting students to learn how to correctly analyse an essay topic so as to ensure that they provide a full response to the issue which is to be discussed.

Paper 03 – Literary Analysis and Themes

This paper was divided into two sections. In Section A candidates were required to analyse an extract from one of the four prescribed literary texts (1) *L'Enfant noir* (2) *L'Odeur du café* (3) *L'Etranger* (4) *Une si longue lettre*. Candidates were expected to describe and analyse plot, setting, character and narrative techniques.

Section B consisted of four questions. Candidates were expected to write an essay, in English, of between 350 – 400 words on one of the questions. This section was divided into two parts, each with a different theme. The themes were "*La Jeunesse*" and "*L'Individu et la Société*". In answering the question it was required that candidates focus on one of the literary texts that had been studied.

Section A - Literary Analysis

1. *L'Enfant noir*

This extract was very popular and candidates seemed comfortable with the theme of youth. Yet there were some areas of difficulty for some of those who chose to answer the questions on this extract.

- (i) Instead of referring to the paragraphs indicated (first and last paragraphs), some candidates referred to the entire extract.
- (ii) Some candidates ignored the fact that the questions asked for “physical evidence”.
- (iii) Candidates focused on the Kondén Diara event and not other details which were more obvious.
- (iv) Some candidates misinterpreted the word “*texte*” and responded based on the entire work rather than the extract.

2. *L'Odeur du café*

The least number of candidates attempted this question. It was reasonably well done by those who attempted it. However, some candidates misinterpreted question (c) and spoke of the way in which Borno was courteous to Da instead of the way in which Da was courteous to Borno

3. *L'Etranger*

This was the second most popular question and was generally answered very well by candidates. However, in question (b) some candidates were only able to see unity among the Arabs, overlooking the relationship between Raymond, Masson and Meursault.

4. *Une si longue lettre*

This question was generally well answered by the majority of candidates. However, some candidates were not able to understand fully the requirements of questions (b) and (c) and as a result gave the same answer to both questions.

Candidates must be encouraged to carefully study questions so that their responses will be as complete as possible.

Section B - Themes

Though some introductions were not very well done, there were several commendable attempts by candidates at conclusions. Some candidates spent too much time giving information on the author and the author's background rather than concentrating on the question. Candidates need to be encouraged to spend some time analysing a question before attempting to give a response. These are areas which should engage the attention of teachers so that there will be overall general improvement in the quality of essays.

5. *Carefree and thoughtless*

“Thoughtless” was interpreted in many ways, for example, (i) giving no thought to others; (ii) wicked and ruthless; (iii) doing things without considering their seriousness. This variety of interpretations led to a variety of points of view. This was not a very popular question but was the best answered by candidates.

6. *Young people are essentially all the same*

This was the least popular question, but was also as well answered as the other essays. The main weakness of candidates was in their being unable to show in what ways there were close similarities among young people. They suggested that youths generally had the same experiences, but were not always successful in linking this fact to the characters which were being discussed.

7. *The main characters suffer so much because they are so different*

Candidates dealt with the idea of their suffering but did not, in some cases, agree that the main characters suffered because of their differences. Candidates were sometimes able to put forward other reasons for their suffering. This was the most popular question and the performance of the candidates was good.

8. *The pessimistic side of human relationships emphasized in literature*

Candidates did not fully understand the word “pessimistic”, hence there were many misinterpretations as a result. Some candidates were of the view that other things were being emphasized and thus totally strayed from the focus of the question. Nevertheless, the few candidates who attempted this question performed well.

Unit 2

Paper 01

This paper required candidates to respond, in English, to a series of questions based on five short selections and one extended interview. The selections and interview were recorded in French. For the first time, the passages were recorded on compact disc instead of on audio cassette. Candidates were able to listen to individual CDs or to one CD for the entire class.

The overall performance of the candidates was good.

Section A – Short Selections

Selection 1

Topic: *Human rights and the handicapped*

This selection was well managed by candidates. Most candidates understood that walking and cultivating one’s land were activities regarded as human rights, but very few were able to add “without stepping on a mine”. The majority of candidates said that Jean Baptiste Richardier was the (co)director but several thought that “*cofondateur*” meant “coordinator”. “Handicap International”, the organization he founded, was not always rendered properly. The other major difficulty experienced by candidates was in defining the goal of NGO - **rehabilitation**, caring for the vulnerable or improving the quality of the care they received. A number of candidates tried to provide answers in keeping with the general topic of human rights.

Selection 2

Topic: *The challenges of the drug trade*

The performance was quite good. Candidates were able to identify ways in which drug abuse and drug trafficking have affected institutions (undermining of institutions, political instability, weakened governments, corruption) and the areas that would require additional funds (health and law). The answer to question (d), on productive investment, was rendered in many and varied forms. The main difficulty for the majority of candidates was the word “*pervers*”, required to complete the description of the effect of the drug trade in question (a).

Selection 3

Topic: *Fluctuations in the price of oil*

Candidates were generally challenged by the questions and so the overall performance was only satisfactory. Candidates were required to give figures for the range within which oil prices fluctuated (\$10 - \$30) and what the experts hoped for (a price of \$25 per barrel). This part was very well done. Many candidates failed, however, to understand what risk some countries envisaged (a fall in the demand for oil). The type of person to which oil was compared (question a), was difficult for most candidates. Several words were not interpreted properly, for example, “*trublion*” a “troublemaker”, was rendered as a “troubled person” and “*qui sème la panique*” - “one who creates panic”, as “a person who panics”.

Selection 4

Topic: *Challenges facing farmers*

This selection proved the most difficult for a large number of candidates.

The answer to question (a) on the comment made about the prices of agricultural products “*en chute libre*” produced the opposite remark – that they were skyrocketing, or had increased. Many candidates were unable to identify any of the crises being faced (question b) – mad cow disease, bird flu, fevers and dioxin. Again, most candidates were able to understand the numbers in (c) “900” and (d) “a half”, but the rest of the answer for question (c) proved challenging: “*900 exploitations agricoles cessent leurs activités*”.

Selection 5

Topic: *Tourism in the Caribbean*

This selection was very well done, with the vast majority of candidates selecting at least three out of the four correct sentences. The choice between (g) and (h) was difficult for some who chose to say that economic prospects were improving, when in fact the expression used was “*tendent à s’assombrir*” – “are becoming gloomy”.

Section B - Extended InterviewSelection 6

Topic: *Carpal tunnel syndrome*

This selection dealt with medical issues (Module 2). Carpal tunnel syndrome was a topic which was unfamiliar to many, but most candidates performed satisfactorily. Most candidates were able to identify three of the elements of the body making up the carpal tunnel: Veins, arteries, ligaments. Bone - “*d’os*” was interpreted as “back” by some, while others included “blood and other parts of the body”.

Many candidates did not understand “*tendons*” but many others did. The role of the synovial sheath, to lubricate, was difficult for some. However, many candidates gained full marks for what could provoke pain: “an increase or decrease in the volume of the contents of the carpal tunnel”. Candidates had few difficulties selecting two symptoms from the list which included cramps, swollen fingers, painful sensations, electric shocks, pins and needles.

Some candidates were unable to say what happened when the patient awoke during the night – “the patient shakes his hand and moves his fingers”. However, most were able to describe the pain and its effects during the day, that is, it became more frequent and prevented certain movements such as buttoning a shirt. Some candidates who did not understand the passage said that the pain became less during the day.

The last two questions proved to be challenging. The vocabulary was problematic: “*sensibilité*” and “*épaississement des gaines synoviales*” were not understood. Most candidates attempted an answer but were unable to write that fingers gradually lost sensitivity and that if left untreated, fingers could become clumsy. Similarly, many did not produce the answer required for the last question, that is, “thickening of the synovial sheath which surrounds the tendon”.

It is recommended that students be encouraged to listen to a variety of programmes in French as well as make efforts to look at French television programmes. This will greatly enhance their ability to understand French spoken in different registers, and of course improve their examination performance.

Paper 02 – Reading and Writing

Section A – Reading Comprehension

Passage 1: *Démocratie*

The performance of students was very good with the majority of candidates falling in the 16 – 24 range.

Passage 2: *Le Tourisme*

The performance of students on this question was quite satisfactory, with most of the candidates obtaining a mark of 50 per cent and above. Many of the candidates were able to respond competently to questions in their own words, in French.

Section B - Essays

This section required candidates to write an essay, in French, of 250-300 words on one of five topics. This section tested candidates’ ability to express themselves in French in a thoughtful, reasonably mature and well structured way on a theme related to current issues as outlined in the syllabus. Examiners were looking for essays with a brief general introduction, three – five paragraphs focusing on the different angles of the topic and a brief conclusion. Candidates’ performance on this section generally ranged from satisfactory to good.

Question 3, which dealt with attitudes to the computer, and question 6 which focused on videos, were the most popular essays. Question 4 which dealt with the “canning industry” was in at least one case misinterpreted, since there was confusion with the words “*conserve*” and “*conservation*”.

Paper 03 – Literary Analysis and Themes

This paper was divided into two sections. In section A, candidates were required to analyse one of four extracts taken from the prescribed texts i.e.(1) *La Rue Cases – Nègres*, (2) *Maria Chapdelaine*, (3) *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (4) *La tragédie du Roi Christophe*. Candidates were expected to describe and analyse plot, setting, character and narrative techniques related to one excerpt. Candidates were expected to display detailed knowledge of the structure and content of the text. Performance on Section A was generally good.

Section B consisted of four questions. Candidates were expected to write an essay, in English, of between 350 – 400 words on one of the questions. This section was divided into two parts, each with a different theme. The themes were “*La vie rurale*” and “*Les conflits politiques et sociaux*” . Writing the essay required that candidates to refer in detail to one of the literary texts that had been studied.

Section A - Literary Analysis

1. La Rue Cases- Nègres

While many candidates performed well on this question, there were others for whom it proved to be challenging. The main problem faced by the latter was that they did not understand the term “*la conduite irréfléchie*” in question (a). In addition, some candidates thought that the word “*texte*” referred to the entire novel and this idea was therefore reflected in their responses. Overall performance was good.

2. Maria Chapdelaine

Questions (a) and (c) proved to be very challenging for some candidates. In some cases the quality of the written French was below an acceptable standard for this level.

3. Gouverneurs de la rosée

Candidates who attempted to answer the question on this extract demonstrated that they knew the text very well as the marks awarded were generally quite good.

4. La Tragédie du Roi Christophe

Questions (b), (c) and (d) were not always well answered by the candidates. Nevertheless, the majority of candidates who attempted this question were awarded at least 9 out of the 16 marks available.

Section B - Themes

5. *The idea that rural life is beautiful is a myth*

Candidates often contradicted themselves by stating that, “I will disprove this statement”, but then going on to prove it. Those who fully understood the question did reasonably well, especially those who chose Maria Chapdelaine as their main text. These were able to offer a balanced view of rural life.

6. *Community spirit is what best defines rural life*

Several candidates looked at aspects of community life and totally disregarded what they were to discuss, that is, if it best defines rural life. Yet, most candidates who attempted this question managed to obtain at least 20 of the 32 marks available.

7. *In unity there is strength*

For the most part, candidates responded well to this question. Many who chose to use “Gouverneurs de la rosée” as their text were able to identify his efforts to unify the community. Those who chose “La Tragédie du Roi Christophe” were sometimes unable to show the idea of “unity”. They were more successful in showing disunity.

8. *The solitude of leadership*

Candidates dealt with the qualities of a leader but did not deal much with the aspect of solitude. Nevertheless, overall performance was quite good.

Although the overall performance on this paper was satisfactory, teachers need to encourage students to be more analytical and discerning in their approach to literary extracts and essays.

Paper 04 – Internal Assessment

Units 1 and 2

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this activity. In several instances there was no significant difference between the scores of the moderators and internal assessor. In some cases more time was spent by examiners and candidates on the prepared topic and topic conversation than on general conversation. Questions asked by examiners varied from simple every day questions to discussions on more sophisticated issues such as the environment. It was evident that there is a need for some schools to ensure that their students achieve a higher level of sophistication with regard to their general knowledge and mastery of the French language.

It would seem that in some cases, during the exercise, candidates were reading from prepared scripts. Teachers need to be more vigilant and show more respect for regulations prescribed for assessment.

In terms of practical advice for internal assessors, it would be helpful for the moderator if CDs/cassette tapes are clearly labeled as requested in the guidelines. Efforts should be made to avoid starting an interview at the end of one side of a cassette tape (if using a cassette tape).

General observations regarding the examination

1. There are concerns with regard to candidates' inability to master the grammar and vocabulary required to obtain high scores.
2. In so far as Paper 01 of both Units is concerned, there is clearly a need for candidates to expose themselves to the spoken word in French, by listening to French radio stations and/or looking at French television programmes.
3. Greater attention must also be paid to instructions on question papers since failure to do has caused candidates to answer questions in the wrong language. This results in their losing marks unnecessarily.
4. In general, candidates need to understand how important it is for them to read all questions carefully so as to ensure that the information which is provided is relevant to the question which is being asked.
5. Candidates also need to be reminded of the importance of providing answers which are precise.