

A Level

French

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GENERAL NOTE

As defined by the Schools Council, Special Papers will consist of questions, normally within the syllabus for the basic papers but of a more searching type than are set for those papers, designed to test the candidate's intellectual grasp and capacity to think about his subject. These papers are intended to provide additional information about the abler candidates which might be helpful to universities in selecting for honours courses. They will also provide the abler pupils in sixth forms with a target in place of the former Scholarship papers. A candidate may offer a Special Paper only if he is also offering the Advanced level subject to which the Special Paper relates. No candidate may offer Special Papers in more than **two** subjects at one examination. The designation 'Distinction' or 'Merit' will be awarded to candidates whose work in a Special Paper reaches the required standard, *provided that* at the same examination they have reached at least Grade E in the basic Advanced level papers of the subject to which the Special Paper relates.

The Special Paper in Modern Language subjects will comprise the following tests:

(a) Prose Composition. One passage of English, for translation into the language.

(b) An 'unseen' passage (or two passages) of prose or verse in the language, with questions to test comprehension and appreciation. Passages written before 1800 will not be set. Candidates may be required to state the theme of a passage and to trace its development, or to make a summary of the passage or of a part of it, or to compare two passages. Translation of short extracts may be required, and questions on vocabulary and style may also be set. The questions will be in English and candidates will be expected to write their answers in English unless specific instructions to the contrary referring to certain questions are given in the question paper.

Details of the entries and results in Modern Language subjects in 1967 are as follows:

	A level		Special	Distinc-	
	Entries	Pass	Papers	tion	Merit
French	3,546	2,596	421	85	136
German	1,070	881	171	42	78
Spanish	310	257	33	8	10
Russian	95	86	13	—	5
Italian	54	38	2	1	1

FRENCH

Question 1 proved to be a fairly difficult passage which nevertheless sorted out the candidates in a very satisfactory manner.

Candidates got round the main difficulties of vocabulary quite well, but among the words not known were those for *huddle*, *snort*, *drip*, *impersonation*, *witch*, *rebukes*, *scowl*, *rudely* (often translated as *rudement*), *mutter*, *go on* (*continuer* was not allowed here), *ruck-sack*, *planning* and *open ground*. This was to be expected, but, rather surprisingly, many had presumably forgotten the French for *witch*, *feather* and *nest*.

With regard to syntax, prepositional phrases caused endless trouble as in previous years, e.g. *staring downhill* and *lead... down a sodden hillside*. But candidates were good at paraphrasing, e.g. such phrases as *I could only turn on... etc.*

Tenses were handled fairly well, although there was a tendency to use an imperfect subjunctive for *Had I been Elisha* instead of sticking to *Si j'avais été* (any form for the name *Elisha* was allowed). Most candidates correctly used the Past Historic for the greater part of the passage. The need for inversion after *at least* was almost invariably forgotten, and the idiom *montrer du doigt* for *to point* was virtually unknown. Careless grammatical mistakes included (we) *parted* translated as *partirent* or *séparèrent*, and *I must have given* rendered variously and badly as *je devais avoir donné* or *je dus donné*.

In 1967 a prose passage was set for the first time in Question 2, a lack of relevance and precision in the answers on passages of poetry set in previous papers having been noted. The present passage was intended to provide a searching test on material that was not too easily predictable, but the answers produced suggest that there was in it perhaps too much emphasis on pure deduction.

Comprehension of the passage itself was in fact fairly adequate; it was the exact interpretation of Questions 2(b) and 2(d) which gave trouble. Half the total of marks went, however, to the two sections of Question 2(a), where appreciation of the passage was tested in a straightforward way, and a good spread of performance was achieved.

In Question 2(a) the last paragraph was understandably found more difficult to deal with adequately. The periodic structure of the first paragraph confused weaker candidates, who were in any case attempting a near-translation of the prescribed sections rather than a judicious and much shorter summary.

This 'reversal' effect was indeed one of the examples of syntactical device which candidates were invited to find and comment on in Question 2(b), but answers here were disappointing: many candidates who did offer examples were content merely to do so, without being stimulated to argue the main point of the question further. Many other candidates gave only generalised comment, that could be summarised as follows: 'The author uses short sentences and long sentences and the passage is difficult to understand. Therefore the syntax is calculated.' It was distressing to note attempts to expand this theme to lengths inappropriate to the number of marks available, extending to six pages on this section in one extreme case.

Both the phrases for detailed explanation in Question 2(c) were very difficult, and the marking was lenient here to compensate, especially as the *le* in *le cèdent à l'instant* was usually taken to refer to *le rêve*.

In Question 2(d) features deserving comment were *espérer de*, *à ne fuir*, *par conséquence*, the frequent use of the imperfect subjunctive and infinitive clauses, and the pairing of words. Many candidates did not distinguish these as 'unusual', and many indeed did not appear, from their generalised statements about the elegance (or inelegance) of the writer's style, to be attempting a real analysis of the language of the passage. Again there were many worthless but very long answers, where the careful singling out of two or three of the categories mentioned would have gained most of the marks allotted.