

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/01
Reading

Key messages

- In **Question 1** it is essential that candidates read the questions carefully. They should note the precise meaning of the words in the instructions; e.g. quote, explain, find an expression in the text, give characteristic features, replace with synonyms.
- In **Question 2** candidates must read both texts carefully, work precisely with the information given and summarise it in a continuous text.

General comments

Generally, candidates found **Question 1** easier than **Question 2**. In **Question 2**, they managed to find the similarities contained in the two texts, but they were often not able to achieve full content marks as they offered repeated information, or they mentioned information that was not related to both texts. The quality of language used was generally quite good, with evidence of accurate spelling and stylistic writing.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Question 1(a) tested the candidates' ability to explain a figurative phrase based on information given explicitly and implicitly at the beginning of the text.

Questions 1(b) and **(e)** proved to be the easiest questions. Although **Question 1(b)** could have been answered by two brief phrases, the more ambitious candidates incorporated their answer into full sentences with appropriate punctuation. The answer to **Question 1(e)** was given explicitly in the text and was successfully identified by most candidates. Only a few candidates provided a wrong answer, mainly because they misunderstood the question.

Question 1(c) required particularly close reading of the text as the answer was implied rather than provided explicitly.

Questions 1(f), (i) and **(j)** also required close targeted reading to be able to extract the correct information from different parts of the text.

In general, the most challenging questions proved to be those related to figurative expressions and linguistic devices used by the author (**Questions 1(d), (g)** and **(h)**).

In **Question 1(d)** the candidates were asked to find substitute expressions for the names of two hockey players and explain why the author uses such expressions. While stronger candidates provided the correct explanation, weaker candidates focused on the meaning of the expressions rather than the purpose of their use.

Similarly, in **Question 1(h)** the candidates were required to quote an example of direct speech and explain its effect on readers. Weaker candidates focused on the content of the quote rather than its purpose.

Question 1(k) tested the candidates' skill to express their own opinion by assessing relevant information from the whole of the text and substantiating it with an appropriate quotation.

Question 2

In this question, candidates were asked to compare both texts, identify and summarise information which was the same in both texts. Most candidates found enough points of relevant information. In some cases candidates misread the question and focused on the differences rather than similarities. It was important to keep to the requirements of the question, and not to compare the style, language or origin of the texts.

There was also no need to quote extensively from both texts in support of the relevant points. Candidates should be aware of using their time and word count wisely.

Language marks

In both questions, marks are available for language. Candidates need to allocate time to check their answers thoroughly to avoid the inclusion of errors which detract from the overall standard of their written responses.

Attention should be given to spelling and grammatical features such as subject-verb agreement, especially in plural of masculine animate and neuter words; capital letters at the beginning of sentences and geographical names; the use of verbs and prepositions with correct cases; reflexive constructions, the use of personal pronouns, etc. Candidates should also take care with punctuation, especially in multiple nominal phrases, inserted clauses and adverbial phrases. When preparing for **Question 2**, candidates should also be confident with the declension of 'two' and 'both'.

FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

Paper 0514/02
Writing

Key messages

Candidates should take notice of the following points, which are taken into account by Examiners when marking the responses:

- The essay should meet the specific requirements of the question
- Use of language
 - Spelling and morphology
 - Word choice – appropriate language for the given style and theme
 - Precise vocabulary to convey accurate meaning
- Text construction
 - Syntax (sentence and phrase construction)
 - Connections (links between sentences)
 - Techniques for text flow
 - Text coherence and paragraph structure (introduction, body, conclusion)
- The reader's experience
 - Serious spelling mistakes impede comprehension of the text
 - The structure of the essay should help the reader of the text to understand, not hinder them. For example, paragraphs should contain clear information, appropriate punctuation and be constructed in a logical way
- With narrative responses, the Examiner enters the fictional world created by the writer and accepts it; however, the writer should follow certain rules of orthodoxy and logic; e.g. the sun does not shine at night, chestnuts do not grow on trees in the spring, etc.

General comments

Formulating opinions and thoughts in a coherent and stylistically well composed text is challenging for candidates, particularly for those who are not following a course of study in preparation for this examination. However, some high quality writing was seen. Weaker responses lacked sophisticated structure and order, intellectual depth and diversity.

The aim of **Section 1** of this examination is to allow candidates to demonstrate that they are able to think the given issue through, form an opinion and express their thoughts grammatically and stylistically. Candidates should learn to present their thoughts logically. Stronger responses contained appropriate syntax, finished sentences and no repetition of ideas. Opinions were expressed in a clear way, which made the reader's task easy. For the different types of writing, there are conventions and norms to follow. Each of these forms has its own principles and expected register of vocabulary. The more the candidate can master stylistic and language skills, the better he or she is able to express more complicated thoughts.

In spelling and grammar candidates are advised to concentrate on these areas:

Endings of nouns and adjectives; using the pronoun "one's" ("svůj"); subject-verb agreement, especially in plural of the past tense. Candidates should also be mindful of inappropriate mixing of tenses within one text. Attention should also be given to sentence punctuation and capital letters at the beginning of sentences and geographical names.

In terms of vocabulary, many candidates showed their ability to choose appropriate and accurate language. In some cases, however, strong influences of the English language were evident, e.g. in phrases such as “byl jsem pozdě”, “z iniciálního domova”, “spousta individuálů”, “repetitivní život”, “je to esenciální”, etc. Candidates should avoid such Anglicisms as they do not sound Czech, detract from the continuity of the text and distract the reader.

In terms of style candidates are advised to avoid the use of colloquial Czech, except in direct speech or internal monologues of characters.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Argumentative/discursive essay

A clear and comprehensible presentation of ideas is fundamental for this type of writing. Before beginning to write the response, candidates should make a plan, for example a mind map or outline, and proceed in a logical order, preferably introduction – body – conclusion. Clear graphical distinguishing of paragraphs also helps the reader to orient better in the text. It is advisable to concentrate on a few ideas which relate to the topic, and not include stories from one's own personal life too much.

This was particularly relevant for **Question 1(a)** discussing the positives and negatives of life in a foreign country. This was one of the more popular questions as many candidates could draw on their own experience. Stronger candidates managed to present well-developed arguments for and against, whilst using their experience purely as illustration rather than as the focus of the whole essay. On the other hand, some candidates turned the topic into a general discussion about migration.

Question 1(c) about pros and cons of being an adult was also chosen by many candidates as it allowed them to express their strong opinions.

Question 1(b) about the value of simple things in life, and **Question 1(d)** about rules and reasons for breaking them were less popular, although some essays on these topics showed thoughtful and reflective approach.

Section B

Description

A colourful description requires the candidate to have a rich vocabulary and sufficient imagination in order to give the reader an idea of the described object, person or scenario.

Question 2(a) was a description of a fair or an entertainment park and the responses covered a whole range of venues from a simple village fair to Disneyland. Stronger candidates managed to evoke the whole atmosphere vividly describing both the chaos and excitement of the venue. Weaker candidates focused on describing external features of attractions, food stalls and people.

In **Question 2(b)**, a description of a view from an observation tower, some candidates presented vivid images capturing the changeable atmosphere of the scenery during the day. Weaker candidates initially focused on the description of the tower itself and the climb to the top, which did not leave them with enough time to depict the view.

Narration

Candidates should follow the principles of this genre. The introduction does not need to be long, it just needs to briefly set the scene. In both **Question 2(c)** and **2(d)** stronger candidates managed to balance their narratives with equal attention given to the introduction, climax and conclusion, while weaker candidates spent too much time leading into the story which did not allow them enough space for a satisfactory climax and ending.

The topic of **Question 2(c)** was “How I got lost”. Some candidates used the topic in a wider sense and wrote a story about getting lost in life. This approach was successful as long as the response stayed in the genre of a narrative rather than becoming more of a reflection.

Question (d) about a mysterious room provoked the candidates' imagination, resulting in a number of fantastical, sometimes dark, stories with a surprising twist at the end. It was important to ensure that the candidates did not get lost in the fantastic details of the story at the expense of the overall structure and logic.

One effective means of narration is the use of direct or indirect speech. Stronger responses included this without over-using it. The best candidates were able to apply the rules for writing in direct or indirect speech.