



2003

LOTE: Russian GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

There was an improvement in students' performance compared with last year, particularly with regard to the Detailed Study. Well-prepared students performed competently in both sections. Many were able to expand on their answers and offer interesting ideas and opinions. Good results in the 'oral' depend on the amount of preparation done. Students who have practised a wide range of questions and answers, focusing on the main ideas of their detailed study and thought through ideas and opinions in advance, are more likely to speak in a fluent and interesting manner.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately

Overall, students seemed well prepared and in general extended their responses willingly and gave interesting detail which led to new areas of discussion. It is disappointing when students who speak Russian fluently give only one sentence answers devoid of ideas and opinions. Students need to know that their performance will benefit from explanations and extended responses. Some students memorised information, and were unable to cope when the flow was interrupted. When asked unexpected questions, they often could not understand or provide an appropriate response.

Students should listen carefully to questions before rushing to answer, making sure that what they say is relevant.

Assessors should not be addressed informally with the ты form. It is also not appropriate to say the English word and ask for the Russian one or to wait for the assessors to provide the right word. If a student cannot think of the appropriate word or expression, they should try to develop the skill of using a synonym to paraphrase their ideas. Most students demonstrated a high level of strategies to link with assessors and could easily ensure that the exchange flowed. They had no difficulty in providing broad answers which showed their general knowledge and an ability to communicate freely, picking up verbal and physical clues.

All students could maintain a conversation, both agreeing and disagreeing with the propositions put by assessors, using phrases such as *Всё правильно, я понимаю, что вы хотите сказать, но я не согласна (не согласен)*.

The introduction was rote learnt by some students, e.g. *Меня зовут ... Мне семнадцать (17) лет. Я люблю ...*

Dates must be correct; one student said he was born in the eighteenth century.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

This was well handled by most students. However, some students did not advance the conversation, giving only very short answers. Consequently, they did not manage to give in-depth answers. It is important that students learn the required vocabulary to talk about their personal world, knowing the expressions, for example, of their parents' occupation, the names of their subjects and their own career aspirations in Russian. Some students elaborated very effectively, others would make a statement but were then unable to follow up with more detail. Students should have thought about their personal world and have already formulated some ideas and opinions about such aspects as position in the family, size of family, what they like and dislike about their school and their preferences for leisure activities.

When students have an opportunity to talk about something of real personal interest, they unwind and often communicate better, and this spontaneous interaction may carry over into the discussion of the detailed study.

Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Some students used a great many English words such as, score, enter, freedom, experiences, university, nutrition, and could not find the vocabulary to translate them. Others used incorrect constructions such as «Могу пользоваться транспорт» instead of «могу ездить на транспорте» «пользовать» instead of «использовать» «играть в пианино» instead of «играть на пианино». A common mistake was «ихние» instead of «их».

Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Some students did not advance the conversation, giving only very short answers; consequently they did not manage to indicate the range of their vocabulary. Appropriateness was better than the range and many students did not use a wide

range of words. It was not necessarily because of Russian but more their general unwillingness or inability to maintain a conversation. Grammar was quite good; however, although the vocabulary was accurate, some students were able to speak only within a very limited range.

Clarity of expression (including pronunciation, intonation, stress, tempo)

In some cases students spoke extremely slowly or took a long time to think of an answer, which detracted from the interaction.

Section 2 – Discussion

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Introductions were much better this year. Students who did not introduce their Detailed Study correctly and only vaguely referred to reading ‘some articles in class which our teacher gave us’ were often those who had the greatest difficulty. Many students were well able to handle unpredictable questions and have sufficient knowledge at their fingertips to maintain an even flow of discussion for eight minutes. Some led the discussion and spoke confidently and fluently, while others prepared a monologue beyond which they could not go, so that no real discussion eventuated.

There were students still prepared to give a report and they were offended when interrupted by the assessor. Students must be reminded that Section 2 is a Discussion, not a presentation. The time of ‘not more than one minute’, which is allowed for students to introduce their topic and give their resources and the main focus of their discussion, is being manipulated by some students to give a rapid fire start to their ‘discussion’. Some were long and complex, which made it difficult for assessors to note down. Others were relatively poor; three sources were mentioned but no exact name of article or author.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Students must refer to their resources/texts. If they are not able to give information relevant to their topic and back it up by the appropriate reference to their sources, the responses are graded accordingly. Students must note that this includes relevance, breadth and depth of opinions and ideas, as well as the breadth and depth of information.

Those students who had read very widely on their topic, reading extra texts in addition to those studied in class, were usually able to express a much wider range of opinions and ideas. Many students had difficulty in comparing the relevance and interest of their different sources. Some were not able to answer questions involving comparison of sources, choosing instead to tell the assessors more of what they had learned at home or school about their topic. The topics which lent themselves to the best discussion were: The plight of children before the Revolution, the contribution of Russian scientists in the world of science, homeless children and children during World War II. A few students brought in photographs and posters to support their discussion and also as one of their sources. They did not just describe their poster, but were able to incorporate it and show its relation to other sources. As a rule the students were exceptionally well-prepared and brought the discussion back to the topic. Students need more practice answering questions such as What is your opinion about ...? What do you think about ...? It is also expected that students will give more than one short sentence in response to such questions as the author of their chosen texts.

Able students seemed to cope well with any topic but others who were not so strong found difficult and complex topics beyond them. Some students felt they simply had to retell the content of the texts instead of discussing them and giving ideas and opinions. The most successful students gave an analysis of the issues, referring constantly to their texts and presented some conclusions from what they had learnt.

It is not expected that a student know everything, so it is quite acceptable to say one is not familiar with a particular aspect of the sub-topic. A good strategy after this is to steer the conversation towards aspects which one can talk about. If photos or objects are brought in, they must be free of language apart from a heading. Students must be able to elaborate on this material, give its relationship to the topic and say why they consider it important.

Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar/Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

After spending 15 hours of class time studying the sub-topic, students should be able to discuss it, showing familiarity with the required vocabulary and having knowledge of the appropriate grammar. If, for example, they have studied life in the USSR after the revolution, then they would be expected to use the past tense accurately.

Clarity of expression

Students should be able to pronounce the required words correctly and talk fluently about their chosen topic.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, a good standard was achieved by most students, reflecting satisfactory preparation for the written examination. However, it does not create a good impression when written answers contain many spelling errors. Students do themselves a disservice when their writing is illegible, illiterate, or both, as they then may not be awarded marks.

Answers in English were often incomprehensible as incorrect spelling gave a meaning other than the one intended, e.g. access/excess, frigate/refrigerators, ship/sheep, sit/seat.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

Answer in English

Appropriate responses include:

Question 1

a

Why is it incorrect to call a banana plant a tree?

- the banana tree is a gigantic grass

b

Describe the parts of the banana plant:

- the trunk is under the ground

and

- the leaves and fruits of the banana grow on the surface

c

How much can a bunch of bananas weigh?

- a bunch of bananas can weigh 50 kilos or more

d

How are bananas transported around the world?

- on refrigerated (cargo) ships

Question 2

Complete the table below, indicating the five (5) colours mentioned in the text, which have a positive influence on a person's mood. Give an example of a positive influence for each colour.

- White – calming colour for offices and hospitals, gives feeling of cleanliness
- Yellow – chases away bad thoughts and depression, gives positive emotions
- Blue – calms tense nerves and marvellously aids relaxation
- Dark blue – Slows the heart beat and lowers blood pressure
- Green – Calms the nervous system and has a calming action on the whole body.

a

What arguments did John use to persuade his father to support him in car racing?

- car racing is less dangerous than his father's former occupation as a jockey
- more 'normal' drivers die on the roads than racing car drivers

b

Describe three safety precautions John usually takes as a car driver.

- wears his safety belt
- has his car in excellent condition
- has himself in excellent condition, wonderful reflexes

A variety of adjectives were given to translate '*gigantskaya*', but gigantic was the most appropriate. The word '*stvol*' was often ignored in Question 1b.

Question 1d elicited some strange responses, from an aeroplane to ocean refrigerators and frigates.

Question 2 was correctly done by most students. A few ignored the question and gave colours which have a negative influence on a person's mood.

Question 3 was the text best handled by most students.

Part B

Answer in Russian

Question 4

a

Where can you see Katya in the new brand of jeans?

- Katya can be seen in her new brand of jeans in her last film and in every day life

b

In which season would you expect her to wear this garment?

- These jeans can be worn in any season.

c

Why has Katya been invited to present this advertisement?

- She is a popular beautiful film star with a very good figure. Young women customers want to emulate the way she looks. It is believed that the public will buy whatever Katya wears (as they will impress their friends if they do so).

Question 5

a

In which of the former English colonies is right-hand side traffic used?

- Canada

b

Why is there still left-hand side traffic in some countries?

- Left side traffic is still operative in some countries as a vestige/reminder of when they were English colonies and they adopted English laws

c

Explain what precautions tourists from countries with different traffic rules should take when they come to Russia?

Tourists from countries with different traffic rules must:

- Be careful turning left and keep right unless overtaking traffic on the freeway.
- Be attentive crossing the road and while going for a walk.
- Must look left, then right, then left again, before stepping from the pavement.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

In this section assessors will take into account the extent to which a student demonstrates the capacity to: understand general and/or specific aspects of texts, by, for example, comparing, contrasting, summarising, or evaluating, and convey the information accurately and appropriately.

Question 6

a

Why did so many people arrive in Kalgoorlie in 1893?

- Gold was discovered there and it was the richest gold field in the world.

b

Give two reasons why so many people died on the gold fields of Kalgoorlie before 1903?

- There was a lack of drinking water which led to dehydration and thirst in extremely hot conditions.
- Drinking water was contaminated with bacteria and lead to typhoid fever.

c

Explain what contributed to the improved living conditions of the miners in Kalgoorlie?

- A pipeline was built from the capital city of Western Australia to bring fresh water to Kalgoorlie, a distance of 560 km.

Question 7

a

Based on Sasha's letter, use the plan of the gold-diggers' museum provided (below) to indicate the type of businesses in the main street and their correct location.

On left side progressing north,

1. Homewares/hardware/general store
2. bakery
3. workshop/smelter
4. theatre (given on the plan)

On right side progressing north,

5. bank
6. post office (opposite theatre)
7. pharmacy

(1 and 2, 5 and 7 could be interchangeable in their location)

b

Contrast aspects of the goldfields described in the brochure (on page 2) and in Sasha's letter about the gold diggers' museum.

	Ballarat	Kalgoorlie
Dates	1851 gold discovered	1893 gold discovered 40 years later
Gold	80 000 tons gold nuggets on the banks of creeks	993 125 tons, richest gold mine in the world gold nuggets lay on ground
Water	plenty of clear pure drinking water in fresh water creeks	lack of drinking water, more expensive than gold, polluted, deaths and diseases caused by contaminated water

Climate	very cold winters, mild summers, temperate, rain 169 days p.a.	mild winters, boiling hot summers semi-arid desert, little rain
Location	only 110 k from state capital,	nearly 560 k from state capital, more isolated, more difficult to travel to

Some students made no attempt to answer some questions in Part A and Part B of Section 2.

No marks were given to those students who answered Part A in Russian and Part B in English. Students who highlighted the words ‘answer in RUSSIAN’ on their examination paper were not tempted to forget this instruction.

Students need to learn how to use a dictionary more effectively. A lack of knowledge of Russian grammar meant ‘zapadnaya’ was translated as ‘trap’/zapadnya, instead of ‘western’. ‘mestorozhdeniye’ in context was the geological term ‘deposit’ not the obsolete ‘place of birth’, which was meaningless in the context. Students who use a dictionary to look up Russian words, often chose the meaning which was not appropriate for the text, e.g. ‘trybi’ were pipes/pipeline to carry water, not tubes. Some did not bother to use a dictionary, and when they did not know the English meaning of a word, they simply wrote it in Russian. Other students invented words which do not exist in English, such as ‘frigites, sit belt, to play jokey’.

Students should be very careful if they make notes in the ‘notes column’ on their paper. Errors occurred, for example, when some students wrote correct information in English in the ‘notes column’, but omitted some essential facts when they re-wrote the answers in Russian.

Part B

The text for Question 8 was a letter and there were questions in the text which needed responses.

Many students found it difficult to demonstrate a range and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Most students were able to complete the task within the given number of words. Students who highlighted the questions in the text which needed responses were less likely to forget to include the responses in their letter. Some students forgot to include the conventions of the discourse form such as date, place, greetings and correct endings. A good letter also included at least one question.

Less successful students demonstrated inadequate grammar skills to complete the task. The more common errors included direct Russian translations, e.g. verb conjugations, especially of verbs in – *oba*, e.g. to plan, to recommend, to organise, spelling and above all, the correct form of cases.

Section 3 – Writing in Russian

The more successful pieces of writing flowed easily, showed imagination and included elements of good story-telling skills. The most popular topics were Question 11, story – imaginative; and Question 12, report – evaluative.

Students must ensure that their writing is within the specified word limit, as some pieces were well over. They can better spend time planning their work to improve the structure and checking for careless spelling and punctuation errors, rather than writing over the word limit. Less successful students were not able to develop complex sentences and relied mainly on simple sentences to communicate their ideas.

Students need to be aware of the conventions of different text types. For example the characteristics of an article (Question 9) are different from those of a report (Question 10).

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