

2015 VCE Yiddish written examination report

General comments

Overall, the standard of student responses to the 2015 Yiddish written examination was excellent. Students demonstrated a high level of comprehension, analytical skills and fluency of expression. Strong command of vocabulary was evident in their breadth of language and ability to articulate and express profound ideas effectively in Yiddish. Students also displayed creativity in their responses, further underlining their facility with the Yiddish language.

Grammar was the major area where students displayed weakness. They made errors with basic grammatical conventions, neglecting to place the verb as the second component of the sentence, using the incorrect auxiliary verb (e.g. using the verb '*hobn*' where it should have been '*zayn*') and using a '*ʔ*' in third person singular in present tense with modal verbs (*kenen*, *darfn*, *muzn*, etc.), where no '*ʔ*' was required.

When preparing for the examination, students are advised to memorise and practise basic grammar conventions and syntactical structures. During the examination, they should consult their dictionary to determine the appropriate gender of nouns and correct past participles.

Students should ensure that they answer each question as comprehensively as possible. Students are strongly advised to review their responses carefully prior to completing the examination and allow sufficient time to check their work for errors and inconsistencies.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Listening and Responding

Overall, students performed very well in this section, demonstrating excellent comprehension skills, as well as the ability to identify and analyse information from spoken texts. Most students conveyed this information accurately and appropriately. Students responded correctly to Questions 1b. and 1c. Incorrect responses to Question 1a. were largely due to misreading of the question or failing to check answers when they had correctly listed the information in their notes.

Part A – Answer in English

The assessment criterion for this part is:

- understand general and specific aspects of texts by identifying and analysing information and convey the information accurately and appropriately.

Text 1

Question 1a.

- a German Jew
- a dead man

Question 1b.

- They managed to find an item with Hebrew writing.
- A Passover (Pesach) wine bottle was found with the label 'kosher for Passover'.
- 'Kosher for Passover' (kosher for Pesach) was written on the tombstone.

Question 1c.

- The non-Jews believed that they had carried out the last wishes of the deceased.
- The deceased's wishes were followed literally, yet the wording was inappropriate for the task.
- This was unrelated to what would be expected on a gravestone.
- This draws on funny misunderstandings that can occur when Jews are in a non-Jewish environment.

Text 2

Question 2a.

The shop is considered significant and legendary because:

- photographs exist prior to and after the establishment of the state of Israel
- the business is still in existence
- it is still in the same family and the third generation is running it
- the woman lived to a ripe old age and maintained her positive attitude to life.

Question 2b.

- They were close.
- They had a common purpose.
- They loved each other.
- He took over the shop.

Text 3

Question 3a.

Her parents are:

- 'driving her nuts'
- 'giving her a hard time'
- 'driving her up the wall'
- 'killing her'.

Question 3b.

- Her mother cried.
- Her father gave her a lecture on the dangers of motorbikes (with statistics).
- Her mother worried.
- Her parents disapproved of her riding a motorbike.

Question 3c.

- She now has a valid response to her parents' concerns.
- She might tell her parents about one of the residents at the Emmy Monash home who rides a motorbike.
- To convince her parents that the dangers are not so great as even a 95-year-old still rides a motorbike.

Part B – Answer in Yiddish

Students displayed a very thorough understanding of the texts. Some students neglected to identify and include all relevant aspects of Question 4a.

Question 5a. was answered clearly and accurately. Many students recognised and articulated the relevant aspects of Question 5b. well, while others had difficulty analysing the text, conveying only some of its relevant aspects in their responses.

The assessment criterion for this part is:

- understand general and specific aspects of texts by identifying and analysing information and convey the information accurately and appropriately.

Text 4

Question 4a.

What we learn about the people from the text is that:

- she is on the island with the grandchildren
- he can afford to pay \$3 million for an item
- he is an educated person with an interest in Einstein
- he has made similar purchases in the past
- they are a close family because he is sharing information about what he intends to do
- he can use a computer.

Question 4b.

Any two of:

- it is written by Einstein
- it is handwritten
- it is a private letter
- it is an interesting letter
- it is radical
- it relates to the Jewish people (or Jewish culture)
- it relates to God.

Text 5

Question 5a.

It is a yoga class. Some clues include:

- the instruction to remove shoes
- the breathing instructions
- the teacher's tone
- the teacher refers to the basics of yoga
- the instructions for listening to the music.

Question 5b.

Alice Herz-Sommer's life reflects the philosophy of yoga through:

- her belief that despite personal and/or national hardship, there is still beauty in the world (and that should be the focus)
- her focus on a positive and optimistic attitude (love of life)
- focusing her energy on something specific (love of music)
- the fact that she adopted a healthy lifestyle (lived to 110 years)
- the fact that she experienced satisfaction and inner peace.

Text 6

Question 6

Reasons why the opera production was special include:

- participants and audience were inspired to stand up against bullies/repression
- the premiere of the opera occurred in Prague despite the fact that the composer had been arrested and sent to the camp
- the fact that he rewrote the opera and it was performed in the Theresienstadt camp
- the story itself
- the number of productions
- the opera was performed before a Red Cross delegation
- it was staged with children
- one of the survivors smuggled out boards to make sets
- the importance of music to inmates and survivors
- the role of opera in keeping up the hopes of inmates.

Section 2 – Reading and Responding

Students performed very well in this section. Their responses demonstrated exemplary comprehension skills, along with the ability to summarise, evaluate, analyse and draw inferences from the text. They conveyed this information correctly and comprehensively.

Part A – Answer in English

The assessment criterion for this part is:

- understand general and specific aspects of texts (for example, by comparing, contrasting, summarising and/or evaluating) and convey the information appropriately.

Text 7

Question 7a.

The expression '*toyt hungerik*' means:

- dying from hunger
- ravenous
- starving.

Question 7b.

Hershl persuaded the inkeeper's wife to give him food through:

- intimidation or an implied threat; through deception
- the tone of his voice
- the implication that he was willing to follow his father's example.

Question 7c.

The punchline demonstrates that he is a '*lets*' (a wag) by:

- he managed to get a free meal
- he did not go to bed hungry
- he used humour and/or deception (to get what he needed).

Text 8

Question 8a.

The proverb is relevant because:

- circumstances may have changed
- trade and persecution (in other parts of the world) have always been at the core of the relationship between Asia and the Jews.

Question 8b.

Trade now includes other important resources such as agriculture, technology, finance, diamonds and education.

Question 8c.

Asia demonstrates its respect by the fact that:

- Technion has been allowed/encouraged to open a branch in Shanghai
- Korean schoolchildren are learning the Talmud
- Jews were offered/able to make a safe haven/home.

Part B – Answer in Yiddish

The assessment criteria for this part are:

- demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus text
- write text appropriate and relevant to context, purpose and audience
- structure and sequence information and ideas
- manipulate language structures and vocabulary in English.

Text 9

Question 9

Students were required to respond to a short text about Mitzveh Day (day of good deeds) by writing an informative report proposing two projects that could be carried out in support of Mitzveh Day and/or World Solidarity Day.

Students performed very well on this question. Their responses demonstrated that they understood the text clearly. Overall, students approached the information and ideas of the text thoughtfully and carefully, and completed the task effectively and creatively. Information and ideas were organised logically and coherently. In general, students demonstrated extensive knowledge of Yiddish, drawing on a rich and broad vocabulary, and for the most part, following sentence structures appropriately. They manipulated Yiddish authentically and creatively, albeit with some grammatical errors.

Section 3 – Writing in Yiddish

Students performed very well in this section, writing highly creative, interesting and readable responses. They presented and developed relevant ideas and opinions in their responses, exploring their topic in both depth and breadth. In general, students wrote coherent responses, structuring and sequencing their ideas and information effectively. Students demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of tense, mood and, in particular, vocabulary, using an impressive range of words and expressions. Sound knowledge and understanding of syntax was also evident, although some students made syntactical and grammatical errors and used English syntactical structures. Generally, students manipulated Yiddish authentically and creatively. There were some limitations in idiomatic use of Yiddish, with sentences translated directly from English. These issues, along with some errors in basic Yiddish grammar, detracted from otherwise excellent treatment of the task.

The assessment criteria for this section are:

- depth of treatment of ideas, information and/or opinions
- write text appropriate and relevant to context, purpose and audience
- structure and sequence information and ideas
- manipulate language structures and vocabulary in Yiddish.

Students were required to respond to one question only.

Question 10

Kind of writing: reflective and/or imaginative

Text type: blog

Students were asked to write blog sharing a moment or incident at their school that had an impact on them.

Question 11

Kind of writing: evaluative

Text type: review

Students were required to evaluate the benefits and costs of hosting the Asian World Cup.

Question 12

Kind of writing: imaginative

Text type: short story

Students were asked to write a short story for children from the perspective of a worm that has just been spotted by a bird.