

# 2017 VCE Yiddish written examination report

## General comments

Most students responded well to the 2017 VCE Yiddish written examination. Their answers reflected their competence and their ability to draw on a broad vocabulary base, and most students used idiomatic language effectively to express themselves in Yiddish.

In 2017, most students demonstrated that they knew the correct gender of the Yiddish nouns they used; however, there were some inconsistencies in students' writing between the gender of nouns used and the related adjectival endings, which should always match, and students also needed to improve on their use of the correct auxiliary verb (*hobn* or *zayn*) in the past tense. Additionally, some students neglected to place the verb as the second component of each sentence, as required. Students are advised to consult their dictionaries during the examination when they are not sure of the correct past participles of verbs or the appropriate gender of nouns. This information is available in Yiddish dictionaries.

Some students did not answer questions in the required language. Some students did not attempt to answer all questions, which removed the possibility of them receiving some marks for an attempted question.

Students should use all the available time to review their answers.

## 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 Part A – Answer in English

In Section 1, students were assessed on their ability to understand general and specific aspects of spoken Yiddish texts. They needed to comprehend and analyse information in texts that they heard in Yiddish and then accurately and appropriately answer questions about this information in English. Responses for this section were generally correct but not always complete.

### Text 1

#### Question 1a.

- to publicise the launch of a new book (by Arnold Zable)
- where and when the launch is to take place

### Question 1b.

- success as a boxer
- fame in both the Jewish community and the general Australian community

### Text 2

Most students evidenced the ability to analyse the text and answer these questions correctly. Question 2b. was not answered comprehensively by some students, who provided simple, literal responses, rather than in-depth analyses.

### Question 2a.

- it reminds her of her childhood in the *shtetl*
- she remembers the beggar fondly
- because she can share a laugh across the generations with her grandson
- she is interested in teaching her grandson about Jewish ethics

### Question 2b.

- the beggar awakens Rothschild at 6.00 am to ask for money, as he thinks that this is his right (and part of running his 'business')
- the beggar compares himself to the very rich man, Rothschild
- the beggar's feeling of entitlement
- the view that begging is also a profession

### Text 3

#### Question 3a.

Explanations should have included:

- working together with students in Kibbutz Dafna in Israel
- use of the internet
- working together with Professor David Suzuki
- use of social media.
- the students will learn about setting up robotic stations.

#### Question 3b.

- the use of existing interesting international research
- like/love/interest in technology

## Part B – Answer in Yiddish

In Part B, students were assessed on how well they could answer questions in Yiddish, based on general and specific aspects of texts heard in Yiddish. They needed to identify and analyse this information and convey it accurately and appropriately in the required language.

This part of the examination was completed well by most students. They seemed to understand general and specific aspects of the text, which they tended to analyse effectively. This information was conveyed both accurately and appropriately in their answers.

Some students provided incomplete responses for Questions 4a., 5, 6a., 6b. and 7c., either omitting some required details or not providing sufficient information.

Students are advised to provide all the relevant information requested in their answers. It is important that students pay close attention to which language they are expected to answer in.

**Text 4**

**Question 4a.**

Answers could have included:

- ביידע זינען געגאנגען אין אַ ייִדישער שול.  
(both attended Jewish day-schools)
- ביידע פֿאַרן קיין האָליווד.  
(Both are going to Hollywood.)
- ביידע זינען מיידלעך  
(Both are girls)
- ביידע זינען יונג  
(Both are young people)
- ביידע זינען פֿון אויסטראַליע  
(Both are from Australia)
- ביידע זינען אין די צוואַנציקער  
(Both are in their twenties)
- איינע אַ טענצערין, איינע אַ זינגערין  
(One is a dancer, the other is a singer)

**Question 4b.**

דזשוד האָט רעקאָרדירט אַ ליד און אַרויפגעגעבן אויף פֿייסבוק.

(Jude recorded a cover of a song and uploaded it on Facebook.)

רעזשיסאָרן האָבן געזען און געהערט דאָס ליד.

(The producers saw her performance.)

**Text 5**

**Question 5**

Answers could have included:

- דער מומעס עלטער עלטער זיידע איז געקומען קיין קלונז זוכן גאָלד.  
(The aunt's great-great-grandfather settled in Clunes during the gold rush.)
- די מומע וווינט נאָך אין קלונז.  
(Ben's aunt now lives in Clunes.)
- די מומע האָט געבויט און באַפּוצט אַ סוכה אין קלונז הייַ יאָר.  
(His aunt built and decorated a *succah* in Clunes.)
- די מומע האָט פֿאַרבעטן געסט צו זיך אין דער סוכה.  
(His aunt invited guests to celebrate Succot with her)
- צום ערשטן מאל אין 150 יאָר פֿייערן ייִדן סוכות אין קלונז.  
(This was the first time that Succot was celebrated in Clunes for 150 years.)
- עס איז אַפֿילו אַ רבֿ געקומען פֿון מעלבורן. ער האָט געבענטשט די סוכה און די וועלכע זיצן אין איר  
(Even a rabbi came to celebrate Succot with her. He blessed the *succah* and those sitting in it.)

**Question 6a.**

Answers could have included:

- ער שטודירט דעם פֿראַבלעם פֿון אַ ווירוס שוין אַ סך יאָרן אין ישראל וווּ די לאַגע איז פֿיל מער פֿאַרשפּרייט און ערנסטער.  
(He has already researched this plant virus in Israel, where the situation used to be worse than it is in Australia.)
- ער האָט דערגרייכט גוטע רעזולטאַטן אויף דעם געביט.  
(He has success in this area.)

- העלפֿט פֿאַרמערס פֿון אַרבוזן  
(helps farmers of watermelons)  
ער האָט דערפֿאַרונג אויף דעם געביט.  
(The expert has experience in this area.)

### Question 6b.

Answers could have included:

- כאַטש דער ווירוס איז ברייט פֿאַרשפּרייט אין ישראל, איז עס נישט אַזוי אין אויסטראַליע. דער ווירוס געפֿינט זיך בלויז אויף צען פֿאַרמען און זיי זיינען שוין אונטער קוואַראַנטין.  
(Although the virus is very widespread in Israel, that is not so in Australia, where it is limited to 10 plantations and these are under quarantine.)
- אַבי איז אָפּטימיסטיש אַז מע קען לייזן דעם פּראָבלעם ווייל וואָס פֿריער מע שטעלט אָפּ דעם ווירוס, וואָס בעסער.  
(Avi is optimistic that the problem could be solved because the sooner the virus is quarantined, the better.)

## Section 2 – Reading and responding

### Part A – Answer in English

Part A in Section 2 required students to compare, contrast, summarise and evaluate in English texts that they read in Yiddish. It assessed how well students understood general information and specific details of these texts.

This part of the examination was completed very well by most students, who demonstrated a very good standard of comprehension and analysis, along with the ability to convey information clearly and appropriately in their answers.

Some students seemed confused by Question 7c. It required a familiarity with Yiddish idioms, which should not be neglected when learning vocabulary.

Students are advised to make sure they read the entire question before planning their answer so that they are aware of all the details they are required to include. They are also advised to try to answer all questions, even if they are not sure of the correct answer, so that they can potentially receive some marks.

### Text 7

#### Question 7a.

- he is the only Yiddish writer to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature
- he knows how to bring his readers in, through his words, so that they look beyond the material and think beyond themselves
- his ability to build a world of fantasy

#### Question 7b.

Answers could have included:

- even though Yiddish is poor in technological words, it is 'the richest language', with words to describe character, personal details and feelings
- Yiddish is his native language, the place he calls 'home'
- Yiddish has a quiet humour, expresses joy, a longing for the Messiah, gratitude for each day of life and for each encounter with love.

#### Question 7c.

- Hak mir nit in tshaynik.* (Don't bang my kettle [Don't bother me.])

- *Drey nisht keyn spodek.* (Don't spin my cap. [Stop your nonsense, stop with your wrong interpretation.])

Each of these sayings is used in Text 7 to illustrate the richness of Yiddish. Some students seemed to have difficulty understanding why these sayings were included in the text and left out this part of the answer.

Students should be careful not to rush their reading of questions before deciding on their answer.

## **Text 8**

### **Question 8a.**

- It's a graduation of young students.
- The speaker wants to inspire the students to continue their journey of learning/lifelong learning.

### **Question 8b.**

- Inge was preparing for the oral examination for her doctorate but was not allowed to complete it by the Nazi government in Germany in 1938 because she was Jewish.
- She left for the US and returned to Germany in 1952 without completing her doctorate.
- Eighty years later, the University of Hamburg allowed her to defend her thesis at age 102, which she did very successfully.

## **Part B – Answer in Yiddish**

### **Text 9**

#### **Question 9**

Responses could have included:

- a descriptive letter explaining a plan to improve the state of world Jewry and of mankind
- a culturally correct Yiddish business letter.

Students were assessed on their ability to demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus text, and then they were required to write an appropriate response that was relevant to the given context, purpose and audience. Students needed to structure and sequence information and ideas, as well as to manipulate language structures and vocabulary in Yiddish.

Most of the requirements of this question were handled well. Ideas and information were generally organised logically, and students responded effectively to the text; however, in general, the question could have been treated more comprehensively, with greater depth. Most students evidenced broad knowledge and understanding of vocabulary and sentence structures.

Students are advised to attempt a partial answer, rather than leaving the answer space blank, so that they can potentially receive some marks.

## **Section 3 – Writing in Yiddish**

Section 3 required students to write approximately 250 words in Yiddish on one of three questions. Responses for Questions 10, 11 and 12 were assessed on how well students demonstrated in-depth treatment of information, ideas and/or opinions, and their appropriateness and relevance to the required context, purpose and audience.

Those students who attempted this section demonstrated both a breadth of expression and depth in the development of relevant information, ideas and opinions. The answers were written in appropriate genres and were relevant both to the given task and to the selected topic. The language skills used reflected an appropriate level of authenticity and some creativity. In most

cases students' knowledge and comprehension of vocabulary, mood, syntax and tense were well reflected in their answers.

Again, students are advised to attempt a partial answer, rather than leaving the answer space blank, so that they can potentially receive some marks.

### **Question 10**

Students were asked to write an informative article for a tourist publication, in which they take a tourist on a tour of Jewish Melbourne, Jewish Sydney, Jewish Brisbane or Jewish Perth.

This response should have focused both on the Jewish population and local places of Jewish interest in the chosen Australian city. The necessary background information should have been given in a logical yet condensed format to keep the reader's attention.

### **Question 11**

Question 11 asked students to discuss the statement 'Voting is not just a right, but also a responsibility' in a speech to secondary school students, persuading them to use their vote in the next elections.

This question required students to write a persuasive speech. Students were required to hold the interest of their listeners as well as persuade them and information needed to be given in a logical and concise format. Students were expected to write about the advantages and the disadvantages of both rights and responsibilities in a straightforward style, with a conclusion that could provide a final judgment regarding the initial statement. For example, students could argue that even though learning enough about election issues to cast an intelligent vote plus time spent voting may take time from other activities, the advantages of participating in the decision-making process of the community, state or country in which they live outweigh the disadvantages of having fewer hours to spend on other activities.

### **Question 12**

Students were asked to write a story for children, to be read aloud during the next Library Book Week, beginning with the words 'Once upon a time, a young child found a ring with magic powers. It allowed the child one wish.'

This written piece needed to be interesting, with a beginning, middle and end; there is an expectation that the potential audience should enjoy the story. Information and ideas had to be structured and sequenced and language structure and vocabulary needed to be manipulated to enhance the fairytale nature of the story.