LITERATURE IN ENGLISH 9153/02

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PAPER 2

GENERAL COMMENTS

The paper was generally challenging for the majority of candidates. What was particularly worrying was candidates' inability to interpret the meaning of most questions, for example, question 1(a). The meaning of "spiritual and physical tribulations of those who sacrificed home, limb and life," an integral part of the question was partly understood by most candidates. Those who attempted part (b) questions evidently had little knowledge of prose appreciation and so, failed to critically analyse given passages and use them to range into wider texts. Candidates often ignored given passages and recounted all that they know about the studied texts. On the other hand, some gave lengthy paraphrased versions of passages without addressing the demands of the question.

Also noteworthy is that, the majority of candidates had problems of discriminating and selecting relevant material that addresses the question. Often candidates poured out all that they know about studied texts. More than often, the work which candidates and teachers used for examination preparation backfired as prepared ideas were deployed indiscriminately. Candidates should be reminded that each question is specific and unique and so will have its own parameters which should be addressed by particular strategies. Candidates need to be taught to think for themselves and offer fresh, personal and convincing ideas supported by textual evidence.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

T.S. BVUMA: *Every Stone that Turns*

Question 1(a)

The majority of candidates braved it to answer the question although they evidently had little understanding on the requirements of the question. They partly answered the question and failed to give other poems from the anthology that demonstrate that people sacrificed home, limb and life to fight the nation's liberation. They also failed to explain the spiritual and physical tribulation endured by fighters for freedom and collaborators. Examiners expected firsthand knowledge of poems that illustrate the demands of the question. Candidates often relied on general historical knowledge and where reference was made to some poems, they merely cited their titles without showing the connection in detail. Each point that a candidate makes should be supported by evidence and be fully explained to show how both the point mentioned and supplied evidence, if any, help to answer the question. More importantly, candidates need to be taught how to study poems by themes, selecting relevant points, developing them fully using textual evidence and giving illustrative explanations showing how the point made answers the question as underlined earlier.

Question 1(b)

The first requirement for passage based questions is sound knowledge of critical appreciation skills. These skills would then be used to answer the specific demands of a question, in this instance, relating the poem's content and style to other poems in the anthology. Analyzing a poem requires a candidate to critically comment on the poem's title and its relevance, the poem's form, structure, tone and poetic devices. Connections should have been established and cited indicating at least how two other cited poems explore the same themes using both similar and different methods. Candidates showed that their skills of close reading, critical analysis and evaluation are shallow at many centres. Candidates often avoided the passage and recounted what they know in general. Those who were faithful enough to stick to the passage paraphrased the poem line by line without establishing relevant connections and analyzing the poem's style and its effectiveness to bring out the themes.

I.STAUNTON (ed): *Writing Still*

Question 2(a)

This was a popular question. Though the question appeared simple, candidates did not take cognizance of the key words "objective insight", "liberation war experiences." Good responses addressed these key words giving specific textual evidence to substantiate

their claims. Weaker responses merely stated the issues without linking them to the liberation war experiences. They ignored the fact that the question required the liberation war context. Some of the candidates failed to indentify relevant short stories dealing with the post-independence situation. Candidates were expected to use the story, "That Special Place," as a basis for further exploring the idea that some liberation war heroes abused their authority and exploited and oppressed others ironically, while fighting colonial oppression and exploitation. Relevant stories which bring this out include, *"The Winning Side," "The Revolutionary: a brief encounter"* among others.

Question 2(b)

Notable on this question were sporadic insightful answers. Good candidates were able to address the key part of the question, "significant features style and narrative methods" employed. Such candidates explained the effects achieved by using these techniques and supported their ideas using textual evidence. Weak candidates paraphrased the passage and in some instances narrated the whole story to prove that they know it. General knowledge of the story which does not help to address the question does not score high marks because at this level knowledge of the story which does not help to address the question does not score high marks because at this level knowledge of the story is an assumed pre-requisite. Examiners look for candidates' analysis and evaluation of ideas among others. Those who missed the voice of the child narrator failed to dialogue and make sense of the passage effectively. Establishing connections of the story with other stories like *"Fancy Dress", "The Grim Reaper's Car"* and *"Mukoma Amos",* was the other part of the question that candidates were required to address.

OKOT p'BITEK *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol*

Question 3(a)

The text was popular with most centres. Candidates who attempted the question failed to clearly identify the attempted the question failed to clearly identify the ridicule and caricature in the songs, as well as to explain their purpose and effect. The key question words were "examine," "effectiveness," "use of caricature and ridicule."Most candidates were just narrating and paraphrasing Lawino and Ocol's words. Some candidates just stated the ridicule and caricature, and did not go farther to explain the purpose and effect of the biting sarcasm used. A good answer was expected to demonstrate that the malicious or scornful laughter is meant to correct because satire is corrective laughter. Examples of ridiculous behavior and ideas should have been supplied.

Question 3(b)

Most of the candidates who attempted the question failed to bring out the contradictions between Western traditional African belief systems. The bulky of candidates were relating incidents or ideas that they could still remember without addressing the question. The key words were, "comment," "how typical" and "depiction of contradictions. The starting point was to identify the contradictions evident in the passage and then demonstrate how they are characteristic of contradictions in the two songs.

Naturally, a sound understanding of the meaning of "contradictions" was required for one to effectively respond to all the demands of the question. An appreciation of the passage which did not attempt to address the question words scored low marks.

MANGO BETI*: Mission to Kala*

Question 4(a)

This was a straight forward question. Candidates largely failed to evaluate Mongo Beti's views on the treatment of women in traditional African culture as depicted in the novel. Some candidates made use of their everyday knowledge of what they know about the treatment of women in their societies, thus ignoring the task at hand. A thorough knowledge of the text and an ability to select relevant ideas which support their claims would have fetched higher scores. Some ideas were just stated without attempting to demonstrate how they answer the question. As mentioned earlier, skills of question answering and developing points were evidently lacking in most responses. Candidates, who were able to select relevant points, support them with evidence and explanations, scored higher marks on this question.

Question 4(b)

The passage based question on the text, though fascinating and accessible was answered by fewer candidates compared to question 4(a). Candidates tended to generalize and offered undeveloped character sketches of Zambo. Most often the answers lacked the skills of analysis and evaluation, which literature study at this level expect and look for in candidates' answers. Often the narrator's attitude towards Kala and more importantly, Zambo, evident in the recurring animal; imagery used to describe him was not fully explored. Some candidates discovered another animal image after writing about the first or second one, thus betraying their failure to establish connections between related ideas. Evidently, some candidates attempted a paragraph by paragraph evaluation of the passage and they produced poorly organized responses. Some candidates often abandoned the passage and recounted other incidents which

feature Zambo without establishing connections or attempting to demonstrate how these incidents help in developing his character. Many candidates ignored to answer part of the question requiring them to evaluate the style used and link it to the wider text.

MARIAMA BA: *Scarlet Song*

Question 5(a)

The question did not attract many candidates. The words "tyranny" and "Chauvinism" were evidently unfamiliar to most candidates. Some candidates who responded to this question were guided by the word "tradition", which they understood. From here, they explored all they know about tradition in relation to the novel, and were silent on how oppressive it is. Chauvinistic aspects in the novel were often avoided. Successful candidates were able to discuss the related parts of the novel and question: "the tyranny of tradition and chauvinism." Those who relied on the available clue of the word, tradition largely remained general. Their responses lacked textual evidence to support their claims. The ability to purposefully select relevant incidents and use them to develop ideas is central when answering literature questions. Weak answers indiscriminately parroted material learned in class. This was evident in that their answers were similar and lacked originality.

Question 5(b)

This was a very unpopular question because of its unusual demands. The task requiring candidates to identify conflicts between the individual interests and social expectations, from the passage and link them to the wider text proved a job and half for most candidates. Though this is not a difficult task to independent scholars, who are capable of understanding the demands of the question and applying leant concepts, many candidates appeared caught unawares because they are used to questions which ask for narrative methods and style. Candidates and centres should desist from teaching and preparing for the examination using past examination papers. The teaching and preparation of examiners should be based on the syllabus.

JOSEPH DIESCHO: *Trouble d Waters*

Question 6(a)

Though the text is studied by few centres, the question was popular because it is straight forward. Good responses addressed both "role" and "significance," and often supporting textual evidence was given. Weaker candidates appeared unsure of the requirements of "role" and "significance" and often addressed the first part of Van Zyl's role only. Good responses were expected to evaluate the part played by Van Zyl and evaluate how he helps bring out the central issues of the novel, **Troubled Waters.**

Comments on how he helps to develop a full understanding of the society being discussed were expected.

Question 6(b)

The few candidates who attempted this question did fairly well by giving a meaningful appreciation of the passage. Those who did not do well failed to refer to the wider as well as to understand the word "transformation.'' Some candidates gave mere narrations of the extract, and in some instances reference to the extract was very minimal. A number of candidates failed to identify the means used to present the change. Good responses discussed the transformation of Andries and purposefully use textual evidence to support ideas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Candidates need to be reminded that passage based question require them to evaluate particular effects of the writing in the passage and to refer to the wider text.

- Skills of selecting relevant points that answer the question and develop sound answers have to be taught and developed.

- The marking guide has grade descriptors of what constitute the grades A, B, C, D, and E. These are a useful guide for teachers when both teaching and marking candidates'' work in preparation for the public examination. A proper use of these descriptors bridges the gap between school based assessment and the national examination.