

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH 9153/04

NOVEMBER 2012

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2012 paper was generally fair and accessible, of concern however, was the rubric infringement witnessed. Some candidates answered two questions on one book and a third question from another text. Centres are urged to get the appropriate examination circular for each examination session. Candidates however demonstrated knowledge of texts including the three knew texts:

-A *tragedy of Lives*

-*Secret Lives*

-A *fine Madness*

While candidates had the required knowledge, they often lacked skills of selecting the appropriate textual evidenced to address questions. Centres are advised to assists candidates with the skills of developing arguments by giving an idea or point, supporting it using textual evidence and then explaining how both the point and the supplied evidence answer the question. In addition, there is need for candidates to go beyond simple recall of themes and incidents and demonstrate skills of application, analysis synthesis and evaluation which are of paramount importance at this level.

Question by Question Analysis

MUSENGEZI AND STAUNTON (ed): *A Tragedy of lives: women in prisons in Zimbabwe*

Though this was its first year to be examined, the text proved very popular with candidates. They basically knew the storylines.

Question 1(a)

This was a straight forward question that required candidates to use at least three stories from the collection in order to discuss the view that most women prisoners are “victims of circumstances”. Few candidates discussed and brought out the key terms of most women prisoners and “victims of circumstances.” The majority of candidates

merely narrated the stories without analyzing and evaluating them in view of the above underlined words.

Question 1(b)

Candidates were expected to analyse the passage, showing in what ways it is typical of two other stories in the anthology. Evidently some candidates could remember the basic story line but often mixed and confused names of characters. Some resorted to paraphrasing the passage leading to lower scores. Assessment objective 2 of the syllabus specifically tests candidates on their ability to demonstrate the ways in which the writer's choice of form, structure and language shape meaning. Attempts to venture into the wider text were noted but the responses were largely general accounts of the stories.

SEMBENE OUSMANE: *God's Bits of Wood*

Question 2(a)

This was also a popular question with candidates. Good responses were those that fully demonstrated the roles that women played in the strike. Some of the essays were very elaborate, detailed and concise while others were sketchy narrations that lack analysis. Some candidates managed to give constructive presentations of men and women while others merely catalogued the themes without attempting to analyze, evaluate or show how they address the demands of the question. They read more like a series of remembered points rather than a developed line of argument.

Question 2(b)

"How" questions still pose problems to candidates. They often give general comments or paraphrase the passage. Those who gave insightful analysis and evaluation of the passage often did not radiate into the wider text. The issue of setting was largely ignored. There was need for candidates to fully appreciate, interpret and evaluate the symbolism of the setting, what it represented, how it pictures segregation among other things. Some relevant accounts were given of various setting and their bearing on meaning. Some of them are listed below;

- Setting in the context of time with a particular focus on the tension, fear, and mood created by the strike.

- The setting of the Vatican.
- The grounds including the pathways, flowers and hedges.
- Isnard's house at number 7, strategically placed for communion with the other whites.
- The kitchen where Beatrice reigns supreme and an evaluation of her attitude to the black servants.
- The sitting room where Isnard and others are talking.
- The veranda which Beatrice used to sleep at night without fear but cannot do so now because of the strike.
- The gleaming white table cloth, coffee table etc.

The various setting and their implication on meaning were contrasted with the mud huts of the blacks and their general social problems. Contrast of the two races was effectively explored using setting.

NGUGU wa THIONGO: *Secret Lives*

The text which is also new was also popular with candidates.

Question 3(a)

The question was very accessible and most of the candidates had knowledge of the stories and themes. The knowledge however, ended at the identification level and ignored discussing the portrayal of religion in any three stories. There was need for candidates to deal with the presentation and criticism of religion especially Christianity. Key issues among others were,

- Identification of relevant stories for example "Wedding at the Cross" "The Black Bird," and "A Meeting in the Dark".
- Analysis of the stories in terms of style and concerns.
- Focus on style and attitude for example the satirical, sarcastic, ironic and mocking aspects.
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Question 3(b)

The question was unpopular with candidates though it was accessible. Candidates were expected to analyse the passage and bring out concerns and demonstrate how they are reflective of the concerns elsewhere in the text. There was also need to pay attention to issues of style, contextualize the passage, identify and discuss issues, like identity crisis, hypocrisy, immorality, exploitation, the concept of beauty, use of internal monologue descriptive language, satire and irony. There was also need to link the passage to the text and offer personal evaluations.

MASHANGAIDZE GOMO: *A Fine Madness*

Question 4(a)

A number of candidates offered insightful responses. Some of them were relevant, concise and freshly personal. Most candidates however, failed to identify past and present struggles and failed to demonstrate how these struggles are linked or related.

Largely responses commented on themes and remained silent on issues of style. Candidates were expected to demonstrate the link between historical struggles and present struggles. Some of the key issues were,

- Resistance against oppression and dispossession, colonial exploitation and imperialism.
- The link between the first, second and third Chimurenga wars
- The DRC war and its effects.
- History as narrations and contemplated incidents.

Question 4(b)

The question required candidates to analyze and discuss the poet's attitude towards war as is pictured in the passage and elsewhere in the text. Most candidates were able to contextualize it. However, there was little analysis in the responses because they were either mere narrations or generalized accounts and so fetched low marks. There was need for candidates to dwell on their comment and oppression skills. Some of the key elements of style were the use of song, mbira, juxta-positioning, analogy and use of legends to create a positive attitude towards war because the war aimed at reclaiming lost land, dignity, identity and create total self rule.

SINDIWE MAGONA: *To my Children's Children*

Question 5(a)

Candidates were expected to demonstrate knowledge of how protest feature and operate in the text. While some candidates were able to identify incidences showing protest against apartheid as demonstrated by the reaction of black employees towards imbalance of social services, police brutality, Bantu education and patriarch, little

attention was given to how the text is explicitly protest literature. Candidates did not develop fully argued responses.

Question 5(b)

The question required candidates to analyze the passage showing how it adds to a full understanding of the problems faced by black domestic workers in South Africa. There was need to bring out the plight of domestic workers in South Africa. There was need to bring out the plight of domestic workers in the passage and elsewhere in the book. Several factors were at play and some of them are the use of language and its effects. The purpose achieved by using dialogue and gossip in revealing domestic worker's predicament, as well as evaluating comic aspects revealed by use of humour. Candidates' personal insights were expected to feature in their evaluation of workers working long hours and yet earn little, the dehumanizing nature of apartheid and unfair labour practices.