

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2006**

FRENCH

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CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS
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DETAILED COMMENTS

Unit 1

Paper 01 - Listening Comprehension

This paper consisted of five short selections and an extended interview based on the content of the three modules of the Unit: from Module 1, lifestyles (the individual and the internet); from Module 2, crime, children in society and from Module 3, the environment (tropical rain forests, conservation of the environment and water; bats as an endangered species).

Candidates attempted to answer most questions, although in a few cases those using individual headsets might have had a problem managing time properly. The overall standard was satisfactory.

Section A - Short Selections

Selection 1

Topic: *The democratization of communication through internet.*

Candidates found parts of the selection challenging. Many candidates used their knowledge of the internet. Particularly difficult were “Congrès américain”, “un citoyen de la nouvelle démocratie mondiale”, the notion of information no longer being passed down ‘d’en haut’, and finally that ‘subversive’ was not being used in a negative sense.

Selection 2

Topic: *The marriage of a hard working farmer’s wife put out by her husband.*

A disappointing number of candidates were unable to give correctly the number of years the narrator had worked with her husband and the time she got up in the morning. Candidates did not know how to explain her marriage to a farmer ‘fille d’agriculteur ... logique d’épouser un agriculteur’. Why she got up early, and ironically, because of not knowing ‘me mettrait á la porte’, many thought that the couple lived happily together.

Selection 3

Topic: *Jacques Chirac’s projects on the environment.*

There were many versions of who Jacques Chirac was – a chef, an environmentalist and even “chief of litter”. Several candidates did not understand ‘eau potable’. Nonetheless, this question was well done, generally.

Selection 4

Topic: *Bats and their usefulness to the environment*

Candidates did well on this selection, although some had problems understanding the precise information given about bats and so offered their own interpretation. For example, question 4(d)

received answers such as ‘They are vampires’, ‘They are carnivores’, ‘They suck people’s blood’ as the myth perpetuated about bats. The answer required came from the line ‘les gens ne doivent pas perpétuer le mythe que les chauve-souris sont dangereuses’.

Selection 5

Topic: *The rapid disappearance of forest, home to butterflies, remedies*

Although the questions required answers based on the selection, several candidates gave answers based on general knowledge. For example, many answers to 5(a) gave general information on tropical rain forests (there are wild animals there, they are important) instead of saying that they were disappearing at an alarming rate. As for 5(b), many candidates did not understand ‘papillons’ and simply listed animals found in a forest (ants, lizards, bugs ...). Performance was fair on the whole.

Section B - Extended Interview

Selection 6

Topic: *The law requiring parents to be responsible for children’s crimes*

The interview, although presented with a summary of the discussion, proved to be the most difficult question. It was clear that candidates used their own interpretation of the situation rather than what was on the tape. Hearing the word ‘victimes’ led to candidates writing about parents ill-treating their children. Some vocabulary proved difficult, for example, ‘faillir’ (les parent out failli á eduquer ou á surveiller leur enfant) but the cognate “exonération” was also difficult. Many candidates interpreted “devoir” as “homework”, thus, missing the point in answers which required them to refer to the parents’ duty. Another ‘false friend’ was the word ‘dommage’, which some interpreted as ‘pity’.

Paper 02 - Reading and Writing

Section A - Reading Comprehension

Passage 1: L’Impasse

L’Impasse was generally simple and easy to read. Questions (a) to (d) revealed that the candidates generally comprehended the extract and for the most part were able to answer appropriately. In a few instances, candidates responded as though Samuel was the protagonist in the extract.

- Finding an appropriate means to describe Samuel’s reaction in Part (d) proved somewhat challenging to some candidates, as did stating what his reaction revealed about his personality.
- Part (e) posed the most difficult to differentiate between ‘cultural conflict’ and ‘interpersonal differences’. Nevertheless, this section was very well handled.
- Many candidates performed creditably with respect to finding synonyms in part (f)-(j).
- Candidates must pay particular attention to the instructions given as a few candidates answered this section in FRENCH.

Passage 2: Sauver les rhinocéros

This extract proved to be more challenging for the candidates than Passage A and as such, candidates did not perform well. Performance may have also been influenced by the fact that candidates were required to respond in their own words and in FRENCH. In numerous instances candidates copied phrases directly from the passage with no attempt at rephrasing or using their own words.

- (a) A few candidates misinterpreted this question as they neglected the phrase ‘souligne de la survie’ and, therefore, went on to the animals being killed.
- (b) Some candidates correctly identified the phrase that highlighted the economic value of the tasks. However, they did not explain the expression as required in the question.
- (c-d) Many candidates paraphrased for these questions and in numerous instances did not provide enough information to be awarded full marks.
- (f-g) There were generally handled well by most candidates.

Section B - Essays

Questions 3 and 7

The majority of candidates chose to do these questions and they were well handled by many candidates. Some candidates were able to use illustrations or examples to enhance their essays and their content ranged from Satisfactory to Excellent.

Question 4

Very few candidates chose this question. Those candidates who attempted it performed well.

Question 5

This question seemed to be a difficult one and it was the least popular of all.

Question 6

Following Questions 3 and 7, this was the most widely chosen question. It was well handled by most of those who did it.

On the whole, the ‘content’ of the composition was good, or it was fairly well organized. Candidates showed reasonable knowledge of the topics and had something to say. However, ‘correctness of expression’ and range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions were weak. In quite a few instances examiners had tremendous difficulty trying to make sense of what was written. At this level, it is expected that basic rules of grammar should be known and used correctly and that vocabulary and idiom be more than a French ‘dressing’ or equivalent in English.

Teachers are urged to provide plenty practice with composition writing and to get students to discuss and analyse their errors and make appropriate corrections.

Paper 03 - Literary Analysis and Themes

Section A - Literary Extracts

This paper was divided into two sections. In section A, candidates were required to analyse an extract from one of the four prescribed literary texts, that is, (1) L'Odeur du Café by Danny Laferrière, (2) L'Enfant Noir by Camara Laye, (3) L'Etranger by Albert Camus and (4) Une si longue lettre by Mariama Bâ. Specific questions were asked on each passage and candidates were required to answer them in French. This section was worth 16 marks.

Section B consisted of four questions. Candidates were expected to answer an essay in English of between 350 – 400 words on one of the questions. This section was divided into two parts each with a different theme. The themes were La Jeunesse and L'Individu et La Société. In answering the question it was required that candidates focus on one of the literary texts listed above. This section carried 32 marks.

Section A - Literary Extracts and Themes

In Section A of this paper, the majority of candidates attempted to analyse the passages listed as Question 2 and 3, that is, L'Enfant Noir and L'Etranger respectively. It was noted that with regard to Section A, candidates had problems with grammar but this did not seriously impede comprehension. In some cases the responses to questions were excessively long and did not necessarily include useful information. It was also noted that more attention to the use of introductory words such as 'commentez' or 'décrivez' would provide more precise and complete responses. Nevertheless, there were some creditable performances. Most candidates obtained more than 50 per cent of the marks.

Section B - Texts

In Section B, the most popular question by far was Question 7 'Society finds it difficult to accommodate departures from the norm'. To a large extent this was discussed with reference to the text L'Etranger. Not enough attention was paid to key words in the questions. For example, in Question 5, (To the young, life is simply a series of episodes and experiences), the word simply in some cases was not fully considered. In Question 6, 'Education, the most humanizing force, often has discomfiting and unanticipated consequences for the young', the words 'humanizing', 'discomfiting' and 'unanticipated' were not fully exploited in the answer.

Although some of the essays were well organized and well written there were several that could have been further enhanced if candidates had included a well developed introduction and conclusion. The overall performance was, however, satisfactory.

Unit 2

Paper 01 - Listening Comprehension

This paper required candidates to respond to questions based on five short selections and a discussion. The subject matter came from each module of the Unit as set out in the syllabus. The overall performance of the candidates was good.

Section A – Short Selections

Selection 1

This selection was based on the political instability in Haiti (Module 1 – Challenges in the developing world). Candidates found the question difficult, especially those concerning Aristide's initial comments, Jean Métellus' description of Aristide and the events associated with 1959. Not enough detail was given for the first question (worth four marks) on Aristide's remarks, and several candidates did not understand 'democratiquement élu' and shortened the expression to 'democratic'. Very few understood that Aristide refused to leave before the end of his mandate. Not many candidates understood the events of 1959 - Question (e) - . Jean Métellus took refuge in France, Haiti was under the dictatorship of Duvalier. The description of Aristide - Question (c) - was worth two marks, one for 'criminal' which was fairly simple, and one for 'someone who did evil everywhere', which many candidates missed.

Selection 2

This selection also came from Module 1 and dealt with the extended family (Values in the developing world). The performance was good. Although it was clear that candidates understood the passage, certain words proved challenging, 'se soutenir', 'vénérés' and 'réciprocité'. The final question was often misinterpreted. Instead of children being 'a source of social protection' several candidates understood that children needed protection.

Selection 3

This selection came from Module 3 and had as its subject on-line banking (Trends in business). Candidates performed well. The phrase 'Pour atténuer ce handicap' was not needed in the answers, but several candidates referred to the bank's efforts to personalize relations with 'handicapped clients'. The question concerning ways in which the bank could be reached proved slightly challenging in the word 'courrier', translated as 'courier' or 'e-mail'.

Selection 4

Performance on this selection from Module 3 was fair. It dealt with the banana war between small countries and developed countries (Agriculture) the term 'devises' was often not understood (20 per cent of foreign exchange). The number of people in the industry was given as 'four million' instead of 'four thousand'. There were many instances of total misunderstanding of the last question. Many did not understand that the banana industry; was in danger and under attack and so spoke about its development in the future.

Selection 5

The final selection based on Module 3 (Tourism) was very well done. It presented opposing views on the effects of tourism in the region. Several candidates, however, were challenged by the metaphor 'le tourisme était de la prostitution'.

Section B - Extended Interview

Discussion

This selection dealt with medical issues (Module 2). In this case, 'mad cow disease' and efforts to find some way to treat it. On the whole, candidates did not perform well on the section.

The first question required the date 1985 and the place, the United Kingdom, for when and where the disease was discovered. The year was problematic for some, and many were unfamiliar with 'Royaume Uni' (frequently rendered as Wyomic/Wyoming).

Some candidates were confused about the animals used to test the vaccine - Question 4(d) - referring to cows instead of mice. Questions (f) and (g) were challenging in the sense that while candidates seemed to have grasped the general idea of the interview they were not able to give the necessary details to gain full marks. Some candidates were confused about which protein was transformed. The answer required them to say that normal proteins took the shape of the protein prion and made the brain spongy, or that the immune system was affected and so the brain was attacked.

On the whole, candidates showed a reasonable level of maturity in their approach to the exercise. However, it is clear that greater competence with the aural skills is needed. Often candidates' jottings and sometimes actual responses indicated a correct representation of the sound heard but this could not be matched with actual words/expression in the French Language.

Paper 02 - Reading and Writing

Section A - Reading Comprehension

Passage 1 Enfants exploités

On the whole the candidates showed that they were able to read and understand the passage. Many candidates were able to produce extensive and meaningful answers to most of the questions and to focus on the specific details required.

In Question (a), many candidates did not know the English equivalent of L'organisation internationale du travail (OIT). Further a number of candidates apparently did not recognize the significance of 'EACH' in the question and failed to look for the other player, that is, UNICEF. In the passage 'première journée mondiale ...' was often interpreted as journal.

Questions b, c and d were generally well answered but there were varying degrees of accuracy and aptness in the explanations of (d). Some explanations were quite superficial.

The vocabulary in (e) was apparently unknown to many candidates, hence "navire battant pavillon nigérien" led to Nigerian gangs and trucks.

'Cache' and 'drapeau' presented the greatest challenges in the section requiring equivalent words/phrases in the text.

Passage 2 Evaluation des cadres: faut-il avoir peur du ‘360 degrés?’

This was a more challenging passage requiring greater attention and analyzing on the part of candidates. Candidates found it difficult to express their ideas in their own words having recourse too often to entire phrases from the passage. Such responses could not be given full benefit of the mark scheme.

Questions (a), (b) and (f) proved to be the most challenging ones. For (a), candidates gave their opinion through reference to the first sentence of the paragraph and many did not relate to the new method being ‘stressant, mais pas forcément idiot’ at the end of the paragraph.

Question b (i) and (ii) were inadequately explained in most cases and the ‘feu vert’ in b (ii) did not help many candidates. In (f), candidates did not relate ‘oublier la tradition et son amour – propre’ to the concept of a new method of evaluation, ‘les cadres’ forgetting their higher status to accept the critique of their workmates including their subordinates.

Section B – Essays

The content of the essays was generally good. However, performance was marred by candidates’ weakness in grammar and expression and lack of appropriate vocabulary and idiom. In a few instances expression caused difficulty in comprehension on the part of examiners. At this level, it is expected that basic rules of grammar would be applied and that there would be varied vocabulary and use of idiomatic expression. Candidates also need to be reminded of the word limit stipulated in the examination. Far too many essays were either too long or fell far short of the minimum number of words stipulated.

Questions 3 and 7 were chosen by most of the candidates. These essays were generally well handled and ranged from ‘Satisfactory’ to ‘Excellent’. In Question 3, some candidates dealt with only one aspect, either ‘the moral’ or ‘the criminal’ of the topic.

Some candidates in answering Question 4, considered the issue only from the perspective of their own particular country and not the region as a whole.

Question 5 was not widely chosen and it was not handled well by those who selected it. Candidates were extremely limited in their responses and clearly lacked the vocabulary and related idioms and perhaps experience to deal adequately with the topic.

Question 6. This question showed a good level of performance by those who chose it. They were generally able to show (1) the extent to which the Caribbean is a multi-cultural society (2) how people of the Caribbean are able to live in harmony and (3) how other nations can learn from their example.

Paper 03

Literary Analysis and Themes

This paper was divided into two sections. In Section A, candidates were required to analyse one of four extracts taken from the prescribed texts listed below:

- (1) La Rue Cases – Negrés by Joseph Zobel
- (2) Maria Chapdelaine by Louis Hémon
- (3) Gouverneurs de la rosée by Jacques Roumaini and
- (4) La tregédie du Roi Christophe by Aime Césaire.

As in Unit 1, specific questions were asked and responses were required in French. This section was worth 16 marks. Question 1, (La Rue Cases – Negres) was the most popular.

Section B consisted of four questions. Candidates were expected to write an essay in English of between 350-400 words on one of the questions taken from either the subsection entitled La Vie Rurale or subsection labelled Les Conflits Politiques et Sociaux. Candidates in responding to questions, were required to focus on one of the four texts listed above. The most popular questions were Questions 5 and 6 with La Rue Cases – Nègres being the text to which most reference was made. Some responses were very good.

With regard to Section A, some candidates experienced difficulty with regard to the questions which required them to establish a link between the specific extract and the text as a whole. There were problems with the use of language. But some responses were good. Most candidates were awarded more than 50 per cent of the total marks.

In some cases, greater familiarity with the text would have ensured a better quality of essay. Less paraphrasing and more analysis would also have produced better essays in some instances. There was, nevertheless, some good work. The majority of candidates scored above 50 per cent in this section.

Paper 04 - Internal Assessment

Units 1 and 2

There is no doubt that the topics chosen by candidates for their presentation related to the content of the respective Units and covered a wide and interesting range of areas. On the whole, candidates were well prepared and impressive in their presentations. There were only rare occasions when the candidates appeared to be well rehearsed.

Judging from questions and comments heard, teachers made candidates feel comfortable and conducted the examination in a good atmosphere. Appropriate questions were asked in the topic conversation. There were, however, some problem areas, a few of which are listed below.

- In the open conversation it was for the most part merely a question and answer exercise. Greater efforts must be made to make this approximate a simple conversation.
- Questions ranged across examiners from the simple “où habitez vous?”, la famille and l’école, to issues such as the environment, pollution and science. Some candidates were restricted to the simple everyday issues, and need to expand their scope to handle issues such as those mentioned above.
- In some cases disproportionate time was given to the presentation and topic conversation and little time was spent on the general conversation.
- In a few cases, teachers interrupted candidates’ responses even if reasonable when they did not match the teachers’ expected response. In other cases, answers were completed by the teacher. Both of these can frustrate the candidate and make assessment problematic.

Some problems for noting:

- Mark allocation for individual questions must be accurate.
- The mark sheet must be correct and accurate.

General observations/concerns regarding the examination

1. The examiners were satisfied that the examination in both Units reflected the content and specifications of the syllabus and reached an appropriate level.
2. There was concern at the level of performance with respect to grammatical correctness, correctness of expression and range of vocabulary. At this level candidates should display a higher level of competence.
3. With respect to Paper 01, many students do not use the hints provided in English in finding answers to the questions asked. Furthermore, a large number of candidates wrote their answers in pencil in the space provided for answers and then simply wrote over the pencil in ink. This not only makes the work unsightly but more importantly, difficult to read.
4. Insufficient attention is paid to instructions in the examination. In some places answers are given in French where they are required in English and vice versa. Also, in some cases, essays are far too long or too short. In both these cases, candidates are penalised.
5. There were too many cases where incorrect or inadequate answers resulted clearly from careless reading of the question under consideration.
6. In the Listening Comprehension, candidates' jottings or sometimes their actual responses indicated that they heard the sound correctly but do not know how to represent it in French or that they did not know the actual word, for example, papion [papillon], royami, wyomie [Royaume uni]. They must be helped to bridge these gaps. Sometimes the correct French word may gain them rewards.