

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2004

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The candidate entry for the Literatures in English examination continues to increase. The 2004 examination had a combined candidate entry (Units 1 and 2) of 1823, compared to the previous year's entry of 1529. Overall, there is improvement in the performance on Paper 01 and Paper 02; the performance on the Internal Assessment remains at the same satisfactory level as 2003.

Although, there has been some improvement on Paper 02 of the examination, there is still a great deal of room for improvement on some aspects of this paper. While candidates are gaining more marks for showing evidence of knowledge of genre, the performance on some modules is weaker than on others. Candidates performed much better on drama than they did on prose or poetry. While many candidates are familiar with the conventions of the poetic genre, a substantial percentage fail to demonstrate knowledge of the prose genre at that basic level. In both poetry and prose, candidates need to understand not just the terms associated with the generic features, but the ways in which writers manipulate the different features of each genre to achieve artistic effect. The ability to explain how different artistic choices reinforce an author's take on a particular issue is an important skill for candidates to learn; giving a list of features of the genre is not sufficient. In the prose genre, in particular, candidates often merely narrated the story or relevant sections of the story rather than produce analytic essays. Candidates will have to continue to improve their essay writing, question analysis and argumentative skills in order to improve their performance.

Although the drama Module on Unit 1, Paper 01 was well done, the general performance on Paper 01 of both Units was less than expected. Candidates have to be careful that they pay equal attention to both Papers in order to maximize their performance overall. Far too many candidates spend time re-writing the questions and far too many fail to attempt entire questions or parts of questions. Since

the marks on this paper are awarded for specific responses, failure to attempt a question results in an inability to score marks for that section or question. Candidates should also pay attention to how many marks are awarded for particular questions because they might lose too many marks when they fail to attempt questions with a higher weighting of marks. It is clear that candidates need to be given practice in time management under examination conditions. In this paper, as in Paper 02, candidates need to demonstrate an understanding not just of literary terms but of the ways in which writers manipulate these to achieve artistic effect. The questions which were weighted heaviest tended to require competent application of this skill and candidates' failure to engage with this aspect of literature compromised their performance. More practice in making judgements about artistic choices in literature needs to be given to candidates.

DETAILED COMMENTS

UNIT 1

Paper 01

Module 1 - Drama

Candidates found this extract, "Lady Windermere's Fan", interesting and responded well to the questions. The best performance of candidates on Paper 01 was seen on this module. However, the ability to explain overall significance of the use of various dramatic devices was not always in evidence in candidates' responses. In general, candidates should be given more practice in developing their analytical skills.

Question 1

Candidates found the question straightforward and responded satisfactorily.

Question 2

Candidates were able to identify stage directions in drama and answered this question satisfactorily. However, not all candidates could

comment on the dramatic significance of the stage directions.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to identify two props. However, weaker candidates were unable to comment on the dramatic significance of these props.

Question 4

Candidates were able to clearly identify aspects of characterization.

Question 5

Candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the dramatic concept of suspense and tension as contributing to atmosphere.

Module 2 - Poetry

Some candidates found the poem hard to access because of their unfamiliarity with the term “glad rags”. However, stronger candidates were able to score high marks on this module given that many questions did not require that the candidate possess an intimate understanding of this term.

Question 6

Many candidates did not know what the term “glad rags” meant nor could they use context clues to correctly decipher its meaning. However in Part (b), even though many candidates could not correctly identify what “glad rags” meant, most were able to recognize ironic dimensions of the term.

Question 7

Candidates were able to identify the persona and were able to handle this question well.

Question 8

Generally, candidates were able to identify the literary devices, but as in all questions of this nature, the weaker candidates were un-

able to explain their effectiveness.

Question 9

This question was well done. Most candidates scored full marks. Most candidates could identify aspects of the father's character and give textual evidence to support their claims.

Question 10

In part (a) many candidates were unable to identify 'tone' in poetry and therefore could not answer the question. In Part (b) however, candidates' answers were generally satisfactory and the responses suggested that candidates had generally understood and were responding imaginatively to the poem.

Module 3 - Prose Fiction

Candidates responded positively to this extract from the novel "The Innocence of Age". However, weaker candidates treated the passage as a comprehension piece and were unable to appreciate the ways in which language works, especially irony, and its effectiveness. This lack of literary appreciation compromised performance.

Question 11

Part (a) of this question was satisfactorily handled. Weaker candidates tended to repeat the adjectives given in the phrase without establishing a relationship between these adjectives and the impression conveyed. The performance in Part (b) of the question revealed that candidates needed much more practice in detecting inferences and overall impression from a set of suggestive clues given in literature.

Question 12

Candidates responded well to this question and performed satisfactorily. Many candidates understood the significance of setting in prose fiction.

Question 13

This question was not well handled. While candidates could identify the literary devices, they were unable to comment on how these devices create humour. Candidates would profit from doing more exercises that help them to recognize the purpose and effectiveness of literary devices.

Question 14

Candidates seemed to have found this question easy and it was well handled.

Question 15

Most candidates handled this question well. There were many creative and imaginative responses given.

Paper 02

It was heartening to see improvement on this paper, especially in the area of knowledge. However, candidates needed to improve on the application and organization skills. Many candidates still failed to formulate a coherent response to the question. While some referred to knowledge of the writer's biography or historical and social context in their answers, many of the candidates were still not synthesizing this information into a strong argument in response to the questions. In the profile of organization, many candidates did not maximize their marks by paying particular attention to the effective use of thesis sentence, introduction, transition, conclusion and paragraphing. Outlining an argument in the beginning of an essay establishes, from the outset, a candidate's main thesis and provides a guide for the candidate to maintain focus throughout the essay. Also, it is sometimes important to define the terms on which the argument rests.

The weakest performance was on the prose module; many candidates tended to spend time telling the story, and plot is only one feature of the genre. Incidents from the plot should have been used primarily as evidence to support an argument. With these kinds of questions on genre, the candidates should not ignore the other fea-

tures of the various genres.

Module 1 - Drama

Question 1

This question was a popular choice by candidates. Candidates understood and responded satisfactorily to the question. Sometimes, candidates did not give equal weight to both plays and in this regard may not have earned maximum marks especially in the area of knowledge. However, candidates showed improvement in the area of knowledge of the genre, although most needed to develop the ability to explain how these features contributed to thematic and dramatic significance. While the question directed attention to “conflict”, other features of the genre were also important in defining what is dramatic in drama. Not enough candidates engaged in the evaluative dimension of the question. Their ability to make judgments about whether conflict is the defining element of drama would have provided the basis for arriving at quality arguments in response to the question. These evaluations would also have afforded candidates the opportunity to offer their informed, reasoned, personal response to literature.

Question 2

While this was the less popular of the two questions in this Section, those candidates who chose this question seemed to find it interesting and they responded satisfactorily. However, candidates could have given more attention to the phrase “means by which”. This phrase directs candidates to engage with the features of genre that writers’ manipulate to engage with the issues of the personal and the social. Since this syllabus is genre-based, it is important for candidates to pay particular attention to features of the genre.

Module 2 - Poetry

Question 3

Many candidates chose Wordsworth, Carter and Eliot to answer this question and the question was satisfactorily done. More candidates recognized the features of the poetic genre and began to score more on the knowledge component of the assessment. However, candidates cannot score as much as they should when they merely

list poetic conventions without any clear understanding of these concepts. Moreover, they tend to lose marks on “application of knowledge” when they fail to explain the significance of the poet’s artistic choices. When candidates are answering a question on two writers or two books, they should ensure that they give equal attention to both.

Question 4

Many candidates could relate thematic and stylistic features that defined a poet’s “voice.” Again, Wordsworth and Eliot were popular choices. There were some excellent essays on Eliot that demonstrated candidates’ ability to manipulate information on a poet’s biographical, literary and cultural/historical context to weave an argument about a poet’s distinctive voice.

Module 3 - Prose Fiction

Question 5

Many candidates responded satisfactorily to this question and were able to identify and discuss incidents and reasons for madness. However, some provided unorthodox and unsubstantiated interpretations of the term “magic”. Many, too, did not produce the level of analysis that the questions demanded. Instead, candidates tended to narrate rather than analyse how features of the genre supported such themes. Both the terms “merely” and “paints”, that would provide room for argument, were ignored in some instances reducing the chance of the candidate scoring well on “application of knowledge.”

Question 6

This question was also popular. Many candidates were able to identify either men or women who experienced displacement. However, some ignored the ways in which gender displacement was represented in these novels or short story collections. For some who chose Senior’s short stories, they sometimes used stories that were less than effective to make their arguments. Selecting the textual details as evidence is very important in arguing effectively and candidates should be careful in the selection of short stories they choose

to make an argument.

Paper 03 - Internal Assessment

The performance on the Internal Assessment this year was similar to last year's. The samples showed evidence that candidates are enjoying these activities that provide room for their critical judgement, informed personal response and creativity. However, teachers needed to be more careful that the assignments set were able to fulfil the objectives of the syllabus.

Length, complexity and appropriateness in light of syllabus objectives must be considered. Teachers need to continue to be vigilant about plagiarism and should always provide the evidence and explanation when such an example is used in the samples sent to the Council.

Module 1 - Drama

This module recorded the best performance of the three modules. It was apparent from the submissions that candidates enjoyed this module. There was evidence in the better scripts that candidates knew the features of drama. The art pieces of specific scenes were well done and the dramatic adaptation, through live performance, was also generally well done. However, the explanatory texts did not always provide the evaluative dimension required to score high marks. This explanation should provide reasons for artistic choice of the director and the dramatic effectiveness of such choices, or an evaluation of the performance.

Module 2 - Poetry

In some cases, excellent critical articles of appropriate length and quality were selected that provided candidates with the opportunity to offer reasoned arguments and informed personal responses. Candidates were able to find room to agree and disagree with different aspects of these articles, using textual evidence to support their claims. However, some articles chosen by the teachers were too long and complex. Some of these responses were long (beyond the 1000 word limit) and typed. **That raised questions about whether the in-class and time limit requirements were adhered to.** The

weaker responses tended to merely summarize the critical essay without any evaluation of the critic's argument. Others sometimes lost focus on evaluating the essay and began discussing the poems studied, but not as a means to challenge or support the critic's ideas. Some of the questions the candidates responded to (for example, reporting on a poet's background) did not help the candidate to fulfil the objectives set out for this assignment. While this is useful work in the study of literature, this will not help candidates to gain high marks on the assignment.

Module 3 - Prose Fiction

While candidates performed satisfactorily on this module, there was much room for improvement in the way prose fiction was discussed. Many candidates continued to narrate plot lines without sufficient attention to the other features of the genre. Too many candidates only listed features without sufficient analysis of their effective deployment in the piece of art. Sometimes the problem was related to the passage selected often being too short and without sufficient evidence of features of the genre to generate full responses. A careful selection of appropriate passages for an activity like this one will help candidates in their close-reading skill, so necessary for Paper 01.

UNIT 2

Paper 1

Module 1 - Drama

The drama extract was not well done. Candidates did not seem to understand clearly what was taking place in this extract and accordingly did not respond well to the questions. Many candidates failed to understand how dramatic devices were being deployed and could not therefore comment on the significance of the playwright's manipulation of the resources of the genre for dramatic effect - a skill which the syllabus requires and one which candidates ought to possess.

Question 1

This question was generally well done and candidates were able to score full marks.

Question 2

Candidates were generally able to identify an appropriate device but as with other questions of this nature, the weaker candidates were unable to explain the effectiveness of the literary device selected.

Question 3

Candidates performed very poorly on this question. Many did not know the meaning of 'allusion' and were unable to discuss audience appeal.

Question 4

This question was generally well done. However, weaker candidates tended to describe Missy's costume rather than analyze the dramatic effect created by her costume.

Question 5

This question was poorly done. Candidates were unable to identify the dramatic technique used to create a fast-paced scene and therefore were unable to correctly respond to Part (b) which required that the candidate establish a relationship between dramatic technique and dramatic effect.

Module 2 - Poetry

While many candidates demonstrated a general understanding of the poem, "Anthem for Doomed Youth", some responses were less than satisfactory. Generally, candidates had difficulty explaining the effectiveness of literary devices and, accordingly, were unable to comment on the significance of these devices. Of the three genres, the least satisfactory performance is traditionally on the poetry module. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to continue devoting extra attention to this genre.

Question 6

Generally, many candidates were able to identify the form of the poem and scored full marks on this question.

Question 7

Part (a) of this question was well handled. However, in Part (b) most candidates had difficulty explaining the effect of these two kinds of imagery.

Question 8

While candidates were able to identify the sound and visual images, many sought to explain effectively by merely paraphrasing the way sound and visual images work, without relating this to effectiveness in the poem.

Question 9

This question was satisfactorily done. Generally, candidates were able to identify the literary devices, but as in all questions of this nature, the weaker candidates were unable to explain their effectiveness.

Question 10

This question, that asked for a reason why ending the poem with a rhyming couplet was an appropriate device, was not well done. Candidates would profit from a more in-depth understanding of poetic form.

Module 3 - Prose Fiction

Candidates performed creditably on this module. They related intelligently to the subject matter.

Question 11

This question was very well done and most candidates scored full marks.

Question 12

This question was very well done and most candidates scored full marks. Where typically candidates have difficulty explaining the effectiveness of a figure of speech, in this instance they were able to

explain clearly the appropriateness of the simile.

Question 13

In the main, candidates answered this question well. However in Part (b), weaker candidates had difficulty justifying the selections made.

Question 14

Part (a) of this question was very well done and most candidates scored full marks. Where typically candidates have difficulty explaining the effectiveness of a figure of speech, in this instance they were able to explain clearly the effectiveness of repetition.

Part (b) of this question was not as well done as Part (a). However, stronger candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of how repetition functioned in the passage as a whole.

Question 15

Both parts of this question were well handled by most candidates.

Paper 02

Candidate performance on this paper improved from 2003. It was gratifying to see improvement on this paper, especially in the area of knowledge. However, candidates still needed to improve on the application and organization skills. Many candidates failed to formulate a coherent response to the question. While some referred to knowledge of the writer's biography or historical and social context in their answers, many of the candidates did not synthesize this information into a strong argument in response to the questions. In the profile of organization, many candidates did not maximize their marks by paying particular attention to the effective use of thesis sentence, introduction, transition, conclusion and paragraphing. Outlining an argument in the beginning of an essay establishes, from the outset, a candidate's main thesis and provides a guide for the candidate to maintain focus throughout the essay. Also, it is sometimes important to define the terms on which the argument

rests. The weakest performance was on the prose module; many candidates tended to spend time telling the story, and plot is only one feature of the genre. Incidents from the plot should have been used primarily as evidence to support an argument. With these kinds of questions on genre, the candidates should not ignore the other features of the various genres.

Module 1 - Drama

Question 1

Candidates' responses to this question were satisfactory. Many candidates saw how language use was important to dramatic effect. Many candidates when discussing Shakespeare, discussed the imagery in characters' language, the different speech types that signaled social positioning and, in very good responses, certain central motifs established through language. Some candidates extended the definition of "language" to mean literary language and spoke of dramatic conventions as tools used by playwrights to explore issues of society. Too many, however, needed to have clearly defined the key words around which their arguments were constructed. *Othello* and *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* were popular choices for this question.

Question 2

This was a popular question and the performance on this question was satisfactory. Many candidates chose "imagery" and "ideas about society" as their two signals of culture in plays. It was disappointing that "stage craft" was not given as much attention, although some candidates could not help referring to stage craft even when it was not part of their selection. Examiners were pleased that candidates demonstrated knowledge of the genre. However, candidates needed to present more careful arguments in response to the question.

Module 2 - Poetry

Question 3

This question was the slightly less popular of the two in this section. Many candidates chose to use Langston Hughes and Martin Carter to answer the question. The examiners were pleased to see that candidates recognize that they do not have to agree with the lead

statement, although, too many failed to engage with the second part as much as they engaged with the first. Some also missed the necessary correlation between the two that the lead statement presumes.

Question 4

Performance on this question was satisfactory – a similar performance as the previous question. In the better responses, candidates argued that clarity is not necessarily opposed to meaningfulness and supported their argument with evidence from the poems.

Module 3 - Prose Fiction

Question 5

Many candidates were aware of narrative perspective as informing viewpoints about issues in prose fiction. However, some were unable to distinguish the different types of narrative perspective and discuss how this difference affected “moral perspective.” Candidates effectively used *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* and *Jane Eyre* to answer this question. One weakness in candidates’ responses, was that they tended to ignore the phrase “largely responsible”, that would have provided room for their own distinct argument in response to the question.

Question 6

This question was fairly well done. One of the best essays from this Unit presented a tightly woven argument about “freedom and entrapment” in *Dubliners*. The weaker candidates tended to offer examples of characters encountering freedom or entrapment without ever dealing with the representation of these issues.

Paper 03 - Internal Assessment

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Length, complexity and appropriateness in light of syllabus objectives must be considered. The area of application of knowledge that tests the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation needs greater attention. Teachers need to continue to be vigilant about plagiarism and should always provide the evidence and explanation when such an example is used in the samples sent to be moderated.

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The examiners are encouraged by candidates' improved performance in 2004 and wish to encourage teachers to continue to refine their examination preparation of candidates.