

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH 2024

PAPER 1: WRITTEN PAPER

General Comments

The paper comprises of three sections; A, B and C. Section A is made up of Drama (Twelfth Night, Educating Rita, I Will Marry When I Want) and Novel (Wuthering Heights, The River Between and Animal Farm). Candidates were required to choose three questions from section A. A context based question is compulsory either from drama or novel. Section B included short stories from three anthologies and candidates were to choose only one question. The last section is C, poetry, and candidates were expected to choose one question. Candidates were to answer five questions in total. However, for the 2024 cohort, there were many instances of rubric infringement whereby candidates answered question 1 and 13 while they were supposed to choose between the two context questions. There were also cases of waffling which could be attributed to lack of in-depth knowledge of the prescribed text.

Comments on Individual Items

Section A- Drama and Novel

- 1 (a) This question on setting was excellently handled by candidates. Most of them were able to point out that the scene takes place at Olivia's residence.
- (b) The question was well answered because candidates provided appropriate responses and took into account the mark allocation. Feste's perception of effects of alcohol on man were all provided by the candidates, being drowns him (1), makes him a fool (1) and, he becomes a madman (1).
- (c) A satisfactory response from candidates was shown as they were able to provide the three reasons by Olivia dismissing suitors sent by Orsino.
- (d) Candidates responses to this question were very poor because they could not explain the meaning of the quoted statement which required them to show that Sir Toby meant he could be a friend / adversary (1) it does not matter (1).
- (e) The question required candidates to display an understanding of humour by discussing the pun in Sir Toby willfully mishearing Olivia's use of the word lethargy and Sir Toby diverting to the word lechery (1). Lethargy means exhaustion while lechery means a display of sexual interest (1). There is a word play (1).
- (f) Impressive responses to this question were noted as aspects of Olivia's personality were provided with supporting evidence from the extract.
- (g) Exceptional responses from candidates were observed, substantiated with evidence from the provided extract.
- 2 (a) This question was well done by most candidates because they showed feelings of admiration, pity, hatred and pride supported by evidence from the extract.
- (b) Some candidates had challenges with understanding the word 'perception' hence were unable to present Antonio as selfless, generous, compassionate and courageous. Then, these traits must be backed with supporting evidence from the provided extract.

- (c) The responses to the question were unsatisfactory because candidates showed a poor recollection of the sequence of the plot of the play. In most Centres candidates mixed up and misplaced events.

- 3 The essay question was not popular but candidates who chose it did very well because they discussed the suspension of social order displayed by characters in the play who easily cross social classes. For instance, Olivia, as a countess, callously throws herself towards a page. She pours her heart to him begging him to return her love. She goes to the extent of putting her reputation on the line when she ridicules herself by sending Malvolio to run after Cesario with a ring claiming he had left it behind.

4, 5, 6

The above questions are from the play *Educating Rita* and Centres seem not to be doing the text as no candidates attempted them.

7, 8, 9

The questions were not attempted by any Centres.

- 10 (a) This was well done as candidates recalled the answer as Kabonyi. (1)
- (b) A satisfactory attempt was noted because the reasons for the fight were well presented as Kinuthia had called Kamau's father a convert to the white man (1) and Kamau had joked about Kinuthia's father dying poor (1).
- (c) Candidates' attempt was very poor because they were unable to describe the relationship appropriately. The relation should be described as tense, hostile or cordial with supporting evidence from the given passage.
- (d) This was a poor attempt because candidates could not unpack the meaning of the statement that the government administrative offices (1) have brought nothing (1) but anguish to the natives (1).
- (e) Candidates are challenged when it comes to showing an appreciation of literary devices. They were unable to show that it is ironic for Kinuthia to complain about the whites' invasion while he is a beneficiary since he went to Siriana to learn the white man's ways.
- (f) An excellent attempt from the candidates was noted because character traits and their support were presented.
- (g) The question was well done by most candidates because they described their feelings appropriately and supported them with evidence from the passage.

- 11 (a)** This question was poorly attempted because candidates could not recall that Waiyaki saw a vision of the image of his sister and that Muthoni (1) shadows that had no concrete form (1) then the mist came back (1). Edges formed and he could not see the outline of a shape coming into being (1). That the shape remained there fixed (1), it was the shape of a woman (1) and he could not make out who she was (1).
- (b)** This was an excellent attempt because candidates simply lifted the six ways in which the moon was personified in the passage. They demonstrated an understanding of the literary device in question being personification.
- (c)** The question was well done by most of the candidates as they discussed their feelings towards Waiyaki and supported with evidence from the provided passage.
- (d)** Candidates have a serious problem of events in the novel. As a result, their responses were very poor because they are challenged when it comes to plot sequencing versus narration. Instead of selecting relevant, appropriate events chronologically, they just narrate the story.

- 12** “Ngugi Wa Thiong’o in *The River Between* shows all women as weak and spineless.” To what extent do you agree or disagree? Give evidence for your views. [20]

This is a discursive question that demands that both sides of the question be addressed, however the attempt was bad as this was not the case. Candidates had to discuss women in the novel for example, Nyambura is spineless as she lacks resolve. She falls in love with Waiyaki but when he asks her to marry him, she refuses because she is afraid of her father. Whereas, Muthoni is autonomous because she defies her father, leaves home and decides to get circumcised against his will.

- 13 (a)** There was a good attempt as candidates showed that life on the farm nowadays had greater dignity than before (1). There were spontaneous demonstrations which celebrated the struggles and triumphs of *Animal Farm* (1).
- (b)** This was a fair attempt of the question but some of the candidates could not present a logical response by working out the appropriate answer from the evidence in the passage.
- (c)** Excellent responses to the question were seen as most of the candidates’ reasoning was appropriate.
- (d)** A poor attempt by candidates was noted as they were unable to unpack the irony that the animals were in fact not their own masters (1), they were kept in totalitarian rule by the pigs (1) and were not allowed to give opinion (1) or protest against anything they suspected as wrong with leadership (1).
- (e)** This item was satisfactorily attempted as Napoleon’s traits were discussed and supported with evidence from the passage.
- (f)** The task was well done as appropriate feelings were presented with supporting evidence.

- 14 (a) Most candidates did not do well in this question because they were unable to select the relevant information from the passage. They had to show that Boxer's neck stretched out (1), his eyes were glazed (1), his sides matted with sweat (1). He was unable to raise his head (1). A thin trickle of blood had come out of his mouth (1). He complained about his lungs (1) in a weak voice (1). Napoleon had made arrangements for Boxer to be treated in a hospital in Wellington (1), where he will be in the hands of human beings (1).
- (b) Candidates' responses were poor as they did not present a chronological order of events that happened immediately after the provided passage. Their response should start with a van that came in the middle of the day and end with the sound of tremendous drumming of hooves inside the van.
- (c) Poorly done as candidates do not describe the relationship but instead provide character traits of the two characters. A description of the relationship is required and should be supported with evidence from the passage.
- 15 Candidates who attempted this question did exceptionally well as they addressed the question appropriately by not reproducing information from the question. For instance, they presented Squealer as a propagandist who paints Napoleon in a favourable light. Sensing the animals' discontentment after Snowball's expulsion, he paddles lies that justifies Napoleon's dictatorship. He says Napoleon took extra burden to lead and take responsibility for the animals, thus sacrificed. When someone spoke about Snowball's courage at the Battle of the Cowshed he protested that Snowball's part was much exaggerated.

16, 17, 18

These questions are from *Wuthering Heights* and Centres have not attempted the text at all.

Section B - Short Stories

- 19 (a) This item was fairly well done but the candidates could not score all the four marks because they tend to fall short in recalling information that comes immediately before the provided passage.
- (b) A very good attempt was noted from the candidates as they provided the required responses.
- (c) This was poorly attempted because the candidates did not formulate the required traits that Sherlock Holmes is pompous, condescending and observant with appropriate supports from the passage.
- (d) A good response from candidates was observed as they showed that Josiah Amberly spoke freely in sharing the unfair treatment he got from his wife.
- (e) This was a poor attempt because candidates did not describe the relationship as nonreciprocal as shown by Josiah Amberly being generous and the wife being ungrateful.
- (f) Candidates had a challenge in responding to the question. The required response was that Sherlock is estimable (1) as compared to him, who is humble (1).

(g) Excellent responses to the question were noted because candidates gave their feelings supported with evidence from the passage.

20 There was generally a poor attempt on this item because candidates tended to simply narrate the story instead of discussing the ways in which different motives for murder are presented in the story. For example, candidates should show that Olivia is resentful as she feels stuck in a boring marriage to a balding, unattractive old man. She falls in love with a young actor and deceives her husband by pretending to have fallen into depression. Ultimately, she grows tired of the pretence and resorts to elimination of her husband so that she can be freely in love with Stephen Castle. The example shows that there should be an attempt of analysis in approaching this type of question.

21 This was observed to be a fair attempt on the part of candidates. However, they could have done better if they had clearly demonstrated how Ronald Torbay's personal traits enable him to get away with murder. For instance, Ronald Torbay is strategic knowing very well that repeatedly cashing on insurance money for deceased spouses would raise suspicion, he makes sure to change his identity and modus operandi and location for his homicidal activities as well.

22 (a) This was an excellent attempt by the candidates as character traits and their support were provided.

(b) Responses to this item were not so good. Candidates struggle with questions that require a bit of reasoning. The desired response is he is worried (1) that Eva's blindness will burden the son (1) and is frustrated that he will not be able to do anything about it (1) because the son is persistent in marrying the blind girl (1).

(c) The question challenged the candidates, they struggled to show that the son had hoped that the visit would change his father's opinion (1) after seeing the inner Eva (1) but he remained adamant (1) in the son not marrying the blind girl (1).

(d) This was a poor attempt of the question because they failed to bring out the contrast that the son was normally submissive to the father's authority (1) but now he was disrespectful (1).

(e) The question was well done by most candidates.

(f) Responses by candidates for this item demonstrated a very good attempt.

(g) This was a poor attempt by most candidates as they did not explain that the engine was so loud (1) that he was forced to speak in a loud voice for his father to hear him (1).

23 Attempts to this question by candidates were very impressive. They skilfully discussed the theme of deception in the story. For instance, they showed how Khumo's friends plan to throw him under the bus when a journalist threatened to reveal their corrupt deals. They pressure him to be the fall guy and when they realise that he is reluctant they forge to kill him in a supposed car accident.

- 24** The question was not popular and the candidates who attempted it did not do well. The candidates were to show the humour, irony, exaggeration and ridicule in the short story. For example, the high court judge lost his composure at the prisoner's request for capital punishment so much that his spectacles fell to the table. This exaggerated humour speaks to the mockery the judicial administration plays on the justice system. It was unheard of for pleas to be entered with the efficiency that Bana and his co accused offered. The norm was for lawyers to strut around in their 'funky black funeral robes' making arguments for pleasure.

25, 26 and 27

The questions were not attempted hence there may be no Centres studying this anthology.

Section C - Poetry

- 28 (a)** The attempt was very good as candidates showed that the mother motivates the son by encouraging him to be persistent in the face of adversity by highlighting her personal experience.
- (b)** This was a poor attempt as candidates could not make a distinction between tone and mood.
- (c)** Candidates did not do well in this question. Most of them simply identified the images but failed to elaborate their significance. For example, they should show that 'tacks' represent the pain that the mother went through.
- (d)** Candidates struggled in commenting on the metaphor of 'crystal stair'.
- (e)** A very good attempt was observed as candidates provided the speaker's personality and supporting evidence.
- 29** Candidates who attempted this question did very well. They pointed out the themes in the poem such as inequitable distribution of resources, disrespect, stigmatisation, gender inequality and discrimination. They discussed the themes in relation to the poem and emphasised that they are a societal ill.
- 30** A poor attempt was displayed by most candidates. Centres should train candidates on questions that involve literary devices. The candidates had to show how the weaver bird is an appropriate symbol in this poem as it is intrusive and invasive in nature.