

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

2025



PAPER 1: WRITTEN PAPER

General Comments

The paper contains three sections, namely, Section A, B, and C. Section A consists of Drama (Twelfth Night, Educating Rita, and I Will Marry When I Want) and Novel (Wuthering Heights, The River Between, and Animal Farm). Candidates should choose three questions from section A. A context-based question is compulsory from either a drama or a novel. Section B includes short stories from three anthologies, and candidates choose only one question from an anthology they have studied. The last section is C, poetry, and candidates are expected to choose one question. In total, candidates should answer five questions. However, for the 2025 cohort, there were many instances of rubric infringement whereby candidates answered questions 1 and 13 while they were supposed to choose between the two context questions. Further, they would ignore the other text studied, which is to choose 13, 14, 15, leaving out drama. Instances of minimal understanding of texts were observed, which led to factual errors and incredible supporting evidence.

Comments on Individual Items

Section A – Drama and Novel

- 1
 - (a) The candidates excellently handled the setting. Most of them were able to give the correct answer as Olivia's residence.
 - (b) The question was well answered because candidates provided appropriate responses that she is a woman (1) disguised as a man (1).
 - (c) Candidates' responses were not satisfactory because they did not bring out the reason, which is to soothe/entice her.
 - (d) Candidates' responses to this question were very good because they were able to give a synonym of "saucy," which is rude, and the reason Olivia allowed her in was curiosity rather than to listen to what she had to say.
 - (e) The question required candidates to give a reaction which can either be "impatient" or "shocked" supported by evidence from the extract. The attempt was fair.
 - (f) A fair attempt at the question, though some candidates could not explain "I hold the olive branch in my hand" as "I come in peace".
 - (g) Exceptional responses from candidates were observed, substantiated with evidence from the provided extract.
 - (h) Impressive responses to this question were noted as candidates discussed their feelings based on textual evidence.
- 2
 - (a) This question was well done by most candidates because they were able to derive the instructions given to Malvolio in the provided extract.
 - (b) Some candidates had challenges with providing the consequences of carrying out the instructions; instead, they simply gave a narration of Malvolio's appearance after following the instructions.



(c) The responses to the question were unsatisfactory because candidates lacked the appropriate vocabulary to describe relationships. The expectation was to use words such as “strained”, “hostile” or “tumultuous”.

3 The essay question was not popular but candidates who chose it did not do well because they were not able to demonstrate how music is interwoven in the dramatic structure of the play and helps to define characters and their thought process for example “if music be the food of love, play on” (1) directly connects music to love (1), asking to be given excess of it that he could overfeed on it to the point of self-disgust (1), paints Orsino as self-pitying (1) and melancholic (1). Music further enhances the celebratory and festive elements (1) as it is on the backdrop of epiphany (1).

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) The attempt at this question was good as candidates described the setting as Joshua’s residence.

(b) Candidates’ response was not good enough as they were not able to bring out the element of sacrifice, which is Nyambura going against her spiritual beliefs because she wanted to be circumcised.

(c) A fair attempt because the candidates provided the two reasons as per the demands of the question.

(d) A satisfactory response was noted as candidates articulated their impressions based on the evidence from the passage. They pointed out that Miriamu is submissive (1) because she fears standing up to Joshua (1).

(e) The question was poorly attempted because candidates lack adequate vocabulary to describe relationships.

(f) An excellent attempt from the candidates was noted because character traits and their supports 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 not popular and candidates who attempted it did not do well as they fell short of expectations. Candidates had to demonstrate that the river played a pivotal role to both Christians and traditionalists as it is a source of sustenance, spiritual renewal, unity and cultural identity for the Gikuyu people.



- (b) This was an excellent attempt because candidates simply articulated their feelings and supported them with evidence from the passage.
- (c) The question was challenging to the candidates who attempted it because they had to unpack the significance of Waiyaki's blood as a bond of allegiance (1), as an offering (1) as well as a sign of bravery (1).
- 12** The essay question was excellently attempted because candidates discussed the relationship between Nyambura and Muthoni, citing relevant evidence from the novel to support their arguments.
- 13** (a) Poorly attempted by a large number of candidates, as they failed to identify the setting, which is the knoll.
- (b) Very good responses because the character was identified as Clover.
- (c) Excellent responses to the question were seen as most of the candidates' reasoning was appropriate.
- (d) Candidates' responses were very good because precise information was provided.
- (e) This item was not satisfactorily attempted as their reasoning was inappropriate. They should argue that animals were shocked (1) since the song was important to them (1) and could not relate with the imposed replacement of the song (1).
- (f) The task was well done as appropriate qualities were presented with supporting evidence.
- (g) An excellent attempt from the candidates was noted because the character traits and supporting evidence were presented.
- 14** (a) Most candidates did well in this question because they were able to select the relevant information from the passage. They showed that Man is the only creature that consumes without producing (1), does not give milk (1), is too weak to pull the plough (1), cannot run fast enough to catch the rabbits (1), etc.
- (b) Candidates' responses were poor as their interpretation of the question limited them to giving more information as required by the question. They focused solely on Boxer and did not realise that other animals were also included in the statement.
- 15** Candidates who attempted this question did exceptionally well as they addressed the question appropriately. They discussed physical force, psychological manipulation, executions, and exploitation, giving relevant evidence from the novel.

16, 17, 18

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



Section B - Short Stories

- 19** (a) A fair attempt at the question as candidates recalled the benefits that Roof gets from Marcus.
- (b) A very good attempt was noted from candidates as they provided the required responses.
- (c) Candidates responded excellently to this item because they demonstrated Roof's catch 22 after taking the bribe and swearing on an "iyi".
- (d) Excellent responses were noted as candidates gave two qualities of the leader of POP and supported them with evidence.
- 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 Khumo's wife contributes to the theme of betrayal in the story. Her indifference, deception, taciturn, suitable subservience, and secrecy should be used to show how she betrays Khumo.
- 21** Attempts to this question by candidates were very impressive. They skillfully described how the "sun" is "killed" in the story. Issues such as corruption, greed, moral decadency, complacency, a flawed justice system and dependency were discussed and supported with relevant evidence from the story.

22, 23, 24

The questions were not attempted by candidates; therefore, there may be no Centres studying this anthology.

- 25** (a) Candidates' response to this item was not very good as they struggled with recalling the relevant plot linked to the passage provided. Their responses were sheer narration.
- (b) Most candidates did well in this question because they were able to select relevant information from the passage.
- 26** Attempts to this item were impressive because candidates demonstrated the relevance of the story by showing that events in the story revolved around the number three.
- 27** A satisfactory attempt by candidates as they provided relevant events from the two stories that show that the characters are indeed cunning.

Section C - Poetry

- 28** (a) The attempts were very good as candidates provided the character traits of the Weaver Bird and supported them with relevant evidence from the poem.
- (b) Candidates struggled in showing the contribution of the owners to their displacement; the questions required analytical responses capturing the owners' gullibility, cowardice, docility, and compassion.



(c) A poor attempt was displayed by most candidates. Tone is the attitude of the speaker or writer, whereas mood is the atmosphere a piece of writing creates for the audience.

29 This question was not well done by the candidates who attempted it. Language refers to words, phrases, and literary devices a poet uses to create meaning, sound, and emotion. Therefore, the item required candidates to demonstrate how the poet in the poem *Still I Rise* has used all these to create a sense of defiance.

30 Remarkable responses to this item were noted because candidates clearly articulated flattery, fear, passion, logic, hyperbole, sarcasm, and coercion as some of the ways the speaker use to persuade the mistress in the poem.