

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE ENGLISH

2023



Paper 1: Written Paper

Section 1: General Comments

This year English Language saw a slight improvement in writing skills. There was good use of flashback, suspense, rhetoric, stream of consciousness technique, direct speech, idioms, proverbs, strong verbs, adjectives, topic sentences, varied sentence structure, appropriate diction or register for the overriding theme, vivid descriptions, a lot of creativity with stories that arouse interest and sustain it. There was good use of the past perfect simple tense, historical present tense use for effect, use of ellipsis, transference of learning, good paragraphing, and spelling. There was flow of ideas in the stories.

Questions 1, 2, 3 (a) and 3 (b) were well answered by most of the candidates while questions 4 and 5 were least addressed topics.

Candidates tended to present short scripts making it apparent that they had run out of ideas. In some instances, they provided a mere repetition of ideas more especially for topic 5. In topic 4, they dwelt more on the impact of favouritism by parents instead of showing how favouritism breeds rivalry among siblings. Some candidates simply narrated a story that portrayed how favouritism leads to sibling rivalry.

SECTION A WEAKNESSES

There were short scripts of as little as 174 words providing very little to assess. They included wrong tenses, spelling, run-on sentences, wrong words, and long paragraphs.

Provision of two different experiences occurring at different times on the near-death experience topic number 2.

SECTION B WEAKNESSES

There were some short letters, informal letter introductions and salutations. Inappropriate style was used such as using contractions, informal language, etc.

Section 2: Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1 FIRE

This was an open-ended question which means candidates could write it as a narrative, descriptive, argumentative as well as factual composition. As a narrative they were expected to write in either the literal or the figurative about an incident involving fire for example a house destroyed by fire, a fire that broke out at a restaurant or somewhere, a veld fire or an emotional upheaval, a trial, challenges. They could have written a story about a person or pet called "Fire".

As a factual/descriptive they could have written about causes of fire, the importance of fire, disadvantages of fire ... etc.

Argumentative: they could argue about the usefulness or destructiveness of fire.



2 DESCRIBE A TIME YOU HAD A NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

Candidates were expected to write about an unusual experience on the brink of death and recounted by a person on recovery, typically an out of body experience or a vision of a tunnel of light. They could have written about an event that triggered the near-death experience, what they experienced when they were in that realm or situation, what brought their lives back to normal. Examples include car accidents, drowning, Covid-19, love relationships, heist, robbery etc. Many candidates who attempted this topic came up with all sorts of stories that depicted a near death experience. They had understood the demands of the question and responded well with appropriate register.

3 (a) 'YOU WILL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS,' SAID THE WOMAN

It suggests that the price or consequences of an action or decision are regrettable for example someone facing severe consequences, suffering greatly, because of one's mistake. Some of the scenarios expected are revenge, betrayal, stolen boyfriend or girlfriend, jealousy. One of the popular topics among candidates. They managed to create stories that made the statement 'you will pay dearly for this' very relevant. Vivid descriptions of scenarios came out clearly.

3 (b) TELLING THE TRUTH HAD SET ME FREE

It implies telling the truth as proof that one is innocent, and this action sets you free from pain and unhappiness. For example, making a confession to the other person for a wrong or offense committed. A person being involved in drugs and making a confession about it. Confession of wrongdoing between partners in a love relationship. Many were able to relate, therefore it was not difficult for them to create stories around the set topic. The only problem was failure of language for those struggling with it.

4 DISCUSS HOW FAVOURITISM BY PARENTS BREEDS RIVALRY AMONG SIBLINGS

Candidates were expected to discuss what parents do which leads to rivalry amongst siblings and the effects on the unfavoured child. Parents actions may include taking the favoured child to best schools, unfair allocation of inheritance or unfair allocation of house chores. Effects may be damaged relations and strained sibling bonds, increased jealousy, resentment, and negative emotions. The unfavoured child could also experience low self-esteem and psychological impact. Favouritism by parents impacts on self-worth and personal development as well as challenges in forming healthy relationships. The topic required a balanced argument showing what the parents do and how it affects children. Many were able to handle it well while some dwelt more on the effects.

5 EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO WEAR WHAT THEY WANT. HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE?

Candidates may agree with the topic or disagree or agree to a certain extent. The key term is "right to" with the arguments expected being cross dressing, wearing trousers by women to the customary court (kgotla), religious attire, reference to different age groups in the society e.g. the old and the young and disagreements over ss of attire. Candidates knew what a right is, but they kept on talking about their preferences as opposed to the right. Not very popular topic.



Section B

Candidates were expected to write an open letter to the Minister for Local Government & Home affairs.

Format (5 marks)

- A Name of the organisation (Ministry of Local Government and Home Affairs/ Media House-name of newspaper)
- B Date in full: e.g. 23 May 2021
- C The recipient (the Minister)
- D Name of the writer in full (name and surname)
- E Subject/heading.

A lot of candidates omitted the name of the organisation, a few did not write the date in full as well as the heading.

CONTENT

Point 1 (Purpose)

Required a mere repetition of the preamble, state the reason for writing the letter and it was well addressed. Some candidates however interpreted domestic animals to be wild animals by pointing out how lions, elephants, crocodiles etc cause a lot of damage in their villages and that an appeal for intervention be made to the Department of Wildlife.

Point 2 (Losses Suffered)

Specific losses suffered by the community. For example, destruction of fences, animals destroying gardens, orchards, cattle causing car accidents, dogs killing chickens and any other mishap by animals that may lead to the community experiencing losses. Candidates managed to articulate the point very well.

Point 3 (Penalties)

Penalties such as fines, imprisonment, confiscation of stray or wandering animals or that animals may be killed. This point overlapped with point 5 as candidates tended to repeat the response for point three on payments asking the minister to make animal owners pay. Some candidates were able to make a distinction between the two points by stating a fine for point three while they emphasised on consultation by the minister for point 5.

Point 4 (Advice)

Most candidates were able to fully elaborate point four by stating that the community should take care of their animals, that they should remain calm, they should not take the law into their own hands, they should report to the police.

Point 5 (What the minister should do)

Public education, Campaigns, policy enforcement, visit to those affected, call a meeting, compensation. Some candidates were not specific on elaborating what the Minister should do. The candidates tended to repeat what point three required instead of separating them.



Paper 2: Written Paper

Section 1: General Comments

Generally, candidates performed well. The paper was accessible to all candidates and the topics were about subject matter that was familiar. Passage A was about snoring and its effect on the snorer and the partner. Passage B was a bit challenging; it was on a topic about gardening, specifically the candidates showed lack of comprehension of landscaping. Passage C was about humans creating harmony with nature and the summary part was done well. Most of the candidature year 2023 was able to present their work very well. In addition, not many candidates left blank spaces including the summary.

Section 2: Comments on Individual Questions

Passage A

- 1 (a) A recall question and it was well done. The students were able to lift the answer from the passage.
- (b) This was a vocabulary question which was well done. The candidates were expected to pick a word from the passage which means ‘**can go on and on**’ The **rubric** demanded **one word** and candidates were able to get it right.
- (c) A simple recall question and candidates were able to pick the correct answer.
- (d) A simple recall question BUT it was NOT well done. They used answers for (e) to answer (d) and repeated them at (e)
- (e) A recall question and was generally well-done.
- (f) A recall type of question. However, it was poorly done because of the following reasons i) Candidates did not follow the RUBRIC- no quotation marks, excess number of words, wrong spelling of some words and one side quotation mark without closing. Generally, it was carelessness on the side of the candidates.
- (g) A recall type of question. Candidates did well.
- (i) - (j) were multiple choice question. The section was well done. The vocabulary was accessible.

Passage B

- 2 (a) A vocabulary type of question that expected the candidates to know the meaning of the phrase ‘**take age**’. Most candidates did well. However, where there were slips, the candidates used the word */take/* and did not qualify it with words such as */long/*, */longer/*, */much/*, */many years/*, */year/s*.
- (b) An own word type of question. It was badly performed. Candidates were expected to give synonyms of Penal word(s) or phrase(s) **Not conscious; Process; Intuitively** and candidates either picked the wrong penal words or could not give synonyms of the penal word(s)/phrase(s)
- (c) A simple lift type of question and was well done.



- (d) An inferential type of question which was done well by most candidates. Note that by quality, candidates were expected to state an attribute/characteristic, which in this case was '**patience**'.
- (e) An own word type of question and was poorly done. Candidates were expected to give synonyms of the penal phrases: **To enjoy the garden as a whole; Immersive experience; To look at the details** and they repeated the penal words/phrases.
- (f) A vocabulary type of question as candidates were expected to know the meaning of the word **diverse**. It was well done by most candidates.
- (g) An inferential type of question which was poorly performed. Candidates were expected to infer the way the word **borrowed** has been used in the passage. Instead of giving the inference, the candidates gave the meaning of borrowed, although it was **NOT** a vocabulary type of question. Candidates said the land/garden was borrowed **YET** it was the lake/sea/mountain which were the landscape he found and took advantage of.

Passage C

- 3
- (a) A lift type of question that expected candidates to know personification means in order to pick the correct phrase. It was well done. Those who did not get a mark did not quote.
 - (b) A lift type of question which demanded that candidates bring out the comparative element of what Lt. General Seretse Khama Ian Khama faced compared to Sir Seretse Khama. Generally, well done.
 - (c) Candidates who did not do well on this question, failed to capture the idea that (...I better get it now) denoted the same meaning as (take it while you can)
 - (d) Vocabulary type of question which was poorly done. The expression **wore thin** was not in their vocabulary. Most gave the literal meaning. For example, they gave answers such as became emaciated.
 - (e) Own word type of question which was **poorly** performed. Candidates failed to pick the correct penal words '**sustainable utilisation**' hence gave the wrong answers.
 - (f) A lift type of question that need the comparative aspect to be clearly stated. It was well done.
 - (g) An own word type of question. It was very poorly done. Some candidates stated what state smoke would do by sticking on the clothes, but failed to bring out how this was in comparison to people's attitudes of letting go. The penal word/phrases **almost impossible to shake** were not explained how they compared to smoke on clothes/ some even failed to pick the penal words.
 - (h) A lift type of question and was done well by most candidates.
 - (i) (i); (ii); (iii); (iv); (v) were vocabulary type of questions. Candidates were supposed to choose from 5 vocabulary words and give their contextual meanings. It was fairly done.



- (j) Summary question. The performance was satisfactory. Most candidates were able to pick the relevant points. The few candidates who attempted using their own words expressed themselves well.