EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL OF ESWATINI

JC

EXAMINATION REPORT

FOR

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

YEAR

2023

Paper 1

General comments

In 2023, about 19000 candidates sat for this examination. There was a slight decline in the candidates' performance as compared to the previous year (2022). Out of a total of 60 marks, the highest score was 54 and the lowest score was 2. This year, a majority of candidates displayed fair knowledge of text content hence they were able to meet the demands of the questions. It was noted that rubric infringement cases were less than in the previous years.

It was noted that a majority of the candidates had an improved way of presenting their responses as compared to previous years. For instance, in the passage-based questions, they were able to give analytic responses. However, there were a lot of cases where candidates used supporting details that were outside the confines of the passage, especially with Questions 4 and 10. In the essays, candidates had sound working knowledge of the texts, which enabled them to meet the demands of the questions. However, there were some instances where candidates used the passages to answer the essay questions, particularly Question 5, 11 and 14. In the empathic questions, responses were rather below average. Candidates were unable to recognise the given moment, and the voice of the relevant characters, thus rendering their responses average. This was seen particularly in Questions 6 and 12. However, there was a significant improvement in poetry in this year's examination. Candidates were able to meet the demands of the questions, particularly Question 7, which in the previous years seemed to be the most challenging in the Poetry section.

Popular questions among candidates in this examination were:

Section A – Question 4

Section B – Questions 7 and 9

Section C – Questions 10, 11, 16 and 17

Least popular Questions among candidates in this examination were:

Section A – Questions 1, 2 and 3

Section B – Question 8

Section C – Questions 13, 14, 15 and 18

SECTION A: DRAMA

Candidates' performance in this section was fair. Most candidates chose Question 4. However, they tended to support their points with details that were not in the passage, thus rendering their responses just above average. The most popular text was ***The Gods are Not To Blame*** as compared to ***Pygmalion.***

Comments on specific questions

Pygmalion

Question 1

(a) What are your feelings towards Mr Higgins as you read the passage? Remember to support your answer with details from the passage.

This was one of the least popular questions in this section and the responses were unsatisfactory. Candidates who chose this question merely re-narrated the passage without relating it to the question. It was as if they had no idea who Higgins was and what was happening in the passage. They were supposed to express feelings of anger for the way he spoke to his mother; annoyance at his insults and disrespect towards Mrs Pearce and Mr Doolittle; worry and sympathy for him for the loss of Eliza; however, find it amusing that he is desperate.

(b) What does the passage reveal about Mrs Higgins' character? Remember to support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates' responses were unsatisfactory. The question required candidates to identify Mrs Higgins' character as they read the passage. However, most of those that chose this question expressed their own thoughts of who she is and the support was not based in the text. They identified her as aggressive, hateful and unsupportive, even a criminal for reprimanding Higgins for informing the police about Eliza. They were supposed to identify Mrs Higgins' character as loving, a disciplinarian, understanding, accommodating, and intelligent among other traits.

Question 2

For what reasons would you admire Eliza Doolittle in the story? Support your answer with details from the play.

This was the most unpopular question among candidates in this section and in this examination, and it was poorly done. Poor knowledge of text content was the major contributory factor to the poor responses. They were supposed to find reasons to admire Eliza and give support that is rooted in the text. They were supposed to state the reason why they would admire Eliza and support their points with details from the text. For instance; her ambition to improve herself, her intelligence, her assertiveness and ability to stand up to Higgins, her determination to learn despite her challenges with Higgins and her beauty that passes her off as a duchess in the garden party.

Question 3

You are Pickering, at the end of the story. Write your thoughts.

Again, this was one of the least popular questions among candidates in this section and was very poorly done. Candidates did not recognise the moment as well as the character. As a result, they only reflected their own thoughts than those of Pickering at the end of the story. They were supposed to reflect feelings of admiration for Higgins for successfully completing the 'project', be happy for Eliza's accomplishments and determination, reflect on the fact that he had lost the bet, worry for Eliza's welfare, and be grateful to Mrs Higgins who helped whenever Higgins needed him.

The Gods Are Not To Blame

Question 4

(a) What are your feelings towards Odewale as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was the most popular question among candidates in this section. However, candidates' responses were just above average. This was because they did not stick to the passage details for support but brought information that was not in the passage. They were supposed to express their feelings towards Odewale only. For instance, feelings of sympathy and horror of what he did to himself; admire his bravery for taking out his eyes; and love him for apologising to Aderopo and for acknowledging of the power of the gods; and anger at his temper which led to the death of King Adetusa.

(b) What does the passage reveal about Aderopo's character? Support your answer with details from the passage.

Candidates did well in this question. They were able to identify Aderopo's character traits as revealed in the passage. For instance, he is loving and caring as he quickly summons Abero to take the children away; supportive; forgiving as he readily accepted Odewale's apology and was protective as he shielded the children from the gory sight of Odewale's bloody eyes.

Question 5

For what reasons would you admire Ojuola in the story? Support your answer with details from the play.

In this question, candidates' responses were average. Candidates did not recall the details that made them to admire Ojuola in the story. Some candidates resorted to re-telling the whole story, yet they were supposed to give reasons why they admired Queen Ojuola. For example, her love for her nation and obeying custom to marrying a stranger as custom demanded. Her respect towards Odewale was to be admired, her support and protection of her husband was also to be admired. She was also considerate as she pointed out to Odewale that it was too late for the bodyguards to travel when he had sent them to find Gbonka.

Question 6

You are the Ogun Priest at the end of the story. Write your thoughts.

In this question, candidates' performance was very poor. They were unable to reflect the relevant thoughts to the given moment. They did not know who the Ogun Priest was, so they expressed feelings as if they were the ordinary citizen of Kutuje. They were supposed to reflect feelings shock that Odewale took out his eyes, be in awe of the power of the gods and have a new respect for them, reflect on Baba Fakunle's confrontation with Odewale, regret not consulting the gods when Odewale was made king as this would have been avoided the many things. He would have felt sorry for Odewale and Ojuola for being cursed but would be relieved that the townspeople were to be free from the strange sickness. He would also be angry at Gbonka for not carrying out the instructions to kill the baby back then.

SECTION B: POETRY

When Fishes Flew and Other Poems

In this section, candidates' responses displayed a great improvement as compared to the previous year(s), particularly in Question 7. They were able to express the appropriate feelings as they read the poem. Question 9 was also well done, as candidates were able to express their views on the negative aspects of human relationships.

Comments on specific questions

Question 7

What emotions are evoked in you as you read the following poem?

This was the most popular question among candidates. The performance was outstanding. They were able to express the relevant emotions as they read the poem, and they supported their points with relevant details from the text. For example, feelings of sympathy for the mother; worry that the scorpion was not found; admiration for the communal spirit that the neighbours show; shock and worry as the father poured paraffin on the bitten toe; admiration for the mother's strength to endure the pain, sympathy for the speaker who saw his mother in the brink of death; relief when the poison subsided and adoration for the mother for saying it would be better if the scorpion chose her and spared her children.

Question 8

What is the speaker's attitude towards love in one of the following poems?

Sadism: **Mphicwa Dlamini**

Blackberry Sweet: **Dudley Randal**

In this question, candidates' responses were unsatisfactory. They were unable to remember the poems and those who did merely narrated them without relating them to the question, thus rendering their responses lacking. They were supposed to express the speaker's attitude towards love as revealed by the language of the chosen poem. For instance, in the poem *Blackberry Sweet*, the speaker expressed admiration for the black girl's physical features. He was attracted to the black girl. He thought the walk of the girl was mesmerising and commanded attention. His love for her felt like she had put a spell on him, making his emotions uncontrollable. In the poem *Sadism*, the speaker was devastated after having been betrayed by his love interest who played with his feelings as if she were an animal that does not have feelings. The speaker believed that human beings had logic and feelings, so they knew when they caused others pain. He also felt his love interest was a sadist because she hurt him on purpose, and she took pleasure in hurting other people.

Question 9

With close reference to either *The Kraal* by Stella Ngatho or *Once Upon a Time* by Gabriel Okara, explore how the speaker has painted a negative picture of human relationships.

This question was amongst the popular questions in this section, and candidates' performance was also outstanding like in Question 7. A majority of candidates chose *The Kraal* over *Once Upon a Time*. In the poem *The Kraal*, candidates were able to discuss the negative picture that the speaker painted about human relationships. For instance; they highlighted that polygamy caused hate and jealousy amongst wives; there was a lot of bickering amongst the wives; that some wives did fall out of favour from the husband and were treated with disdain and ridicule; that there was abuse from the husband and yet all that was hidden to the outside world by wall fences. In the poem *Once Upon a Time*, the speaker believed that human beings are no longer genuine, but they were fake, they were unwelcoming and unfriendly, they were materialistic, their love was conditional, they pretended and wore many faces for different occasions and they were deceivers.

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SECTION C: PROSE

In this section, candidates' performance was fair when compared to the previous year. The most popular text among candidates in this section was *The Pearl* and the least unpopular text was *The Mending Season*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 10

(a)   What makes the doctor such a dislikeable character in the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates' responses were unsatisfactory as compared to the previous year. A majority of them failed to use the passage details only for support but went beyond it, as far as chapter 1 when the beggars described the doctor. Some even mistook the passage for the events that happened in Chapter 1 when Juana and Kino went to the doctor after the scorpion's sting. They were supposed to find reasons to dislike the doctor in this passage. For instance, his presence made Kino seethe with anger as he recalled the events of the morning; his pretence in calling Kino 'my friend'; his manipulation of Kino's ignorance by shifting his bag; his diagnosis of Coyotito being exaggerated to scare Kino and the manner in which he administered the capsule to Coyotito.

(b)   What are your feelings towards Kino as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This question was well done. Candidates were able to express their feelings towards Kino and supported with passage details. For instance, feelings of sympathy for Kino that he had to be reminded of the enmity between his race and that of the doctor's; pity for his ignorance which led him to believe the doctor; admiration for his assertiveness for not allowing the doctor to come in at first; admiration of his love for his son as he let the doctor come in for his sake; and pity towards him for being manipulated and trapped by the doctor.

Question 11

To what extent would you sympathise with Juana in the story? Support your answer with details from the text.

In this question, candidates' responses were fair. However, there were instances when they mistook Juana for Juan Tomas. Since this was a discursive essay, they were supposed to bring both side sides of the argument, but they failed to do so, rendering their responses incomplete. On one hand, they were supposed to sympathise with Juana for being poor; when her beloved son was stung by the scorpion; when the doctor refused to treat their baby because they had no money; when they were attacked after finding the great pearl; for having a stubborn husband who refused to listen when told that the pearl was evil; when her husband's behaviour changed and there was no longer harmony in the family; when their house and canoe got destroyed; during the long and hard journey on foot to the capital and upon the death of Coyotito. On the other hand, candidates may have not sympathised with her because she was stubborn and adamant that she wanted to go to the capital even when Kino was against it. She also failed to heed to instruction to hide at the cave, which resulted in Coyotito being killed by a stray bullet.

Question 12

You are Kino at night, realising that your canoe has been broken. Write your thoughts.

In this question, candidates' responses were very good. They were able to capture Kino's voice and the moment and thus reflected relevant thoughts and feelings. For example, feelings of horror and shock that his canoe had been broken; panic as there was no way of a quick escape; anger at the attackers for destroying something that cannot defend itself; his decision to go to Juan Tomas' house for safety, worry about the baby and Juana in the house; but a new determination that he would go to the capital to sell his pearl.

The Mending Season

This was the most unpopular text among centres in this section and candidates' performance was unsatisfactory.

Question 13

(a)   What are your feelings towards KB as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates' performance was unsatisfactory. They were unable to express the relevant feelings towards KB in the given moment. Instead, they expressed their feelings towards KB for her overall character in the story. They were supposed to express feelings of annoyance at her for faking a smile, annoyance at the way she bragged to Tshidiso about her life and her family, admiration for her for chatting with Tshidiso, and love for her for extending an invitation to her birthday party to Tshidi.

(b)   What does the passage reveal about Tshidiso's mothers? Support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates' performance was good. They were able to identify the character traits of Tshidiso's mothers. For example, Mmabatho was loving and supportive, assertive, and understanding, while Malebone was a straight talker, and Malesedi was strict and a disciplinarian.

Question 14

To what extent would you sympathise with Matshidiso in the story? Support your answer with details from the story.

This question was one of the least popular among candidates in this section and it was poorly done. Their responses were not only one-sided but there was also lack of text knowledge, as a result they gave inadequate reasons why they would sympathise with Tshidiso. Since this is a discursive question, they were supposed to bring out both sides of the argument. For example, on one hand, they would sympathise with Matshidiso for having been born to a family that was discriminated against by the society they live I; for not spending much time with her father as she wanted to; for being a loner; her lack of confidence when she went to the new school in town – she had to lie to KB and her friends so that she could fit in. She was also insulted by Elizabeth during netball practise. On the other hand, they would not sympathise with her for lying because of peer pressure and her sometimes sassy attitude.

Question 15

You are Veronica, going to Mrs Allison's office after the netball court incident. Write your thoughts.

This was another unpopular question among candidates in this section. However, it was fairly done. Candidates recognised the moment and hence they reflected the relevant thoughts that Veronica might have had as she went to Mrs Allison's office. For instance, she was still livid that Beth had insulted her and showed no remorse for slapping her. She was also determined to prove her case to Mrs Allison. She wondered why she alone had been summoned to the office. She was also sad that her mother would be dragged to the situation and shocked that there were people who still used the derogatory word even in times of reconciliation and integration.

Africa Kills Her Sun

This was one of the popular texts among centres in this section. Candidates performed very well.

Question 16

(a) What makes Thandile's step-mother a dislikeable character? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was one of the popular questions among candidates in this section and it was well done. Candidates were able to give reasons why they disliked Thandile's step-mother after reading the passage. For instance, she was physically and emotionally abusive to Thandile, she hated Thandile as she referred to her as a TIRESOME child, she favoured her own daughter Sheshile over Thandile and she insulted the memory of Thandile's mother by calling her a ghost.

(b) What are your feelings towards Thandile as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates performed very well. They were able to express feelings of sympathy, sadness, pity, relief and happiness that she has Sheshile who comforts her; sadness that the father was not present to see what was happening to her and hurt for her because she had to separate from his brother Mondli.

Question 17

To what extent would you sympathise with Charles in the story *Under the Shade of Sahara* by Zodwa Motsa. Support your answer with details from the text.

In this question, candidates' responses were average. They did not remember the story hence their responses were inadequate. Since this is a discursive essay, they were supposed to bring both sides of the argument. On one hand, they had to sympathise with Charles for being a victim of xenophobia; that his home country was poor and there were no job opportunities; he was forced to leave his family to look for greener pastures in other countries and he missed his family. On the other hand, they may not sympathise with him because it was his choice to stay for so long away from his family when he had the means to visit. He neglected his wife and children by not visiting, and it was his over ambition that led him to the land where he later experienced xenophobia.

Question 18

You are Sukey de Jagger, just after finding out that your sister has died in the story *The Sisters*. Write your thoughts.

This was another unpopular question among candidates in this section, and their responses were unsatisfactory. Some candidates reflected their own feelings and thoughts rather than those of Sukey. In another scenario, they did not use the first-person voice but treated the question as if they were responding to a traditional essay. However, it was noted that there were also a few outstanding responses. Candidates were supposed reflect Sukey's feelings of shock and anger that Jan had finally succeeded in killing her sister; her hatred for him was to be reflected; her regret for not doing anything sooner to save her sister from the monster of a husband but relief that at least she was in better place and had reunited with their mother. She would blame her father for Marta's fate and God for not protecting her sister. She would also not want anything to do with the farm.

Recommendations

- Teachers are advised to cover all texts as required by the syllabus, as ignorance of texts becomes the major contributory factor to poor performance in the examination.

- Candidates must be trained to choose questions correctly; adhering to the instructions of the component, as failure to do so results to rubric infringement, which greatly disadvantaged some candidates even in this year's examination.

- It cannot be emphasised enough that, in the traditional essays, candidates should be reminded to expand to the whole text for support.

- Like the previous year(s), it was noted that some candidates chose two questions from the same section or text. The requirement is that: candidates should choose two passage-based questions and one essay OR two essay questions and one passage-based from the different sections of the paper and from different texts.

- In poetry, teachers are commended for the remarkable improvement of this year's performance and are encouraged to continue to give focus to the language and its effect, not in the mere interpretation of the poems as these interpretations tend to be vague, out of context and misleading. Also, for training the learners to use the whole poem when giving support.

- Teachers are also advised to give candidates ample to practise the different types of questions so that they can respond accurately to the different genres.

PAPER 2

General comments

This year saw a decrease in the candidature. The performance unfortunately also declined significantly this year. In their quest to respond to the set task, most candidates were tempted to: narrate, paraphrase, use bullet points or create their own question on feelings. Others responded to only one part of the question which resulted in them scoring low marks. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to expose candidates to this kind of paper as early as possible and give them as much practice as possible. Candidates need more practice in text appreciation, question analysis and essay writing skills.

Structure of the paper

The paper had two questions. Question 1 was a prose-based question; Question 2 was based on a poem. Candidates were required to respond to either Question One or Question Two in 1 hour 30 minutes. Each question carried 20 marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

What challenges does the girl face and how does she overcome them to finally make her dream come true?

This question was by far the most popular choice among candidates. The passage is about a young girl whose dream is to study at the University of Connecticut. In the passage the young girl is faced with financial challenges, comes from a poverty-stricken family, has a low self-esteem, lacks mentorship since she is the first one to study in the university in the family and has the fear of rejection among many other challenges. She then overcomes these challenges through her sheer determination, applying for financial aid, support from parents and guidance and help from her guidance counsellor from school.

Candidates who performed well are those who clearly stated the specific challenges, quote relevant evidence from the text, while explaining how these proved to be hurdle to her. They were also expected to tackle the second part on how these challenges are overcome to finally make her dreams come true in a similar way in which the first part was handled. Weak responses were those that had vague or elementary understanding of the passage. Narrations, paraphrases, lifting and generalisations about hardships of getting scholarships were common flaws. Gross irrelevance was also noted whereby candidates discussed their personal challenges instead of discussing those of the girl in the passage. Others did not understand how this girl was applying for admission to the University of Connecticut, yet she didn't have her end of year results.

Question 2

Explore how this poem vividly describes the challenges the boy faces and the effects these have on him.

An improvement was noted in the number of candidates who chose this question. The manner in which the poetry question was handled showed that teachers have put a lot of effort in training candidates. However, it was still the least popular choice for a majority for candidates.

The poet has depicted the experiences of a boy who faces challenges such as isolation, loneliness, neglect, rejection, academic challenges, being a misfit and difficult past amongst many others, whilst at school. The boy is hurting due to lack of attention such that he wishes not to feel anything anymore. He has now become timid, has a bruised self-esteem and is hopeless. He is sad, frustrated and disappointed by the people around him.

Candidates who performed well in this question were able to state and clearly explain the challenges faced by the boy and gave relevant examples to support their claims. Candidates' who discussed the effects as well –the second part of the question – scored better marks. Candidates who discussed both parts of the question did exceptionally well.

Weaker responses were those that displayed a vague or little understanding of the poem. A majority narrated the story of the poem without stating specific challenges. A few focused on figures of speech and incorrectly quoted them. For example, they would quote: 'the sun is sinking and darkness coming 'as a simile. Some candidates failed to understand the position of the boy; instead of viewing him as a victim they blamed him for all the sad things that are happening to him. Candidates also misunderstood and misinterpreted some aspects of the poem and some words. For instance, the mother was presumed dead, gone for long or lost. The footpath was also mistaken for a person. Gross irrelevance was noted with some candidates who shared their personal experiences or issues of mothers neglecting their children typical to their environment.

Factors Affecting Performance

- Not writing one whole essay. Such a method of responding limits the flow of ideas hence affecting the candidate's development of the response. This results in ideas that are sketchy and disjointed or incomplete and inadequate.

- A majority of candidates were clearly unfamiliar with the set question type.

- Candidates would narrate the contents of the texts in their responses instead of answering the questions.

- Poor question analysis which resulted in learners failing to reconcile the two parts of the question.

- Discussing feelings which was outside the demands of the question.

- Some candidates wrote lengthy responses. These resulted in generalisations.

- Identifying challenges, solutions and effects but failing to develop them into meaningful and persuasive paragraphs.

- Candidates failing to support their responses with relevant evidence from the texts and clear explanations.

Recommendations

- Teach question analysis skills to help learners focus on the task or question requirements.

- Teach candidates how to develop responses i.e. paragraph development.

- Expose learners to different question types.

- Teach text analysis and how emotions are evoked as opposed to giving learners lists of feelings which they will merely regurgitate and use out of context. Learners should be able to give appropriate feelings and support them with relevant examples as well as explain how the selected example evokes the said feeling. In the case of personal responses, learners need to know that they are required to respond effectively to the set question first before giving their opinions.

- Explain to candidates the purpose of the synopsis, bullet points and glossary.

- Encourage learners to echo question and address it in each and every paragraph.