



EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL OF ESWATINI

Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education

Literature in English (6875)

Examination Report for 2023

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EGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 6875/01

Set Texts: Closed Books

General Comments:

The number of candidates that sat for the paper showed a slight improvement when compared to 2022. The performance was slightly better than the previous year. This could be because teachers had a bit more time to prepare learners than in the previous year.

The level of difficulty of the paper was at par with last years'. However, as usual some questions were most favoured by candidates. The most challenging questions for candidates were traditional essays in all the genres. The candidates' Achilles heel was in echoing the texts in their written responses. The Examiners noted, particularly, that most candidates wrote generally on thematic questions that required evidence from the text to validate their viewpoint.

Most worrying are the ever-growing incidents of rubric infringement. Centres are advised to explain the requirements of the instructions on the cover page of the question paper. For example, a candidate should answer a question on Drama, Poetry and Prose. One of these **MUST** be a passage-based question denoted by the asterisk mark *. While in past examinations some candidates answered only passage-based questions, in the 2023 examination a new form of rubric emerged. Candidates answered only two questions, and mostly it was Drama and Poetry. Some candidates chose all three questions from Section A and such a practice culminated in the loss of marks and had an adverse effect on the final mark.

Comments on Specific Questions

SECTION A: DRAMA

J.B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question *1

The task required candidates to establish the personality of the Birlings and how they relate to each other. This was not supposed to be dealt with separately, but candidates had to describe the relationship alongside their analysis of the personality. Candidates who performed poorly in this question treated the Birlings as a unit even when a character portrayed a peculiar character trait. Also, some candidates considered Gerald Croft as a Birling, yet he is not. Lastly, there was a tendency to focus on the character part and overlook how they 'relate to each other'. Good responses, though, were able to bring out the personality of each individual member of the Birling family and their relationship.

Question 2

This question required that candidates explain the extent to which they agreed that Priestley presents the Inspector as more than a policeman. This question was unfavoured by most. The few candidates who chose it did well by recalling that the Inspector is presented as an omniscient character who seems to be on a moral crusade to prick the conscience of the upper class that treats members of the lower class with disdain. However, weaker responses merely gave out character details of the Inspector without aligning them to the question.

Question 3

This question required that the candidates write their thoughts as Eva Smith after Mrs. Birling has refused to grant her charity. This question gave candidates a challenge as the moment in the text cannot be directly identified. We do not get to see the conversation between Eva and Mrs. Birling, it only comes out when the Inspector interrogates Mrs. Birling. Thus, candidates could not clearly identify the moment and, as a result, struggled to come up with relevant thoughts and feelings.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question *4

This was not a popular question amongst candidates. The question required candidates to say what impression they form of Antonio and Sebastian's characters and the way they relate to each other. The few that chose it were able to note that Sebastian is considerate and that their relationship exudes warmth and kindness. Others, however, expounded that the two were lovers, something not clearly shown by the author. It also appeared as if some were just trying their luck with the question as they mistook Sebastian for a woman.

Question 5

This was another question which was not popular with candidates. However, those that selected it performed fairly well. They were able to identify the characters who went to great lengths trying to win their loved ones. Such characters include Orsino who, out of desperation, sends Cesario to go woo Olivia on his behalf. Olivia herself sent Malvolio to return a ring she falsely claimed Cesario forgot in her house. However, unsuccessful candidates did not anchor their responses in the text, but they narrated their own experiences. The bulk of the responses completely ignored the 'how' part of the question.

Question 6

The responses were too few to warrant a comment.

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero***Question *7**

This was one of the most popular questions which required candidates to express their opinion about the relationship between Jeroboam and the Old Prophet. Most candidates were able to see that the relationship between the two 'men of the cloth' was fake, hypocritical and toxic. However, weak responses tended to focus on the characters of the two without commenting on their relationship. Such responses demonstrated little awareness and scored low marks since the question wanted candidates to comment on the relationship.

Question 8

This is one of the questions which posed a serious challenge for most candidates. The question asked the extent to which candidates would agree that the influence of social status is an important driving force in the play. It was apparent from the responses given by candidates that they could not fathom the meaning of 'influence of social status'. Thus, most responses were simple narrations of what Jero does without showing that his actions are fuelled by a desire to acquire social status. Such candidates' responses also failed to appreciate the meaning of 'driving force' and therefore could not realise that the question demanded that they focus on all the characters, as almost all of them are driven by a desire to improve a lot in life.

Question 9

This was a popular question among candidates. It required candidates to write Amope's thoughts the moment just after Chume had announced that she must pack her things because she was going home. It was pleasing to note that candidates knew the character of Amope very well. Most of them managed to bring out the thoughts and feelings Amope had at that particular moment. They depicted that Amope was shocked by Chume's sudden change of mind as he had just dropped her at the debtor's house earlier in the day. However, weaker responses could not nail down the moment and thus crafted thoughts that were way ahead of the given moment. Such candidates ended up fetching low marks.

SECTION B: POETRY**Jack Hydes (ed.): *Touched with Fire: 'The light of setting suns'*****Question *10**

This question was not popular with many candidates. It required candidates to explore how the speaker has portrayed the young woman in the poem. Such a question required candidates to critically analyse the poet's choice of words in order to get the personality of the woman. Most candidates who chose this one gave the impression that they had not done the poem before, as they dismally failed to see that the young woman in the poem was an independent woman who found it hard to conform to the social norms and conventions that society expects of women. Some felt that the woman was a satanist while others did not even realise that the character was a woman but assumed that it was a male because of her macho behaviour.

Question 11

There were no responses made to warrant a general comment.

Question 12

A few candidates chose this question. The question required that learners must explain how the poet conveys a critical view of human beings. Some candidates successfully attempted this question as they noted the cruelty of the two men in the poem who killed a beautiful female mountain lion. However, less successful candidates could not recall the story told by the poet and thus gave responses that were irrelevant.

BRIAN WALTER and FELICITY WOOD (eds.): *Groundwork: An Introduction to Reading and Writing about Poetry*

Question *13

This was without doubt the most favoured question in this section. It required candidates to show how the poet's words paint a clear picture of the effects of the storm. In responding to this question, it was important for the candidates to note that though the storm was powerful, it caused no destruction. The question was fairly done as most candidates were able to give the effects of the storm and explain how literary devices such as onomatopoeia conveyed the effect of the storm. However, less successful candidates failed to decipher the meaning of the word 'effect' and simply gave an analysis of the poem without attempting to answer the question. These would refer to the literary devices found in the poem without explaining how they depict the effect of the storm.

Question 14

This was another popular question amongst candidates. The question required candidates to explore how the poet has given a vivid picture of life and death in the poems *Break, Break, Break* or *Death the Leveller*. Some candidates were able to show how the poet has given a clear picture of life and death. These supported their assertions with carefully chosen words and phrases from the texts. Good responses were able to recall the poems in such a way that the lines of the poem could be pieced together from each paragraph to produce the whole poem. However, weak responses generally discussed life and death without linking the main point to the text. Such responses did not fetch good marks.

Question 15

A few candidates chose this one to warrant a comment.

ELISE VARGA (ed.): *Unbroken Chains: An Anthology of Poetry***Question *16**

This was not a popular question among candidates. Most of the responses tended to re-use the words of the poem to describe the beauty of the evening instead of showing how the poet's words describe the beauty of the evening. For example, candidates would merely say, 'The poet's language describes the beauty of the evening because it is calm and free'. Such a response does not explain the beauty of the evening. In answering this question, candidates had to state that it is a beautiful evening because it is peaceful and worry free then use the line 'calm and free' to substantiate their viewpoint. Very few candidates managed to achieve that, with a majority paraphrasing the poem.

Question 17

General comment cannot be made as question was not chosen.

Question 18

General comment cannot be made as question was not chosen.

SECTION C: PROSE**HARPER LEE: *To Kill a Mockingbird*****Question *19**

This was not a popular question, but the number of candidates who chose it increased when compared to last year. The question required candidates to explain how the passage creates a sense of fear and anxiety. Candidates were not really expected to separate the fear and the anxiety in their responses as the two are intertwined and cannot be easily separated. Most responses treated the passage as an unseen text. Some candidates appeared unfamiliar with the story as they claimed the narrator was Jem, yet it was Scout. To further prove this, candidates did not know who Atticus was and where he was. Generally, the question was badly done.

Question 20

This question did not have many candidates choosing it. Candidates were supposed to identify the characters in the text who face insurmountable obstacles or no-win situations but still face them stoically. Good responses were able to identify these characters, such as Atticus himself who, despite knowing that there was no way of convincing an all-white jury to pass a not guilty verdict, went ahead and defended Tom Robinson with great aplomb. However, most candidates failed to understand the gist of Atticus' statement and therefore picked characters whose experiences did not reflect the truth of the statement.

Question 21

This question was not popular amongst candidates, but the few that chose it did fairly well. Most candidates captured Jem's mature voice very well. These were also able to come up with thoughts and feelings typical of the character at the end. For instance, candidates came up with feelings of relief that Scout survived the brutal attack by Bob Ewell and vowing that once fully recovered he would go and thank Boo Radley for saving his and Scout's life. However, some candidates seemed not to realise that Jem was well aware of all that happened during the night of the attack and would not, therefore, be harbouring feelings and thoughts of revenge against Bob Ewell as he knew that he was dead.

WILLIAM GOLDING: *Lord of the Flies***Question *22**

This was definitely not a popular choice for many candidates, but a reasonable number attempted it. The passage required candidates to explain the ways in which Golding makes the passage so shocking and terrifying. Good candidates were able to note that the imminent foreboding thunderstorm created terror for the boys and that their crazed dance was shocking. These candidates could see that the shock and terror grew in intensity as the passage developed. However, weak responses seemed not to know what was happening in the extract and thus could not succinctly bring out the shocking and terrifying aspect of the passage.

Question 23

Again, this was not a popular question among candidates. The question required candidates to state how far they agree with the view that, in the absence of social norms people show their true nature, which is mostly evil and vicious. Most candidates displayed a good understanding of the question as they noted that Jack and Roger became evil and vicious in the absence of adult supervision. However, only a few candidates went on to engage with the 'how far' part of the question. There were characters in the story who, despite the absence of social norms, remained true to themselves. These characters include Ralph, Simon, Piggy, and the twins.

Question 24

This was not a popular question among candidates. The question required candidates to write Jack's thoughts after having attacked Ralph's group and stolen Piggy's glasses. Many candidates were able to easily identify the moment and came up with Jack's thoughts of vicious delight to have finally laid his hands on the one thing that made him a proper chief. However, weaker responses would present Jack as someone riddled by feelings of guilt and thoughts of regret for having attacked Ralph's group and taking Piggy's glasses. They seemed to have forgotten that Jack hates Ralph and Piggy with a purple passion.

Barrie Wade (ed.): *Into the Wind: Contemporary Stories in English***Question *25**

This was a very popular question amongst candidates. It required candidates to explain how Dorothy Johnson's writing communicates Horse's discontentment and unease. A few candidates were able to pick out the relevant details from the passage. A majority were thrown off guard by the word 'discontentment'. Consequently, the candidates were citing evidence which neither depicted discontentment nor unease. On top of that, other candidates displayed a glaring lack of surface understanding of the story as they wrongly assumed that the character in the story was a real horse.

Question 26

This was another popular question. It required candidates to explain how the harshness and cruelty of racism has been explored in *A Sense of Shame* and in *Let Them Call it Jazz*. Candidates had to write on one, but some cases wrote on both texts, thus attaining low marks. Moreover, some candidates merely gave a narration of the texts instead of showing how the incidents in the stories explore the harshness and cruelty of racism. In some instances, candidates gave general responses which did not echo the text. Some would even confuse the names of the characters with those of characters in other stories.

Question 27

This was not a popular question. Candidates were required to write their thoughts as Lellie after Duncan had physically abused her to the extent of bruising her face. Most candidates missed the moment and wrote Lellie's thoughts as if Allan had already arrived and Lellie was empowered by the books she had received from him. As a result, they wrote thoughts plotting revenge on Duncan. Such thoughts were largely irrelevant and fetched no marks. Other candidates, on the other hand, appeared unaware of where Lellie and Duncan were as they wrote thoughts threatening to report Duncan to the police. In fact, most candidates relied on their knowledge of gender-based violence scenarios to craft Lellie's thoughts.

Recommendations and advice

- Educators must emphasise the importance of writing the question numbers on the spaces provided on the cover of the answer sheet.
- To address prevalent rubric infringement, teachers are encouraged to give full Literature in English papers to learners and then ascertain if learners, in their selection of questions, do conform to the instructions.
- Teachers must teach learners how to write a good essay, especially passage-based and traditional essay questions. Learners write lengthy paragraphs with no clear development of the main idea.
- Learners, when dealing with passage-based questions, must be made aware that it is not an unseen text. Thus, knowledge of what has happened leading up to the selected passage is key to answering a passage-based question.
- Teachers need to impress on the minds of the learners that the strength of an extract question lies in citing relevant evidence from the passage to substantiate the argument raised. Making long quotes, paraphrasing, and generalising must be discouraged.
- When responding to traditional essay questions, candidates tend to use material from the extract question. This disadvantages candidates as they find themselves with very little or no material to craft their responses. Candidates are allowed to use information from the extract to answer traditional essay questions if the passage relates to the question, which is an unlikely occurrence. However, in order for them to present a good response, they must consider the entire text.
- In the traditional essay questions, citing accurately from the text is not demanded, but candidates must demonstrate their knowledge of the text by echoing the text in their response.
- At times, traditional essay questions demand that learners state 'how far?' or 'to what extent?' A good response puts the other side of the argument into consideration as well. The response, though, must clearly show which side of the argument is dominant.
- With empathy questions, teachers must highlight the importance of the moment the thoughts are based on. Careful reading of the question is very key. For instance, if the questions say, 'just after', learners must be careful not to stray to moments that come long after the stated scenario.

EGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 6875/02

Unseen Text

General Comments

This year saw an improvement in the number of candidates who sat for Literature in English Paper 2 compared to last year. Candidates' performance was improved as they were able to meet the demands of the questions they were faced with. As usual, the paper offered candidates with two options to choose from, where they either choose a passage or a poem. Question 1 proved particularly popular than Question 2. Question 1 required candidates to express their feelings based on what was happening in the passage, while Question 2 needed candidates to write about the speaker's feelings. It was noted that most candidates preferred the passage over the poem. In previous years, it had been noted that candidates would lean more towards the poem as it is usually shorter, but it was noted that candidates do weigh their options now before they engage in answering the question.

Most candidates, especially in the first question, were able to understand the task at hand and tried to respond accordingly, whereas in the second question, most candidates who answered it, tried to switch the question to suit their own understanding. Misinterpretations were noted especially in the use of English expressions, which would then in turn change the whole understanding of the passage and poem. What is expected of candidates is to show their understanding of the language and the setting of both the passage and poem. Another thing noted was that rubric infringement was on the rise as a handful of candidates from various centres opted to answer both questions, ignoring the instructions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This was a popular question. This question required candidates to express their own feelings on what was happening in the passage. The question was generally well done by the candidates who chose it. First of all, candidates who did well were those that understood that the passage was about a hunting expedition that happened a long time back before modernisation. Good answers from candidates were characterised by being able to bring out varied feelings in accordance with what was happening in the passage and cover all the characters in the story. The passage provided a lot of content candidates could pick from and show how they felt. They sympathised with Agbadi for being attacked by the elephant and getting seriously injured in the process, which was horrifying and terrifying. They also noted the respect accorded to Agbadi by being wrapped in the *otuogwu* cloth as a sign of his position in society. They also sympathised with the villagers for the fact that their emotions were controlled, which was shocking, and they couldn't just grieve until they were told to do so. They would feel sorry for Ona and feel anger and hatred towards Obi for his harsh words towards her. Candidates would also explain why they felt the way they felt. Their feelings would also heighten as the passage also reached a climax.

Most candidates who did well were those that were able to see that it was a hunting expedition and a lifestyle for those people at that time without criticising them for being poachers. They were able to side with Nwokocha Agbadi by feeling sorry for him and able to see that, in fact, he did not die, but merely passed out as he had lost a lot of blood. They were also able to move along with the passage from the hunting to the importance of Agbadi to the villagers. They would also note the customs of the people and how Ona was being treated for expressing her grief. All these were to be supported by feelings, either negative or positive, but as long as they supported with evidence from the position of their chosen ground.

Weaker responses were characterised by candidates failing to vary their feelings but concentrating on one feeling throughout, while some stated their feelings but not in accordance to what was happening in the passage. They would even pick random words and write them as feelings like, 'I feel *sarcastic*' or 'I feel *dying*'. Some candidates didn't understand what a hunting expedition was all about. They would view it as a bad thing to do since nature has to be conserved. Also, they wondered why anyone would hunt an elephant to eat, as they believed elephant meat was not edible. Some could not even understand why a chief would go hunting instead of sending his subjects to do the hunting for him, as he also had slaves to do the job. Common errors were prevalent where candidates would think that Agbadi died because of the phrase 'passed out' which for them, meant passing away. Disadvantaged candidates dwelt on the issue of preservation of wildlife without answering the question. Some candidates tended to only concentrate

on the first part of the passage without venturing to the other parts. Some would just ignore the flow of the passage by starting at the end and end up losing the meaning of the entire story.

Question 2

The question was not so popular with the candidates. This question required candidates to state the speaker's feelings as he observed his father at work. There were two extremes with the candidates who answered this question. There were those who did exceptionally well and those that performed dismally. Good answers were characterised by responses that showed understanding of the poet's language and the time when the poem was written. Candidates who understood the story in the poem were spot on. They were able to state the speaker's feelings clearly in accordance with what the speaker was saying in the poem. They also analysed the language to bring out the feelings. They were able to note that almost all the feelings the speaker had about his father were positive, as he was full of love, respect, admiration for him and worshipped him.

Weaker responses were received from candidates who misinterpreted the poem and also changed the question. They put in their own feelings instead of the speaker's feelings, which greatly disadvantaged them from scoring high marks. They also could not see the strength and precision of the farmer and the joy he derived from such work, but what they saw was a man who was poor and worked so hard to make a living, thus feeling sorry for him. They said he was a single father who would even have to carry his child on his back while working. They even thought that using the horses meant he didn't have oxen or a tractor for that matter. The common error was that they modernised the poem and felt sorry for the man who could not afford to buy modern tools for ploughing. Some could not even figure out the meaning of words like 'furrow', 'sod'. They even misinterpreted the 'clicking tongue' of the father to mean frustration or anger. They didn't see that he was enjoying his work such that even the horses seemed to be in sync with him. They even concluded that the son felt sorry for his father for working so hard while raising him.

Recommendations

It is important that in preparing candidates for Literature in English Paper 2, teachers should try and:

- Expose learners to the summary at the top. This can help learners to know what the unseen text is about and when it was written, so they can never have a problem in interpreting the setting.
- Candidates must be exposed to answering unseen text where they should know that to create coherence, they should start from the beginning of the text to the end. This helps candidates not to lose the gist of the text.
- Candidates should be exposed to various types of unseen texts to vary their understanding of different settings and eras.

- They should be trained to always approach a text with the aim of analysis than to just paraphrase it. The question is always a guide to what is needed from candidates.
- Also, candidates should practise the unseen text and be made aware of the instructions that they should choose one, either the passage or the poem.