EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL OF ESWATINI

Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education

Literature in English (6875)
Examination Report for 2024

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EGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 6875/01

Set Texts: Closed Books

General Comments

The number of candidates that sat for this paper was slightly higher compared to the previous year, 2023. There was a remarkable improvement in the performance when compared to the previous year. This could be attributed to the introduction of two new texts to the Literature syllabus, A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe.

The level of difficulty of the paper was almost the same as that of last year. However, some questions were popular and mostly favoured by candidates over others. The most challenging questions were in poetry, especially questions 13 and 16. The candidates' main weakness in the poetry questions was in their failure to give the precise emotion evoked by the poet's language. In the drama section, candidates generally struggled with the extract questions, particularly questions 1 and 7. The candidates grappled with understanding the key words in the questions. The examiners observed, for instance, that most candidates were giving excellent character sketches of the characters of Walter and Ruth, yet the question required candidates to state how Hansberry dramatically presents the relationship between Walter and Ruth. This was also the case in *An Inspector Calls* as candidates would simply identify the Inspector's personality, thus missing the thrust of the question which expected a discussion of the Inspector's firmness and purposefulness.

This year again had an alarming number of rubric infringement incidents. Centres are encouraged to clearly explain the requirements of the types of questions to be answered by the candidates in order to adhere to the instructions given. For instance, a candidate should at least cover a question on Drama, Poetry and Prose. Most importantly, candidates should attempt at least one passage-based question. It was common for some candidates to answer three passage-based questions or to answer questions from only two sections. This resulted in the deduction of marks and negatively impacted the overall mark.

Comments on specific questions

SECTION A: DRAMA

J.B PRIESTLY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question *1

The task required candidates to show how Priestley has dramatically portrayed Inspector Goole's firmness and purposefulness in the passage. This was a popular question with candidates but was not

satisfactorily done. Some candidates were able to show how Inspector Goole is firm and purposeful. These were able to carefully select relevant evidence from the passage to support this view of the Inspector. However, weak responses simply identified the Inspector's personality without explaining how it shows his firmness and purposefulness in this chosen moment.

Question 2

This question required candidates to discuss the ways in which Priestley presents the lessons learnt by each member of the Birling family in the play. The question was not popular with candidates. Those who chose it instead of carefully discussing the lessons for each member of the Birlings resorted to narrating what the characters did to Eva Smith which resulted to her suicide failing, to then tie it all up with what they learnt after the Inspector had exposed their culpability in Eva's death. Other responses included Gerald Croft, yet Gerald is not a member of the Birlings family by birth and he, at the time of the play is not married to Sheila to qualify as a member of the Birling family.

Question 3

This question required that the candidates write their thoughts as Gerald after admitting to the Inspector that they knew Eva Smith. The moment proved problematic for many candidates as they were not sure of the exact moment from which their thoughts should begin. Most candidates wrote about their worry about how Sheila would react upon hearing Gerald's confession before the Inspector yet by this time Gerald had already admitted to Sheila that he had a relationship with Eva Smith. Other responses portrayed Gerald as very remorseful, yet in the text Gerald does not feel responsible for Daisy Denton's death. Others took it a bit far by coming up with panicky feelings and thoughts for Gerald as they opined that he would be arrested for contributing to Eva's death. Some even showed Gerald agonising over the possibility of the Birlings not wanting anything to do with him, something which is far-fetched because Mr Birling so desperately wants Sheila to marry Gerald to bolster his business endeavours.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question *4

The question required candidates to state what impressions they form of the characters of Olivia, Feste and Malvolio. This was not a popular question among candidates. The few that opted for it showed little evidence of having studied the text and displayed little or no knowledge of the characters. For instance, some candidates labelled Olivia as disrespectful for calling Feste a fool, yet Feste's role in the play is to play a 'fool' or clown. The context in which the conversation between the three occurs seemed to be lost to these candidates. However, better responses tried to bring out the character traits but were limited by an inability to come up with the precise descriptive words for characterisation thus they resorted to

explaining what they are doing or how the characters are feeling like 'Feste is teasing Olivia' or 'Olivia is annoyed' instead of saying 'Feste is persistent' or 'Olivia is patient.

Question 5

Another question which was not popular among candidates. The question required that candidates should discuss the ways in which Shakespeare presents events that depict a world that has been turned upside down in the play. Candidates who chose this one were able to respond well to the question by citing the different events that bear out this statement, which include the confusion caused by mistaken identities as well as the chaos and disorder brought about by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's drunkenness and their plot with Maria to avenge themselves on Malvolio. However, candidates who struggled with this one failed to draw out these events but simply gave a narration of the play without responding to the question.

Question 6

This was not a popular question among candidates. The question required candidates to write as Maria after Olivia has said about Malvolio,'let this fellow be looked to'. This question was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to assume Maria's voice of excitement at the success of her plan to fool Malvolio. These were able to come up with thoughts relevant to this moment. However, weak responses simply dwelt on what Maria got up to with her accomplices and failed to write the thoughts Maria would think after Olivia had said 'let this fellow be looked to'.

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question *7

This was a popular question which required that candidates explain how Hansberry dramatically presents the relationship between Walter and Ruth. However, most candidates failed to do that, choosing instead to focus on the personalities of the two characters. There were some shocking cases whereby candidates even brought in characters who are not in the extract – Beneatha and Mama. Albeit this was a challenging question, there were candidates who were able to describe the type of relationship Walter and Ruth have, based on the passage. They were also able to support this with relevant quotes from the text.

Question 8

This was another popular question which required candidates to discuss to what extent they are encouraged to sympathise with Walter in the play. Generally, candidates fared fairly well on this question. Those who chose it were able to give the reasons why they sympathise with Walter, and they also gave

reasons why they do not sympathise with him as demanded by the question. Weaker responses chose to discuss one side and ignored the 'To what extent' part of the question. Others simply picked information from the extract and used it to give reasons why they sympathise with Walter, thus limiting their scope of focus.

Question 9

This was a popular question among candidates and a vast number of them performed admirably well in it. The question required candidates to write thoughts as Mama after Walter has admitted to losing part of the insurance money in a scam. Most candidates seemed well taught about the character of Mama and the events that touch on her in the play. What also helped candidates was that the moment could not be mistaken for any other and therefore they were able to nail the thoughts and feelings that go with that poignant moment. Weak responses failed to use the first-person narrative, and some would write Mama's thoughts as if she was having a conversation with Walter.

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 state how they think the poet has used language to make the poem so emotional. This was one of the most challenging questions for candidates as they failed to realise that they were not expected to simply restate the stem of the question but give specific feelings. For instance, candidates would say, 'The poet uses language to make the poem emotional because the porpoises commit suicide' instead of saying, 'the poem is sad because of the way the poet describes how the porpoises died.' This statement should then be followed by a quote from the poem and its explanation.

Question 11

This was not a popular question and the few candidates who chose it just narrated what the poem is about without showing an understanding of how the poem helps them to have a better understanding of life issues.

Question 12

The responses were too few to warrant a general comment.

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

Question *13

This was a popular question. It required candidates to discuss how the poet has used language to make the poem *At Tea* so emotional. A majority of the candidates struggled to grasp the demands of this question which, just like question 10, required candidates to give the specific feeling evoked by the poet's choice of words as they read the poem. Candidates would simply give a general analysis of the poem without touching on how the poem is emotional. Others misinterpreted the first few lines. For example, some would say 'the young wife lacks confidence, that's why she looks at her husband's face for approval' yet the young wife looks at her husband's face because she is happy and the emotions the reader should have are admiration, happiness etc.

Question 14

This question was obviously not as popular as question 13 but still quite a sizeable number of candidates chose it. It required candidates to explain how the poet has shown Roddy Mcorley's attitude towards death. It was also well done by most candidates as they were able to give a precise description of Roddy's attitude. For example, candidates were able to see Roddy's brave, fearless, strong, confident attitude. They recalled lines from the poem to support their discussions very well. On the contrary, weaker candidates were unable to remember the contents of the poem thus bringing out scanty narrations of fragments they could recall of the poem. These were largely wrongly paraphrased and not helpful in answering the question.

Question 15

A good number of candidates selected this question. It required candidates to explain the ways in which the poem explores the idea of time and maturity and the effect thereof, allowing understanding to develop between two people. Candidates who did well were able to start their response from the time of innocence when the two met while they were playing, as any typical child would do. They were able to show the transition from childhood to marriage where the wife was still confused and shy to the point where she begins to understand and falls in love with the husband. Weak responses, however, simply failed to bring these stages out and resorted to a narration of the poem. These even struggled to recall the lines of the poem relevant to their responses.

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

Question *16

This was not a popular question among candidates. The question required candidates to discuss how the poet uses language to make the poem so emotional. The few that opted for this question had difficulty bringing out the relevant specific emotions and generally displayed a lack of understanding of the poem. Most would repeat the same words when explaining their quotes. However, there were better responses that tried to come up with the relevant emotions, but the emotions would be very few such as, sadness' and 'pity'. This was a result of most candidates viewing the poem as only dealing with a love relationship, yet the poem looks at many scenarios that end unceremoniously, leaving the persona dejected.

Question 17

General comment cannot be made as the question was not chosen.

Question 18

General comment cannot be made as the question was not chosen.

SECTION C: PROSE

HARPER LEE: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Question *19

Not many centres study this text and the few candidates that chose this question did not do that well. The question required candidates to explain how Lee has made the passage both amusing and serious. Candidates still find the key words of the question 'amusing' and 'serious' quite challenging to deal with. The candidates who attempted this question could not bring out the amusement in either Miss Maudie's or Scout's comments. They only mentioned that it was amusing that the character said this without properly explaining 'how'. Others even made the mistake of confusing Scout for Jem. Candidates also seemed unaware that the two feelings should be dealt with separately at times while in other instances the passage would be both amusing and serious.

Question 20

This was not a popular question with many candidates. It required learners to state how far they agree with the view that Boo Radley is a character deserving pity who later wins the reader's admiration. The few candidates who attempted it were able to sympathise with Boo Radley and also showed their admiration for him, especially for saving Jem's and Scout's lives. Some candidates, however, displayed a complete lack of knowledge of the text and the 'how far' part of the question was totally ignored. These

tried to rely on the extract to find reasons for pitying and admiring Boo Radley thus their responses fell way short of the examiners' expectations.

Question 21

This question was not popular among candidates. It required candidates to write Jem's thoughts having safely returned from fetching your pants from Nathan Radley's place. Most learners got the moment wrong and, on top of that, displayed a lack of knowledge of the text. There was also a worrying trend of candidates not using the first-person narrative technique 'I' in crafting their thoughts. Candidates would write, 'If I was Jem I would…' This is unacceptable; thus, candidates were penalised for it. There were candidates though who tried to come up with the appropriate thoughts. Such candidates were able to capture Jem's relief that Atticus would not whip him and his gratitude to Boo Radley for mending his shorts.

CHINUA ACHEBE: *Things Fall Apart*

Question *22

This was a popular question with most candidates. It required that the candidates should discuss how Achebe's writing in the passage brings out feelings of horror and sadness. This question was generally well answered, and candidates could easily engage with the language of the passage. What made the candidates' task easier was that the chosen moment is of an incident that depicts sadness and horror in a conspicuous manner. However, there were cases where candidates ignored the horror in the passage and simply focused on the sadness. Some showed a lack of knowledge of the text by being ignorant of the incident described by the extract and thus handled the passage as if it was an unseen text.

Question 23

This was another popular question among candidates. The question required candidates to express the extent to which they think Achebe presents Okonkwo as a hero who should be admired or a villain who should be despised. Most candidates showed that they were well versed with Okonkwo's character, as they pointed out with ease the things that make Okonkwo a hero in their eyes. However, weak responses tended to fuse together the hero and villain, thus forwarding views that were meaningless. Candidates who wrote about Okonkwo as a hero then, later on, in their writing viewed him as a villain, were rewarded because that is how the author has presented him in the text.

Question 24

This was the least popular question of the three but was generally well done. Candidates were supposed to write thoughts as Okonkwo on the way back to Umofia after spending seven years in Mbanta. Most candidates were able to capture the moment and thus were able to show Okonkwo's excitement that he was finally going back to his clan. These were able to show Okonkwo's determination to rid his village of the white people and also to reclaim his esteemed position in the clan. However, weak responses tended to write thoughts that were laden with guilt and remorse for having killed the boy and generally showed a meek Okonkwo. Some appeared ignorant of the fact that at this point Okonkowo had severed ties with his son Nwoye and had warned his five sons not to follow in his footsteps.

BARRIE WADE (ed.): *Into the Wind: Contemporary Stories in English*

Question *25

This was another question which was popular among candidates**.** This question required candidates to discuss how the writer in the given passage reveals the white men's cruelty and hatred. Generally, this was a well-attempted question as candidates were able to make a clear selection of relevant reference from the text to use in supporting their arguments. Weaker candidates were unable to point out the key requirements of the question, like how through the aspects of the text 'cruelty' and 'hatred' is shown. Some of these responses would also bring incidents that are not in the extract and thus no marks were awarded for that.

Question 26

This was not a popular question. It basically required candidates to discuss to what extent they think the writer presents Lilian as a character deserving admiration and pity. It was, however, not well done by most candidates as they fused both admiration and pity. They did not separate what they deemed admirable and pitiful about Lilian, thus their arguments ended up making little or no sense. Others opted to focus on only the admiration part of the question, neglecting the pity part. Some candidates failed to mine through the story, only focusing on Lilian's relationship with her fiancé and the stranger, yet her standing in the broader Onitsha society is also important.

Question 27

This was another popular question which required candidates to write their thoughts as Selina after Mr Sims has just offered you his empty flat to occupy. Candidates performed well in this one. Good responses were aware of the moment and expressed their thoughts and feelings appropriately. They showed their excitement and relief. They also touched on their uncertainty about the motive behind Mr

Sim's generosity. Weak responses, however, failed to grasp the moment and spent time bringing in every scenario they thought might be relevant to this moment.

Recommendations

- Educators must emphasise the importance of adhering to the instructions on the cover of the answer sheet. It is vitally important for learners to write their centre numbers, candidate numbers and names.

- To address prevalent rubric infringement, teachers are encouraged to give full Literature in English papers (make use of mock paper) to learners and then ascertain if learners in their selection of questions do conform to the instructions. Educators must also emphasize the importance of giving the essays equal attention as they all carry equal marks. This will also help eliminate the growing trend of learners answering only two questions, supposedly because they ran out of time.

- Learners must be made aware that passage-based questions are not treated as an unseen text. Thus, knowledge of what has happened leading up to the selected passage is key to answering a passage-based question.

- Educators must teach learners how to construct the main sentence of the paragraph. They must dissuade learners from reproducing lines of the passage as their point. For example, learners write, 'Alex La Guma reveals the white men's cruelty and hatred towards the coloured man by that the shot gun was loaded'. This is incorrect. The learner should have said, 'Alex La Guma reveals the white men's cruelty and hatred towards the coloured man by showing that the white men were ready to kill the coloured man. Then this will be followed by the evidence from the text, 'The shotgun was loaded'. The learner must then explain the evidence and then conclude with a personal feeling.

- 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. Paraphrasing and generalizing must be discouraged.

- When responding to traditional essay questions learners tend to use the extract question. This disadvantages candidates as they find themselves with very little or no material to craft their responses. Learners are allowed to use information from extracts to answer traditional essay questions if the passage relates to the question. However, in order for them to present a good response, they must consider the entire text.

- In the traditional essay question, citing accurately from the text is not demanded but learners must demonstrate their knowledge of the text by echoing the text in their response.

- At times, traditional essay questions demand that learners must 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. A question, for example may read, 'You are Okonkwo on the way back to Umofia after spending seven years in Mbanta.' Write your thoughts. Such a question requires candidates to come up with Okonkwo's thoughts and feelings before reaching Umofia. So, thoughts crafted after Okonkwo's return to Umofia are not relevant.

EGCSE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 6875/02
Unseen Text

General Comments

This year, there was a slight rise in the number of candidates who sat for Literature in English Paper 2 compared to last year. Candidates' performance also improved. As the paper offers candidates two options to choose from, Question 1 was the most popular. Candidates have shown that they prefer the passage-based question more than the poem. It was also noted that candidates perform the poem in a less satisfying way, hence the low numbers of candidates that choose it yet in previous years it had been noted that candidates would lean more towards the poem as it is shorter. Most candidates were able to understand the task at hand and tried to respond accordingly to both questions. Only a few candidates would deviate from the question and create their own. There were a few misinterpretations of the passage and poem where candidates would show that they do not understand what they are reading about. In other instances, they would even change the question to suit what they had in mind. An example in the passage is where they were supposed to give Waldo's personality, but instead they expressed their feelings, or how they felt towards Waldo's actions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular question among the candidates. It required candidates to bring out Waldo's personality as they read the passage. The question was fairly well answered by the candidates, with a few exceptions here and there.

Good answers were characterised by the right personality drawn from the passage and fitting with the actions of Waldo. They saw Waldo as a respected man, and a disciplinarian. They also saw him as authoritative, dramatic, orderly, committed to work and instilled fear in every boy in the school. The candidates were able to highlight Waldo's personality, supporting their assertions with evidence from the text. They would then further explain why they think that fits to be his character. Some would add a personal response which made their work richer. They were also able to see how the passage heightened, from Waldo walking through the school corridors, up to where he is seen in action in class. Some candidates also found a balance between the good and the bad side of Waldo's personality. They engaged with the language, bringing out the fear and anxiety that engulfed the school boys when in Waldo's presence.

However, weaker responses were characterised by errors and misinterpretations of the passage and question. Some candidates would just paraphrase the story without engaging with it. Others would not even answer the question asked but would change it to be a question on feelings. Some candidates failed to bring out Waldo's personality, as they would just highlight what he does, and then conclude '… that's how Waldo's personality is brought out.' They also lacked the right vocabulary to express the personality. Others went on a tirade, giving advice to teachers on how to behave and treat students in their respective schools, thus missing the real question.

Common errors were also noted where candidates would misinterpret some words and expressions in the passage. The phrase 'Waldo commanded the most respect' was misunderstood by candidates. The word 'command' was interpreted to mean 'demand', yet it's an expression of how respected you are or the level of respect you are given. Also, the word '' 'theatrical' was changed to mean 'threatening', thus distorting the whole personality of Waldo. Other errors noted were that candidates assumed it was a mixed school, and said Waldo hated the boys and not the girls, failing to see it is a Catholic boy's school. Another error candidates made was not understanding that Waldo only punished the boys that claimed to have done his work, yet they were lying. They thought that Waldo would just punish every boy unnecessarily. In general, candidates showed an understanding of the passage as a whole and could relate to it as well.

Question 2

This question was not so popular among the candidates. For those who chose it, a few did it justice. Candidates were required to show how the poet brings out a mother's fear of losing her daughter as they read the poem. The question was not attempted satisfactorily, as most candidates failed to engage with the language to bring out the fear of the mother.

Good responses were characterised by a thorough understanding of the poem and the use of language by the poet. The candidates were able to identify and interpret the metaphors used by the poet. They used that to show where the mother's fear lay in losing her daughter. An example was the use of the words 'I don't want them' to show the fear the mother has of losing her daughter to unknown people. Also, the word 'swallow' was used by candidates to show that the mother fears her daughter will go away and leave her, just as a swallow is a bird that is free to fly as it pleases. So, the mother is afraid that her daughter will gain freedom and leave her behind. The fact that the candidates did not lose sight of the question on the mother's fear, made them produce good responses.

However, weaker responses were characterised by paraphrasing the poem without directly engaging with it. Some candidates would include their own feelings instead of sticking to the fear of losing the daughter. They couldn't engage with the language to show where the fear lies. Common errors were prevalent,

where most candidates interpreted the poem to mean the mother was losing her daughter to marriage. They failed to see that the scenarios presented in the poem, like 'never flying again to my straw bed', 'she would nest in the eaves', being a 'princess' or a 'queen', all showed that whatever circumstances the daughter may encounter, she would always remain a little girl to her. She can't stand to lose her to anything or anyone and wants to keep her to herself forever. Other candidates took some words literally. An example was the word 'swallow', where some candidates wondered how the daughter can be a bird. Others changed the meaning of the word to the swallowing of food. Overall, it was noted that poetry still has a long way to go in terms of understanding the deeper meaning for candidates to give meaningful responses.

Recommendations

- Candidates should be exposed to a wide variety of reading materials so they can be familiar with different eras and settings.
- Extensive practice is needed in class.
- Candidates should be trained on the dynamics of poetry and how to approach the genre.