



CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

CSEC[®] English

**SYLLABUS
SPECIMEN PAPER
MARK SCHEME
SUBJECT REPORTS**

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English

The CXC English syllabus is organised for examination as English A and English B. Syllabus objectives are organised under understanding and expression in order to guide both content development and the assessment scheme. Understanding indicates more than basic comprehension, and Expression is of more significance than the ability to employ structural and grammatical correctness. The syllabus seeks to express and invite the recognition of Reflection as being intrinsic to both. English A emphasises the development of oral and written language skills through a variety of strategies; English B provides opportunities for students to explore and respond critically to specific literary texts, to observe and appreciate the author's craft, and to make meaningful connections with human daily interactions.

The English Syllabus encourages receptive and expressive exploration of the three major literary genres - Drama, Poetry, and Prose – and the varieties related to those major divisions – in order to develop awareness of and familiarity with the many functions and purposes of language. It is recognised that a good language syllabus provides opportunity to discover and appreciate that the five facets of the language arts: listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing.

In addition, this syllabus strongly promotes reflection on the principle that reflection is the tool which helps individuals to clarify their own understanding, and enables them to provide themselves and others with satisfying responses. This recognition is seen as being fundamental if teachers are to help students to reach their full creative potential. The literature of the region is fore-grounded so as to foster the positive sense of selfhood and Caribbean-ness. The focus encourages recognising our region's talents, valuing regional varieties of language, and developing the skills of selecting form, tone and register appropriate to the transactional context. The syllabus also recognises that language is essential to basic, effective transactions – personal, social, scientific, technical and business. Literary texts are also chosen, therefore, to help in the development of appropriate responses to general human behaviours, to promote understanding of the human condition.



CARIBBEAN
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

Caribbean Secondary
Education Certificate®

SYLLABUS

ENGLISH

CXC 01/G/SYLL 15

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CSEC®

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English Syllabus

◆ RATIONALE

It is envisaged that persons certified by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) will demonstrate the ability to understand and appreciate what they listen to, read and view, and the ability to express themselves clearly in speech and in writing. The teaching and testing of English is founded on the premise that the abilities mentioned are fostered by the study of language and literature, separately and jointly, and that the abilities are vital factors in managing personal and social well-being. Indeed, in the current socio-political world climates, the study of language and literature underpins our understanding of human dynamics, and prepares us to respond critically to the wealth of material that bombards our lives through the media.

*The CSEC English syllabus is organised for examination as English A and English B. The syllabus objectives are organised under **understanding** and **expression** in order to guide both content development and the assessment scheme. **Understanding** indicates more than basic comprehension, and **Expression** is of more significance than the ability to employ structural and grammatical correctness. The syllabus seeks to express and invite the recognition of **Reflection** as being intrinsic to both. *English A emphasises the development of oral and written language skills through a variety of strategies. English B provides opportunities for students to explore and respond critically to specific literary texts, to observe and appreciate the author’s craft, and to make meaningful connections with human daily interactions. The language and literature syllabus document recognises the separate value of these areas, but advocates an approach to teaching that creates a strong inter-relatedness of the two. The principle is that structured language learning situations which use literature, provide opportunity for guided reflection on, and understanding of, the human condition and life itself. It also promotes meaningful comprehension, acquisition of grammatical correctness and other communication skills.**

This integrated syllabus provides a map to help students to develop the ability to read and enjoy literary texts; to explore social and moral issues using the skills acquired while learning to ‘read’ texts; to evaluate the way their personal ownership of language promotes and optimises their own growth; and creates opportunity to practise using the acquired language to express themselves effectively. In short, the syllabus crafts an essential interweaving of literature and language study as the platform for raising UNESCO’s “Pillars of Learning”: to know, to do, to live together, to be, and to transform self and society. Inter-related study helps the instructor to shape the many-faceted image of the ‘ideal’ Caribbean person envisaged by the syllabus. That person is a social being who respects human life itself and values the fundamentals of that life - family, community, diversity, rights and freedoms which characterise our area. The ideal also understands and appreciates the meanings and nuances of environment, ethnicity, culture, imagination, entrepreneurship and accountability.

Further, the English Syllabus encourages receptive and expressive exploration of the three major literary genres - Drama, Poetry, and Prose – and the varieties related to those major divisions – in order to develop awareness of and familiarity with the many functions and purposes of language. It is recognised that a good language syllabus provides opportunity to discover and appreciate that the five

facets of the language arts: listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. In addition, this syllabus strongly promotes reflection on the principle that reflection is the tool which helps individuals to clarify their own understanding, and enables them to provide themselves and others with satisfying responses. This recognition is seen as being fundamental if teachers are to help students to reach their full creative potential. The literature of the region is fore-grounded so as to foster the positive sense of selfhood and Caribbean-ness. The focus encourages recognising our region's talents, valuing regional varieties of language, and developing the skills of selecting form, tone and register appropriate to the transactional context. The syllabus also recognises that language is essential to basic, effective transactions – personal, social, scientific, technical and business. Literary texts are also chosen, therefore, to help in the development of appropriate responses to general human behaviours, to promote understanding of the human condition.

◆ AIMS

The syllabus aims to:

1. *develop the ability to use the spoken language, Caribbean Standard English (CSE¹);*
2. *develop the ability to understand and respond to spoken and written Caribbean Standard English;*
3. *develop the ability to use language effectively for communicating across cultures at different levels, that is, intra-personal, inter-personal and groups;*
4. *develop the ability to monitor personal thinking processes through the application of meta-cognitive strategies;*
5. *develop the ability to articulate personal experiences (real or imagined) in spoken and written language;*
6. *promote in students a willingness and ability to inform themselves about, and to contribute reasoned opinions on social issues;*
7. *promote an appreciation of the variety of purposes for which language is used;*
8. *promote an understanding and appreciation for the place and value of the varieties of English and of the dialects and creoles of the Caribbean and other regions in different social and cultural contexts;*
9. *develop a critical awareness of the use of language devices used for narrative, descriptive, argumentative and expository writing;*
10. *develop the ability to respond to literature for pleasure and insight, to recognise and respond to the writer's craft, and to make sensitive appraisals of value judgements and other concepts expressed in Literature;*

¹ CSE (Caribbean Standard English) is a standard of English. It differs from other Standard Englishes primarily on the phonological and lexical levels, with no appreciable difference in grammar, particularly in the formal written mode.

11. *use knowledge of the various forms of information for the students' own enlightenment, while recognising the importance of acknowledging the contribution of such sources to their own ideas; and,*
12. *develop the capacity to assess the reliability of sources of information including those available on the Internet.*

◆ SKILLS AND ABILITIES TO BE ASSESSED

The skills and abilities are categorised under the two broad headings: **Understanding**, the decoding and interpreting of messages through the analysis of the language structures and devices used in any given context, and **Expression**, the conveying of meaning through the selection of language structures and devices appropriate to each specific context. Performance will be reported under the profile dimensions **Understanding** and **Expression**.

1. Understanding

The ability to:

- (a) understand meaning conveyed (both in listening and in reading) through word choice and grammar, and (in reading) through punctuation and paragraphing.
- (b) obtain information accurately, as demonstrated in the ability to:
 - (i) recognise facts stated explicitly;
 - (ii) extract specific information from what is read or heard;
 - (iii) extract implied information;
 - (iv) identify stated or implied time sequence;
 - (v) draw valid conclusions and inferences from information presented;
 - (vi) recognise cause and effect relationships;
 - (vii) identify main and subordinate ideas and trace their development;
 - (viii) recognise the difference between denotative and connotative language;
 - (ix) treat with passages whose main purpose is informative (expository) *as opposed to* literary or argumentative; and,
 - (x) interpret and respond to tables and pictorial communication, such as diagrams, conventional signs and symbols.
- (c) grasp insights from reading literature and demonstrating the ability to:
 - (i) deduce reasons and motives for particular spoken and written communication (other than those with an overt argumentative intent);

- (ii) appreciate the appropriateness of different uses of tone, mood, register, code and style in talks and speeches, in non-literary forms including scientific or technical writing, and in literary forms (prose, verse and drama), in relation to the author's intention;
 - (iii) detect connotations in the use of words and in the presentation of ideas and distinguish between connotative and denotative meaning;
 - (iv) detect and assess the apt use of devices such as pun, innuendo, exaggeration, irony and symbolism;
 - (v) recognise and respond to the appropriateness of the means, including form and structure, used by a speaker, director or author to achieve the intended effect of a talk or speech, letter, article or essay, poem, novel, story or play;
 - (vi) visualise the situation, attitudes, mood and setting of a play and appreciate how they influence the actions and interaction of actors in the performance of that play;
 - (vii) recognise implicit themes; and,
 - (viii) respond to West Indian and other literature in English (novels, short stories, poems and plays): recognise elements of the writer's craft; respond to writers' evocation of feelings, moods, atmosphere; making critical appraisal of values and concepts expressed in literature, and relate these to everyday living.
- (d) recognise and evaluate opinion expressed in various forms *as* demonstrated in the ability to:
- (i) distinguish factual statements from unsupported opinion statements;
 - (ii) *detect bias or particular perspective* in the use of words and *in* the presentation of ideas;
 - (iii) evaluate the effectiveness of language devices used to persuade; and,
 - (iv) recognise the range of techniques of persuasion employed in social intercourse and in the mass media, and assess their argumentative effects.

2. Expression

The ability to:

- (a) use appropriate diction, grammatical forms (both in speaking and in writing) and suitable punctuation and paragraphing to convey meaning clearly and with facility;
- (b) communicate factual information clearly, concisely *and* adequately in giving oral and written instructions, reports, summaries, and expositions;
- (c) *acquire self-knowledge through self-expression and give aesthetic satisfaction to others in personal, creative and imaginative language by:*

- (i) organising and sequencing ideas to communicate emotional and imaginative interpretations of experience; and,
 - (ii) using language (tone, mood, register, code and style) appropriate to particular situations and contexts.
- (d) communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which persuades or dissuades effectively. This will involve the ability to:
- (i) present reasoned evaluative comments on proposals and situations of various kinds in language that is clear and appropriate to the occasion;
 - (ii) demonstrate the ability to employ, wherever necessary, a range of argumentative techniques for emotional impact;
 - (iii) present a logical argument using justifiable techniques related to sound oral and written debate; and,
 - (iv) *research a topic or situation from different angles or perspectives in order to express an informed opinion.*

◆ SUGGESTED TIMETABLE ALLOCATION

It is recommended that in order to satisfy the requirements of the English A and English B examinations, a minimum of six sessions should be allocated to English A and four to English B per week. However, it is recognised that students and teachers operate in a wide variety of situations and under an equally wide variety of conditions. It is important that individual institutions develop an allocation of time, taking the following into consideration:

1. language competence levels of students at point of entry into the examination class;
2. availability of human and other resources;
3. learning styles of students;
4. school culture;
5. normal timetable concerns; and,
6. balance among skills needed in English A and English B.

◆ RECOMMENDED APPROACHES TO FACILITATE LANGUAGE LEARNING

This syllabus is based on the philosophy that the acquisition and mastery of language is a progressive process. Teaching and learning methodologies should facilitate opportunities for students to gradually build on their experiences, knowledge and skills.

A number of language varieties, which differ significantly from the Caribbean Standard English (CSE), exist in the Caribbean region. A non-threatening setting is therefore critical to student experimentation with the language and the development of the required competencies. For this reason peer and small group activities are recommended so that students will feel confident enough to manipulate the language. Excessive correction of errors should be avoided, since this may contribute to low self-esteem and refusal to make attempts to develop CSE competencies. Teachers should also keep in mind that in teaching CSE grammar to speakers of creoles, it is important to raise students' consciousness or awareness of the similarities and differences between the forms.

Teachers will find it useful to employ the integrated approach in the teaching of this syllabus. The different modes of language- listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and the sixth element – reflection – are essentially linked and should be addressed through methodologies which reflect and promote their interconnectivity.

The exploration of literature is essential to the achievement of the aims of this syllabus. Literature should continue to serve the traditional roles of facilitating literary appreciation and promoting positive values and attitudes. However, literature should also serve as the general context through which meaningful language learning takes place. It should be used to model the apt use of a range of learning skills in the different genres. It should serve as the springboard for reflection and problem-solving. It is recommended that as far as possible elements of literature be fully and seamlessly integrated into the language learning process via various prompts, as well as through the treatment of specific elements. The promotion of the reading of good literature will also improve students' language skills.

Teachers should also promote the use of metacognitive strategies on the part of students. Thinking aloud as they work through a task or explaining the process involved in arriving at a plausible response should be modelled by the teacher and practised by the students. As students become more aware of the processes which undergird language learning, they will begin to display more confidence and competence in the use of the language.

Interpersonal development should be promoted at all levels of the language learning process. As students build their language competence through interaction with peers, they should also be encouraged to develop the attendant social skills.

The transactional functions of language form an important aspect of this syllabus. Students must therefore be made to recognise the utility of language in practical functions. Teachers should seek also to help their students develop a genuine love and appreciation for language as they use it to reflect and provide pleasure for themselves and others.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

The choice of material to be used in the classroom will be guided by both the language needs of daily living and the need of the students to develop the skills and insights necessary if they are to derive satisfaction from novels, stories, poems and plays. The approach in this syllabus calls for emphasis on the exposure of students to literature, not to the learning of facts about literary theory.

*A reading list is included in the syllabus to offer help to schools in choosing class texts to develop the ability to enjoy literature. It is a list of **suggested** reading, not prescribed reading. It offers a guide to the range of material that is suitable for particular groups of students. Schools are encouraged to create situations which lead to wide reading by students.*

There will, of course, be differences from territory to territory and even from school to school, so the recommendations must not be taken as binding in any way. It is hoped that students will be encouraged to read widely within the range of titles suggested both by the list and by the teacher's own additions to it, and that class sessions and written assignments will be geared to stimulate and reward this extra reading of, and interest in literature.

The reading list includes a number of reference texts on the teaching of drama. The approach to drama implicit in the syllabus places the emphasis on the use of activities such as miming, improvisations, the reading and acting of plays in the classroom that would help in the development of self-awareness and understanding of others. The texts included in the suggested reading list will provide guidance in implementing this aspect of the drama programme, particularly in the first three years of secondary schooling.

Refer to pages 57-80 for Suggested Reading List.

◆ ENGLISH A AND B: NOTES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES (FORMS 1 – 5)

Communicative competence is a critical issue in any classroom and is the focus of the aims outlined earlier in this syllabus. Students will be expected to demonstrate good control of the mechanisms of language, write good, clear prose, and to communicate easily, precisely and fluently. It is a sound instructional principle to practise the skills required to achieve these features within situations that simulate the social contexts as nearly as possible. *The importance of the oral aspects of **English** should be emphasised.*

Suggested teaching activities are intended to guide teachers for both English A and English B into a full understanding of the objectives of the syllabus, while offering ideas for both teaching and assessment activities. This list of activities is not prescribed, nor is it exhaustive.

NOTE: *It is recommended that teachers in all subjects ensure that the English Language competence of their students is satisfactory. With this in mind, it is suggested that teachers of English should provide guidance to teachers of other subjects with respect to the quality of English expected to be displayed, and that five per cent of the marks for any assignment should be allocated to the quality of the language used in presenting the assignment, oral or written.*

◆ ENGLISH A and B – NOTES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	EXPLANATORY NOTES	SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY	SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT
Understanding (a) – Grammar and Mechanics			
Students should be able to:			
1. explain meaning conveyed (both in listening and in reading) through word choice and grammar, and (in reading) through punctuation and paragraphing; and,	<p>Word choice:</p> <p>formal, informal, standard, non-standard, Creole, literal, figurative use, fixed phrases, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms. <i>Striking word combinations, for example, alliterations, produce effective descriptions.</i></p>	<p><i>Appropriateness of word choice and brainstorming.</i></p> <p>Wide reading (class library); shared newspaper, assessing alternative Internet sites, listening to effective speeches, oral skills; use of dictionary and thesaurus including e-dictionary and e-thesaurus; word puzzles, word-a-day, vocabulary notebooks, word-attack skills.</p> <p><i>Use students' writing to analyse word choice.</i></p>	<p>(a) Cloze tests. (b) Sentence completion. (c) Synonyms. (d) Antonyms. (e) Definitions. (f) <i>Word Matching.</i></p>
2. <i>identify effective use of adjectives, word combinations, unusual turn of a phrase.</i>	<p>Grammar:</p> <p>(a) syntax – the ways in which words are ordered and connected to form phrases or sentences with particular meaning; and,</p>	<p><i>Grammar and Spell check in word processing. (Stick consistently to CSE/ASE/BSE).</i></p> <p>Explicit language comparison and substitution and restructuring drills (as in second-language teaching); critical listening and reading exercises; identifying sentence patterns, analysing fact, evaluating arguments and opinions.</p>	<p>Listening and reading comprehension exercises, with answers dependent on the understanding of particular forms, structures, patterns.</p> <p>Selecting appropriate words from a range of choices when describing.</p> <p>Combining words for effect, for example, adjectival phrases with double adjectives.</p> <p>Create alliterations.</p>

**SPECIFIC
OBJECTIVES**

EXPLANATORY NOTES

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
LEARNING ACTIVITY**

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
ASSESSMENT**

Understanding (a) – Grammar and Mechanics (cont'd)

Students should be able to:

Study and discussion of visual media extracts relating to standard English spoken:

- (i) by Caribbean persons;
- (ii) *by non-Caribbean persons or; and,*
- (iii) *by Caribbean persons with non-Caribbean influences.*

(Note word choice, check for agreement in grammar, common and different aspects of language use).

Read poetry for how word choice conveys imagery, produces effective comparison and contrast.

Discuss shades of meaning of synonyms.

- (b) morphology – the ways in which the form of words and fixed phrases, and the changes made to them affect meaning.

Exercises to differentiate marking of number, possession, verb tense, adjective degree, pronoun reference, and word-building. Use of word-processing tools for editing.

As overleaf.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**EXPLANATORY NOTES****SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY****SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT****Understanding (a) – Grammar and Mechanics (cont'd)**

Students should be able to:

Punctuation:

recognition of punctuation marks and their effect on meaning – capital letter, question mark, exclamation mark, full stop, semi-colon, comma, colon, apostrophe, quotation marks, brackets, dash, hyphen, ellipsis.

Paragraphing:

recognition that material is ordered in paragraphs in order to assist understanding and create particular emphases and effects.

Critical discussion and correction of punctuation used in selected and prepared material; dictation; reading aloud to identify contribution of punctuation to meaning.

Unpunctuated passages used to focus on links between punctuation and interpretation.

Justifying choice of topic sentences in paragraphs read or heard; making an outline from a given (magazine) article; evaluating colleague's paragraphs, creation of dialogue and role play and other controlled oral activity, impromptu speech.

Dictation:

Reading aloud to show appreciation of punctuation; Explaining the effects of punctuation marks in context.

Using written material:

- (a) identifying topic sentences;
- (b) explaining the effect of paragraphing in passages with and without dialogue; and,
- (c) similar exercises to (a) and (b) using oral materials or visual media.

Expression (a) – Grammar and Mechanics

Students should be able to:

1. use appropriate diction and grammatical forms (both in speaking and in writing) and suitable punctuation and paragraphing to

Diction:

- (a) *careful selection characterises word choice and influences style; and,*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Expression (a) – Grammar and Mechanics (cont'd)

Students should be able to:

convey meaning clearly and with facility.

(b) appropriate diction, matches word choice and style to the purpose, situation, audience and content of the written or spoken discourse; accurate use of words, fixed phrases, synonyms and antonyms are expected.

Grammar:

adjustment of grammatical form for flexibility as appropriate to audience and context, sentence functions (statement, question) and types (simple, compound), for accuracy: number, identification of

Use of dictionary and thesaurus including audio samples on e-dictionaries; creating word puzzles; scrabble; word-a-day; vocabulary notebooks; rewriting items for different purposes, situations and audiences; oral and written sentence completion and cloze exercises.

Role play:

- (a) various professions;
- (b) use of hierarchy - (student/ principal), worker /superior; and,
- (c) other relationships: civilian/law officer; sales clerk/customer.

Use of grammar check on Microsoft Word. Practice in appropriately structuring and altering statements, questions; synthesis; building complex and compound, sentences. Oral, then written language comparison

Sentence completion and cloze tests.

Word substitution.

Structured writing or speaking task to test appropriate diction.

Extended writing task to test use of suitable variety of sentences.

Synthesis.

Extended writing task to test accuracy in the statement of number and concord. Error recognition; error correction; changing direct to reported speech.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Expression (a) – Grammar and Mechanics (cont'd)

Students should be able to:

subject, concord, pronoun reference, possessives, sequence of tenses.

and restructuring drills; proof-reading exercises to identify and correct errors of number, concord, reported speech, journal writing, oral interviews, impromptu speeches.

Punctuation:

appropriate use of capital letter, question mark, exclamation mark, full stop, semi-colon, comma, colon, apostrophe, quotation marks, brackets, dash, hyphen, ellipsis.

Reading aloud; giving, taking dictation; proof-reading exercises. *Editing paragraphs and peer writing.*

Extended writing task to test appropriate use of necessary punctuation marks.

Dictation.

Correcting an unpunctuated passage.

Paragraphing:

logical division of continuous writing into coherent paragraphs; *as well as* use of conventions of paragraphing shown in writing dialogue.

Outlining a composition by grouping brainstormed (or jumbled) ideas; oral and written expanding of topic sentences into paragraphs; adding properly sequenced paragraphs to create a longer work. Semantic mapping.

Extended writing task (essay, short story) to test effective paragraphing; dividing passage into paragraphs; correcting faulty paragraphing.

Listening to speeches, news items, documenting, show-telling and giving instructions; podcasts to recognise how the flow of ideas helps/hinders audience understanding.

Listening to speeches to note how natural chunking, pausing, voice change, suggest punctuation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**EXPLANATORY NOTES****SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY****SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT****Understanding (b) – Informative Discourse**

Students should be able to extract information accurately. This involves the ability to:

1. recognise facts stated explicitly;	As the first level of questioning, this requires a basic understanding of information presented directly in language to be taken literally.	Use of various subject textbooks, manuals, newspaper reports, notices, recipes, tables, charts, signs, maps, diagrams, audio and visual media, blogs. Use of Internet articles on same/similar topics – analysis of views, and separation of facts from opinion.	Multiple choice, short-answer, oral questions <i>relating to</i> explicit information (read, heard or shown in a diagram). Who, what, where, when, why, how questions. Following directions.
2. extract specific information from what is read or heard;	Selection of relevant information, making use of titles, introductions, topic sentences, illustrations, <i>main ideas</i> .	Note-taking; making outlines, summaries, paraphrases; giving titles; formulating questions to elicit data.	Written and oral summaries, reports. Reporting data as diagrams, charts. Selecting the outline from an article.
3. extract implied information;	Reading 'between the lines' (a critical skill) is used in interpreting information presented indirectly.	Making inferences from suitable passages, poems; deducing meaning of cartoons, and trends in charts, <i>maps</i> , advertisement, other oral, <i>social media</i> presentations. Listening/watching visual media: (a) make predictions based on speech, music, atmosphere, body language and on other behaviours;	Multiple choice, short-answer, or oral questions re implied information (read, heard, or seen in graphic).

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Understanding (b) – Informative Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to extract information accurately. This involves the ability to:

- (b) *Infer character traits* based on dress, behaviours, speech; and,
- (c) have a discussion on what 'setting' contributes to meaning: hearing and understanding, for example, influence of indoor/outdoor; social location, for example, church/market.

4. identify stated or implied time sequence;

Important for following instructions and for making good sense of information received in *distorted or non-sequential order*, as in flashbacks.

Re-ordering jumbled directions, picture sequences, planning activities; taking minutes of meetings; chronological listing of events in account; identifying cue-words (first, second, next, then; dates).

Following instructions, directions. Arranging (events recounted, pictured) in sequence. Numbering logical sequence.

Assessing the clarity of instructions on the labels of commercial products.

5. draw valid conclusions and inferences from information presented;

Identifying sound and unsound deductions in particular examples, and generalisations from samples.

Recognising faulty reasoning and inadequate or biased samples in prepared explanations, reports.

Differentiating sound from unsound conclusions in given deductions and generalisations.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**EXPLANATORY NOTES****SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY****SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT****Understanding (b) – Informative Discourse (cont'd)**

Students should be able to extract information accurately. This involves the ability to:

6. recognise cause-effect relationships;	To be distinguished from coincidence to avoid false conclusions.	Identifying cause and effect (and coincidence) in stories, reports of events and experiments.	Identifying (or predicting) effect of given cause (and vice versa) in a passage (narrative or expository).
7. identify main and subordinate ideas and trace their development;	Structure seen through sequence of topics of individual paragraphs <i>and their level of emphasis and development</i> . Themes of longer works.	Note-taking; book-reports; analysing structure of paragraphs, short stories, novels, essays, oral narratives. Comparing novel with movie version.	Making summaries, outlines of items read or heard. Identifying themes in essay, story, film and drama.
8. recognise the difference between denotative and connotative language;	Denotative (dictionary meaning) for literal, objective understanding; connotative (suggesting feelings) for subjective, emotional response.	Dictionary work; comparison of similar information presented in contrasting styles; study of effect of word choice on slant, bias in oral and written narratives.	Differentiating between denotative and connotative language in prepared extracts. Giving unbiased equivalents of loaded terms.
9. identify passages in which the main purpose is informative (expository) rather than literary or argumentative; and,	Expository: to inform or explain. Literary: to entertain, stir feeling. Argumentative: to convince, direct.	Analysis of author's purpose and intended audience; focus on elements of style which support informative purpose. Watch/listen for denotative and connotative use of key words discussed before start of viewing/listening.	Choose expository extracts from a mixed selection. Identify author's precise purpose and intended audience.
10. interpret and respond to tables and pictorial communication, such as diagrams, conventional signs and symbols.	<i>Visual or graphically presented information is often used to amplify/condense the verbal presentation.</i>	Analysis of tables, charts, signs, maps, diagrams; converting the information to verbal form; making inferences from the data.	Identify signs on maps. Extract data. Make inferences from tables and charts. Summarise data in writing. <i>Continuous writing</i>

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Understanding (b) – Informative Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to extract information accurately. This involves the ability to:

Recognise and discuss trends; make predictions.
Speak or write about visual impact.

exercises, developing what is given in a visual.

Expression (b) – Informative Discourse

Students should be able to:

1. communicate factual information clearly, concisely and adequately, in giving oral/ *written* instructions, reports, summaries, and expositions in appropriate language.

Information discourse takes various forms: essays, summaries, reports, instructions.

Clarity of instructions depends upon precise language and careful sequencing of information.

Reports are expected to be objective, accurate, comprehensive and *well* organised.

Summaries require economy of language, the careful selection of relevant main ideas, and the preservation of the intention of the original.

Expositions give information or explanation in an ordered manner, with supporting evidence for each element.

Writing instructions, recipes; designing application forms; explaining how to play a game.

Exercises in Giving and following oral instructions.

Giving evidence to an investigator; reporting accidents; oral or written reports of surveys, news reports, minutes.

Writing *emails, blogs*, classified advertisements, resumes, minutes of a meeting; summarising a radio news item; condensing a passage, isolating the views of one debater.

Writing notices, job applications, expository essays. Completing forms, explaining how things work; preparing notes for informational talks.

Writing directions and explaining how to operate an appliance.

Reporting a missing person. Reporting on a club project.

A media report on a sports event. Press releases.

Condensing a newspaper report; summarising one of the topics in a recorded conversation; writing *letters, emails*.

Describing yourself to a pen pal. Explaining how a sewing machine or car engine works. Expository essays, for example, outlining two

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Expression (b) – Informative Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to:

The appropriateness of language for communicating factual information is largely dependent on the degree of formality (register) expected by the listener or reader. (Process writing encourages writers to generate and arrange ideas, to seek feedback and to draft and redraft, before final proofreading).

Making oral reports on set or observed activities; giving reasoned responses to situations; giving reports; assessing activities. These are to be delivered in limited time and words.

Vocabulary “games” relevant to specific situations.

Classifying the above reports according to the degree or formality expected; rewriting inappropriately written items.

main problems of youth today.

Identifying inappropriate language use in an item and supplying appropriate alternatives.

Understanding (c) – Literary Discourse

Students should be able to grasp insights from reading literature by:

1. *deducing reasons and motives and particular perspectives for specific spoken and written communications (other than those with an overt*

Engage in metacognitive exercises in which students are made aware of their own thinking.

Distinguish between the purpose of the writer, the speaker, and the narrator. The narrator’s

Helping students to monitor their reading by studying the effect of the written or spoken word on their thoughts.

Exposing students to a wide range of oral and

In small groups, practise “think aloud” in which students say what they are thinking after reading or hearing the spoken word.

Identifying voice and point of view and commenting on effectiveness.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Understanding (c) – Literary Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to grasp insights from reading literature by:

<p>argumentative <i>intent</i>);</p>	<p>or the persona's voice is not necessarily the author's thus two motivations may exist in the same piece of writing.</p>	<p>written extracts, for example, biography, autobiography, narrator independent from author; author speaking through a character; poems, fables, satire, where characters are often not human. Imitating styles of piece studied.</p> <p><i>Help students to understand what happens to them when their thoughts wander.</i></p>	
<p>2. appreciating the appropriateness of different uses of tone, mood, register, code and style in talks and speeches, and in literary forms (prose, verse and drama), in relation to the author's intention;</p>	<p>Tone: attitude expressed by the speaker or "voice", mood or atmosphere: emotion conveyed in a work. Register: selection of language in indicating level of formality. Code: language peculiar to a specific group. Style: manner of statement, including form, structure, language.</p>	<p>Reading and listening to a range of literary and non-literary material, including poems, short stories, novels, plays, movies and Television items, newspaper, magazines, manuals. Identifying elements and evaluating their appropriateness. (This is an ongoing process, not restricted to English classes). Interpretative dramatisation of selections (all genres). This is not limited to the original piece but must be allowed to include the students' interpretations that may produce new versions. View visual media with alternative conclusions and</p>	<p>Reading and dramatising pieces of literary and non-literary material; Writing evaluative comments.</p> <p><i>Practise writing their thoughts about characters and issues in journals.</i></p> <p>Comparing and contrasting selections on the same issue, for example, literary and non-literary prose extracts; poems and drama extracts; poems and prose extracts.</p>

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Understanding (c) – Literary Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to grasp insights from reading literature by:

		discuss changes in meaning effected. Conduct <i>self-editing sessions</i> .	
3. detecting connotations in the use of words and in the presentation of ideas and distinguishing between connotative and denotative meaning;	Connotative: emotional, cultural, social associations given to words. Denotative: standard meaning necessary for precise understanding of meaning. See also Understanding (b) 8.	Learning effective use of dictionary; exploring meanings of words in current use; slang, jargon; studying effect of word choice and shades of meaning on slant and bias in speech or writing (for example, about gender, race, politics, religion, culture). Regular practice in identifying and assessing the effects of an increasing range of devices; students creating effects by using their own devices in descriptive writing. Small group activities: reading circles and book clubs; Book reviews.	Ranking words according to their negative and positive connotations; Identifying bias in given examples; Identifying reasons for effect produced in examples of biased writing or speech.
4. detecting and assessing the apt use of devices;	Importance of understanding why a particular device such as pun, innuendo, exaggeration, irony and symbolism is used and its effect on meaning.	Reading specifically to detect hidden meanings. Listening to song lyrics (for example: calypso, dub) to understand meanings.	Identifying and explaining the effect of devices in given written passages, oral extracts.
5. recognising and responding to the appropriateness or otherwise of the medium, including form and structure,	Identification and use of verse, stanza, dialogue, reported speech, punctuation, formal and informal writing, first and third person narratives,	Exposure to a variety of material to show the range of forms and structure found in written and spoken statement. Study of	Identifying and describing form and structure found in given examples. Imitating models of form and structure with new content.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**EXPLANATORY NOTES****SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY****SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT****Understanding (c) – Literary Discourse (cont'd)**

Students should be able to grasp insights from reading literature by:

used by a speaker, director or author to achieve the intended effect of a talk or speech, letter, article or essay, poem, novel, story or play;	flashbacks, acts, stage directions.	folk expressions – West Indian and others (all contributors to Caribbean culture).	
6. visualising the situation, attitudes, mood and setting of a play and appreciating how they influence the actions and interaction of actors in the performance of that play;	Recognition of the importance of the director and actors to the interpretation of a script; the need for the reader of a play to visualise it in performance.	Seeing a play or film (especially one that has been read) performed on stage or screen; Acting parts of a play in class; practice in reading parts; investigating aspects of putting on plays: casting, set design, costumes, props, advertising. Internet research to locate and study pictures of unfamiliar places; Visits to galleries/study of print/photo collections.	Identifying and explaining differences between a text and movie of the text. Explaining links between setting, action, motives, character. Directing a scene with fellow students.
7. recognising implicit themes; and,	Theme: a dominant view, or one of the recurring ideas, stated or implied in a work, for example, love, jealousy, heroism, freedom.	Identifying and defining underlying ideas in a text in small groups or individually. <i>Use visual media to present themes, for example, picture and written text collage comprising pictures/written text on "war".</i>	Identifying and tracing themes; Assessing a theme's importance to the plot, with supporting evidence. <i>Graphic representation followed by writing in continuous prose; Displays.</i>
8. (a) responding to good literature	Literature – a reflection of life-experience as well	Identifying (in group discussion and	Identifying values expressed in texts;

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**EXPLANATORY NOTES****SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY****SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT****Understanding (c) – Literary Discourse (cont'd)**

Students should be able to grasp insights from reading literature by:

(West Indian and **other literatures in English**): novels, short stories, poems and plays; and,

(b) making critical appraisal of values and concepts expressed in literature; and relating these to everyday living.

as a vicarious extension and enrichment of it; a means of evaluating personal values and those expressed in literature, and sometimes forming new values.

individual writing) values encountered in texts; evaluate them on (a) personal, (b) social, and (c) ethical levels.

Assessing these with reasons and supporting opinions;

Assessing identity of a character and explaining motivation.

Expression (c) – Literary Discourse

Students should derive aesthetic satisfaction from creative writing by:

1. organising and sequencing ideas to communicate emotions and imaginative interpretations of experience;

Exploring various forms of self-statement, spoken and written. Demonstrating control over the structure of an order of presentation especially when communicating emotional and imaginative slants to experiences.

Writing and reading stories, verse, dramatic scenes, possibly after discussion of personal experience, a topical event, or some other stimulus.

Submitting outline, drafts and a fair copy of an imaginative piece, for assessment of both final product and process of writing;

Practising independent revision of imaginative writing done under test conditions.
Produce a personal expressive essay.

2. recognising the various literary devices and their contribution to meaning and demonstrate an ability to interpret, at various levels different creative works; and,

Metaphors, simile, proverbs and other idiomatic expressions across genres.

Discussion of meaning in works which use the devices well;

Assessment of such devices and their contribution to meaning. (See Understanding c Item 4).

Identify the devices as used in various works;

Creating short stories/poems which use and respond to such devices.

Reading aloud to demonstrate understanding of the work which use the devices.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	EXPLANATORY NOTES	SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY	SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT
Expression (c) – Literary Discourse (cont’d)			
Students should derive aesthetic satisfaction from creative writing by:			
3. using language (tone, mood, register, code and style) appropriate to particular situations and contexts.	Effective speech and writing both depend on the suitability of word choice and style to the subject, to the situation, and to the people being addressed.	Evaluating different imaginative and real situations to determine what use of language is appropriate for narrator, character.	Writing <i>relevant</i> statements in language suited to different speakers, situations.
	See tone, mood, register, code and style in Understanding 2.	<i>Demonstrate use of emotive vocabulary. Create rhymes, chants and songs.</i>	<i>Compose verses of poetry. Produce imaginative writing.</i>

Understanding (d) Argumentative Discourse

Students should be able to recognise and evaluate opinion(s) expressed in various forms. This involves the ability to:

1. distinguish factual statements from opinion expressed in various forms;	If assertions are capable of being verified (factual, even if shown to be false), the appeal is to reason and the audience can use its judgment; if opinions are given without grounds which can be verified then they are unreliable.	Identifying and analysing statements of different kinds of prepared passages, and in advertisements, letters to the editor, reviews, sports reports; removing all but logical arguments from prepared argumentative passages, listening to and viewing tapes of speeches.	Identifying verifiable and unverifiable statements in a passage. Judging the soundness of selected verifiable assertions. Identifying the more reasonable (logically presented) of two argumentative passages.
		Reading court reports and reports on trials.	
		Studying short proposals, paying attention to structure and reasoning.	
2. detect connotations in the use of words and in the presentation of ideas;	<i>Bias and/or particular perspective may be detected in the choice of words and evidence in the presentation of ideas.</i>	Discussion of the effect of loaded expressions in advertisements and other argumentative material.	Identifying and evaluating the argumentative effect of given devices.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	EXPLANATORY NOTES	SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY	SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT
Understanding (d) Argumentative Discourse (cont'd)			
Students should be able to recognise and evaluate opinion(s) expressed in various forms. This involves the ability to:			
3. evaluate the effectiveness of language devices used to persuade; and,	<i>Evaluate the effects of rhetorical questions, repetitions, hyperbole, litotes, irony, sarcasm, paradox, oxymoron, pathetic fallacy, rhyme and other devices of sound, and figurative language.</i>	Comparing two accounts of the same event and descriptions of the same scene from different points of view. Identifying each device in material provided, discussing argumentative effects in context.	Identifying and evaluating the argumentative effect of given devices. <i>Use guided questions to produce evidenced-based argument.</i>
4. recognise the range of techniques of persuasion employed in social intercourse and by the mass media and assess the argumentative effects.	Appeals to authority, desires, fears and other emotions; use of statistics; association of ideas; contrast, ridicule; rhetorical questions and other language devices; visual and auditory effects <i>in the argumentative process.</i>	Discuss likely reasons for the use of particular techniques in advertisements and campaigns; identify various techniques in material recalled or shown in class. Study proposals and reports to see how tables, charts are used. Using the Internet, study visual media clips to note how visuals are used to persuade.	Identifying examples of techniques in given items; explaining the purpose of the technique used in a given example; analysing and assessing the effectiveness of a piece of argumentative language.

Expression (d) – Argumentative Discourse

Students should be able to communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which persuades or dissuades effectively, namely:

1. present reasoned evaluative comments on proposals and	<i>Provide reasoned opinions, draw conclusions logically on the basis of facts.</i> <i>Giving</i>	Supporting opinions with reasons; providing sound reasons for agreeing or disagreeing	Stating a position, for example, on new transport and traffic proposals, (community projects and
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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	EXPLANATORY NOTES	SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY	SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT
Expression (d) – Argumentative Discourse (cont'd)			
Students should be able to communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which persuades or dissuades effectively, namely:			
situations of various kinds, in language that is clear and appropriate to the occasion;	<i>opinions which others may not agree with, requires facts or other evidential support.</i>	with suggestions; practising inoffensive ways of complaining, disagreeing.	institutions) orally (in a meeting) or in a letter to the newspaper Editor.
		Preparing arguments for specific contexts (home/school).	<i>Write a letter of complaint. Write a letter of appreciation.</i>
		Constructing and supporting proposals.	
		Role play (impromptu) arguments for and against.	
2. demonstrate the ability to employ, wherever necessary, a range of argumentative techniques for emotional impact;	Psychological persuasion is used, not only to manipulate people into buying goods or supporting beliefs, but to warn those in danger and to strengthen those in distress.	Advertising a product (a) deceptively and (b) responsibly, identifying situations where persuasion targeting emotions may be justified; practising such persuasion in speech and writing.	Writing advertising copy to dissuade children from using illegal drugs; writing to a disillusioned teenaged relative to persuade him or her not to give up hope.
3. present a logical argument using justifiable techniques; and,	Serious argumentative essays and speeches emphasise reason over emotion, though they may be made more attractive by the occasional use of emotive appeals. Both sides of an issue are recognised, and the writer makes his or her stance clear.	Practice in generalising from appropriate evidence, and deducing logically from facts, debating issues, and writing items to persuade with a minimum of emotional appeal, and with opposing views noted and answered.	Writing argumentative essay, letters, and media articles and commentaries. Discussing the effectiveness of chosen advertisements.

**SPECIFIC
OBJECTIVES**

EXPLANATORY NOTES

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
LEARNING ACTIVITY**

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
ASSESSMENT**

Expression (d) – Argumentative Discourse (cont'd)

Students should be able to communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which persuades or dissuades effectively, namely:

4. *critically analyse issues that have come to public attention.*

Critical issues that affect our lives emerge from time to time. It is necessary to understand them, discuss them and take informed positions.

Read newspapers, listen to discussions, note expert views, discuss them, discuss some forms of public behaviour. Differentiate between gossip/propaganda and information.

State ideas about community and nation.

◆ THE ENGLISH A EXAMINATION

◆ CERTIFICATION

The syllabus is offered for General Proficiency certification. A candidate's performance will be indicated on the certificate by an overall numerical grade on a six-point scale as well as a letter grade for each of two profile dimensions, namely, Understanding and Expression.

◆ DEFINITION OF PROFILE DIMENSIONS

The knowledge and skills students are expected to develop on completion of this syllabus have been grouped under two profile dimensions:

1. *Understanding.*
2. *Expression.*

1. Understanding

The ability to:

- (a) understand meaning conveyed in reading, through word choice, grammar, punctuation and paragraphing, and to obtain information accurately;
- (b) grasp insights from reading literature; and;
- (c) evaluate opinions expressed in various forms.

2. Expression

The ability to:

- (a) communicate factual information clearly, concisely, and adequately in giving written instructions, reports, summaries, and expositions in appropriate language;
- (b) give aesthetic satisfaction to others in personal, creative and imaginative language; and,
- (c) communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which persuades or dissuades effectively.

◆ FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATIONS: ENGLISH A

The English A examination is offered at the General Proficiency level. The Assessment comprises three papers, Paper 01, Paper 02, and Paper 031 or Paper 032.

Papers 01 and 02 are assessed externally. Paper 031 is the School-Based Assessment (SBA) and is assessed internally by the teacher and moderated by CXC. Paper 032 is an Alternative to the SBA and is intended for candidates registered as private candidates. Paper 032 is externally assessed.

Paper 01 (1 hour 30 minutes – 29 per cent of Total Assessment)

1. Composition of Paper

This paper consists of 60 compulsory multiple-choice items arranged in two sections. **Section One** consists of 25 *discrete* items and **Section Two** consists of 35 reading comprehension items based on five stimuli as follows: one poem; one literary extract (for example, novel, short story, biography, diary, letter); one expository extract (for example, encyclopaedia extract, report, instructions, newspaper article, texts of speeches, transcript of conversations); one argumentative extract (for example, an advertisement, a speech or a letter to the editor); one visual extract (for example, table, chart, form, diagram, map, cartoon, *advertisement*).

2. Mark Allocation

- (a) One mark will be assigned for each question.
- (b) The total number of marks available for this paper is 60.
- (c) *This paper contributes 29 per cent towards the final assessment.*

3. Award of Marks

Marks will be awarded under Profile Dimension 1 as follows:

In **Section One**, marks will be awarded for the ability to understand meaning conveyed through word choice, grammar, syntax, sentence structure, punctuation and paragraphing.

In **Section Two**, marks will be awarded for the ability to:

- (a) obtain information accurately;
- (b) grasp insights from reading literature; and,
- (c) recognise and evaluate opinions expressed in various forms.

Paper 02 (2 hours and 40 minutes – 50 per cent of Total Assessment)

1. Composition of Paper

This paper is divided into the following four sections:

Section A consists of ONE compulsory question – *informative discourse (summary)*.

Section B consists of ONE compulsory question – *informative discourse (exposition)*. This question will require candidates to respond to given stimulus material. The response may take

the form of an email, letter, report, notice, or article. The question will change from year to year, but will focus on the skills of communicating factual information concisely.

Section C consists of two optional questions. These questions require candidates to produce a short story.

Section D consists of ONE compulsory argumentative essay question. The format for the response may vary from year to year (for example, a speech, letter to Editor, essay).

2. Mark Allocation

- (a) Section A is worth 25 marks.
- (b) Section B is worth 30 marks.
- (c) Section C is worth 25 marks.
- (d) Section D is worth 25 marks.
- (e) This paper is worth 105 marks, and contributes 50 per cent towards the final assessment.

3. Award of Marks

Marks will be awarded under Profile Dimension 1, as follows:

In **Section A**, marks will be awarded for the ability to:

- (a) use appropriate grammatical forms, and suitable punctuation and paragraphing to convey meaning clearly and with facility; and,
- (b) communicate factual information clearly, concisely, and adequately in written instructions, reports and summaries in appropriate language.

In **Section B**, marks will be awarded for the candidate's ability to:

- (a) communicate factual information clearly, concisely, and adequately in written instructions, reports and summaries in appropriate language; and,
- (b) obtain information accurately.

Marks will be awarded under Profile Dimension 2, as follows:

In **Sections A and B**, marks will be awarded for the ability to:

- (a) use appropriate grammatical forms, and suitable punctuation and paragraphing to convey meaning clearly and with facility; and,
- (b) use appropriate language and communicate factual information clearly, concisely and adequately in writing letters, reports and summaries.

In **Section C**, marks will be awarded for the ability to give aesthetic satisfaction to others in personal, creative and imaginative language.

In **Section D**, marks will be awarded for the ability to communicate personal opinion clearly and cogently in language which effectively persuades or dissuades.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT (SBA)

Paper 031, School-Based Assessment – (SBA – 21 per cent of Total Assessment)

A single SBA will be required to complete both aspects of the English Syllabus: English A and English B. A student who does English A only OR English B only OR English A and B will be required to submit **ONLY** one SBA. The SBA will be credited for both English A and B. The SBA is expected to be done by each student working as an **individual**, and as **a member of a small group** approved by the teacher where:

1. **individual** refers to each student, who has responsibility for his/her own portfolio; and,
2. **group** refers to 4 – 5 students sharing a general topic, who work together to discuss and solve problems, explain ideas, learn from peers, improve oral skills, and practise social skills and leadership roles.

The marks assigned to a student will consist of:

1. his/her individual mark (Plan of Investigation, Oral Presentation, Reflection, Participation Measure); and,
2. the mark assigned to the group (Quality of Group Behaviour, Written Report).

PORTFOLIO

Each student will create a Portfolio on an issue/topic/theme/event selected by the students in the group and approved by the teacher. The issue/topic/theme/event will also be orally presented. The issue/topic/theme/event selected **should allow for meaningful research and presentation**.

The Portfolio should include the following:

1. **PLAN OF INVESTIGATION** – *an introduction to the issue/topic/theme/event (A satisfactory response should be no more than 100 words).*
 - (a) *Why did you choose this issue/topic/theme/event?*
 - (b) *What are the expected benefits to you as a student of English?*
 - (c) *How do you intend to collect relevant information on your issue/topic/theme/event and use this in your presentation?*
2. **PARTICIPATION MEASURE** – *A measure of the candidate's individual participation assessed by self and teacher.*

3. **INDICATORS OF GROUP ACTIVITY** – A minimum of THREE pieces of material, for example, print, audio, visual media must be collected and presented in the Portfolio and should address the issue/topic/theme/event selected. One of the three pieces must be print. These pieces will form the basis for the process of enquiry and group work activities (cognitive, psychomotor, affective) in which students will become aware of and practise English language skills.
4. **REFLECTION** – THREE entries in which the student reflects on the issue/topic/ theme/ event selected should be completed. In the first entry the student must indicate how each piece of material helped to shape his or her thinking about the issue/topic/ theme/event. The second entry should discuss the use of language in the material selected and the third entry should state how the process of doing the SBA helped the student to become a better person. The reflection should be written in class under the teacher’s supervision.
5. **WRITTEN REPORT** – A written report of the investigation should be a summary of the processes, procedures and outcomes of the research. It should include the material collected, reasons for selection and analysis of the material. A satisfactory report should be about 250-300 words in total.
6. **ORAL PRESENTATION** – A personal response related to issue/topic/ theme/ event should be delivered orally in 3 to 5 minutes. The oral presentation should be delivered predominately in standard English and in a genre of the student’s choosing, for example, drama, poetry, prose, role play, speech, argument, exposition. The student should deliver a brief overview of the presentation including the genre chosen, the sources used and a comment on the kind of language used. A brief plan of the Oral Presentation must be submitted in the Portfolio.

Additional guidelines for the School-Based Assessment are provided on pages 45–56.

MODERATION OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

School-Based Assessment Record Sheets are available on the **CXC**®’s website (www.cxc.org).

All School-Based Assessment Record of marks must be submitted online using the SBA data capture module of the Online Registration System (ORS). A sample of assignments will be requested by **CXC**® for moderation purposes. This sample must be electronically submitted. Each candidate’s assignment in the sample should be a single word processing document (preferably PDF) with all the supporting images embedded.

These assignments will be re-assessed by **CXC**® Examiners who moderate the School-Based Assessment. Teachers’ marks may be adjusted as a result of moderation. The Examiners’ comments will be sent to schools.

Copies of the students’ assignment that are not submitted must be retained by the school until three months after publication by **CXC**® of the examination results.

Paper 032, Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA) (2 hours – 21 per cent of Total Assessment)

Private candidates are required to write Paper 032, an Alternative Paper to the SBA. The Alternative Paper will assess the candidate’s acquisition of skills in the same areas of the syllabus identified for the SBA.

This paper will consist of a guided critique of three pieces of stimulus material:

1. *An excerpt from a recent newspaper article on a topical issue;*
2. *A cartoon strip or lyrics to a song on the same topical issue; and,*
3. *A poem, short story, public speech (extract) on the same issue.*

Candidates will answer three compulsory questions. Two questions will require short answer responses and one question will require the creation of an imaginative piece in response to the theme selected. Marks will be awarded for content, organization, effective use of language, voice or style, and word choice.

1. *Candidates will be required to respond to questions on:*
 - (a) *issues raised in the stimulus;*
 - (b) *possible impact on the intended audience; and,*
 - (c) *language techniques used.*
2. *Candidates will be required to respond to questions about an oral presentation. Candidates must research and be aware of the characteristic features of an oral presentation.*
3. *Candidates will select ONE of the issues/situations raised in the stimulus and create a personal response to it. The response can take the form of drama, poetry, prose, lyrics to a song (a satisfactory response for Drama or Prose pieces should be no more than 2 pages in length).*

Tables 1 and 2 present a summary of the assessment scheme for the English A Syllabus.

ASSESSMENT GRIDS FOR ENGLISH A EXAMINATIONS

Table 1 - Marks Allocated to Examination Components

Paper	Component (Questions)	Profile 1 Understanding	Profile 2 Expression	Raw Mark	%
<i>Paper 01</i>	<i>1-60</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>-</i>	60	29
<i>Paper 02</i>	Section A <i>Question 1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>20</i>	25	12
	Section B <i>Question 2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>20</i>	30	14
	Section C <i>Question 3</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>25</i>	25	12
	Section D <i>Question 4</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>25</i>	25	12
<i>Paper 031/SBA Paper 032/ Alternate to SBA</i>		<i>-</i>	<i>45</i>	45	21
EXAMINATION	<i>-</i>	<i>75 (36%)</i>	<i>135 (64%)</i>	210	100

Table 2 - Weighting of Examination Components - English A

	Profile 1 Understanding	Profile 2 Expression	Composite
Paper 01 (1 hour 30 minutes)	60	-	29%
Paper 02 (2 hours 40 minutes)	15	90	50%
Paper 031/SBA Paper 032/Alternate (2 hours)		45	21%
Examination (6 hours 10 minutes)	75 (36%)	135 (64%)	100%

◆ REGULATIONS FOR PRIVATE CANDIDATES

Private candidates will be required to write Paper 01, Paper 02 and Paper 032, the Alternative to the SBA. A private candidate must enter through a school, a recognised educational institution or the Local Registrar's Office.

◆ REGULATIONS FOR RESIT CANDIDATES

For CSEC® candidates, SBA scores can be carried forward only ONCE and only during the year immediately following the first sitting. In order to assist candidates in making decisions about whether or not to reuse a moderated SBA score, the Council will continue to indicate on the preliminary results if a candidate's moderated SBA score is less than 50% in a particular subject. Candidates re-using SBA scores should register as "Re-sit candidates" and must provide the previous candidate number when registering. These candidates must rewrite Papers 01 and 02 of the examination for the year in which they re-register.

Resit candidates may enter through schools, recognised educational institutions or the Local Registrar's Office.

◆ SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

School-Based Assessment is an integral part of student assessment in the course covered by this syllabus. It is intended to assist students in acquiring certain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are associated with the subject. The activities for the School-Based Assessment are linked to the syllabus and should form part of the learning activities to enable the student to achieve the objectives of the syllabus. Students are encouraged to work in groups.

During the course of study for the subject, students obtain marks for the competence they develop and demonstrate in undertaking their School-Based Assessment assignments. These marks contribute to the final marks and grades that are awarded to students for their performance in the examination.

The guidelines provided in this syllabus for selecting appropriate tasks are intended to assist teachers and students in selecting assignments that are valid for the purpose of School-Based Assessment. The guidelines provided for the assessment of these assignments are intended to assist teachers in awarding marks that are reliable estimates of the achievement of students in the School-Based Assessment component of the course. In order to ensure that the scores awarded by teachers are in line with the CXC standards, the Council undertakes the moderation of a sample of the School-Based Assessment assignments marked.

School-Based Assessment provides an opportunity to individualise a part of the curriculum to meet the needs of students. It facilitates feedback to the student at various stages of the experience. This helps to build the self-confidence of students as they proceed with their studies. School-Based Assessment also facilitates the development of the critical skills and abilities that are emphasised by this CSEC subject and enhances the validity of the examination on which candidate performance is reported. School-Based Assessment, therefore, makes a significant and unique contribution to the development of relevant skills and the testing and rewarding of students for the development of those skills.

The Caribbean Examinations Council seeks to ensure that the School-Based Assessment scores are valid and reliable estimates of accomplishment. The guidelines provided in this syllabus are intended to assist in doing so.

Features of the SBA Tasks Appropriate for English A and English B

1. SBA tasks should provide opportunities and space to enable all secondary students to:
 - (a) **produce** language (spoken, written) for a wide variety of purposes;
 - (b) **understand** language (spoken, written) as used in homes, schools, the community, the market place, and the playing field; and,
 - (c) **use** language as a principal tool in their cognitive, metacognitive and affective development and growth.
2. SBA tasks should motivate each student to engage in searching for relevant information. That is:
 - (a) every student in the English programme should be required to **search, collect and record** relevant information (as is presently done in real life).

- (b) *the tasks should involve distinctive activities usually undertaken in English A and English B. However, both English A and B are essentially social events. They both are primarily concerned with being lucid in oral communications; with using language and bodily expressions which are easily and readily produced or received in classrooms, in playing fields and in the community; with the cognitive, the affective and the metacognitive facets of all human behaviours; explicitly and implicitly, privately and publicly, and randomly and purposively.*

Thus, each student working as a member of a small group (4 or 5) is expected to participate in a set of group activities, one of which will be assessed by the teacher.

- (c) *every student is expected to engage in self-to-self transactions which may assume many tangible forms such as keeping diaries, making and keeping notebooks, writing poems to oneself, engaging in a blogfest, reflecting-restructuring-recording images of one's changing perspectives on real-life issues, monitoring and evaluating how the individual solves problems, how the individual learns how to learn and how to project useful affective states onto cognitive tasks.*

3. *Some of the tasks (SBA) should be done by the students under normal classroom conditions and supervised by the classroom teacher.*

4. *Every student has a carefully defined role in the SBA assignment:*

- (a) *Displaying (and thereby defining), through oral and written language, his or her communicative independence.*
- (b) *Analysing texts (oral and written) that have been identified, selected and recorded as expressions of creativity and imagination.*
- (c) *Self-monitoring the development and growth of the abilities to reflect, plan, review, evaluate and redesign.*
- (d) *Evaluating the impact of a learning strategy (used in English) in terms of:*
- (i) *the issue to be resolved and making sense of the complexities and subtleties of the texts being analysed; and,*
- (ii) *the cognitive and affective development of the student and deepening the student's perception of him/herself.*

IMPORTANT – *The teacher is responsible for ensuring that each student's work is his or her own work. **Plagiarism and cheating will be penalised**. A simple way to establish authenticity is to insist on check points for students to show how their work is progressing.*

Teachers may also use brief oral questions to verify that candidates did indeed engage in the research activities. Some teachers may require candidates to submit preliminary drafts along with the final version, although only the final version will be assessed.

GUIDELINES TO TEACHERS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

The guidelines for the assessment of the School-Based Assessment (SBA) for English A are outlined on pages 29–32 and pages 38–39 for English B of the syllabus. It is required of all candidates and will be marked by the teacher in accordance with the criteria set out in the SBA mark scheme on pages 50–56 of the syllabus.

The English A and B School-Based Assessment (SBA) is to be marked out of a total of 45 which is 21 per cent of the overall grade.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The SBA portfolio is internally assessed by the teacher, and then externally moderated by a CXC-appointed examiner using assessment criteria that relate to specified objectives of English A and English B.

Plan of Investigation I-W	Participation Measure G-O	Quality of Group Activity G-O	Written Report G-W	Reflection I-W	Oral Presentation I-O
A	B	C	D	E	F
(5 marks)	(5 marks)	(10 marks)	(10 marks)	(5 marks)	(10 marks)

Key:

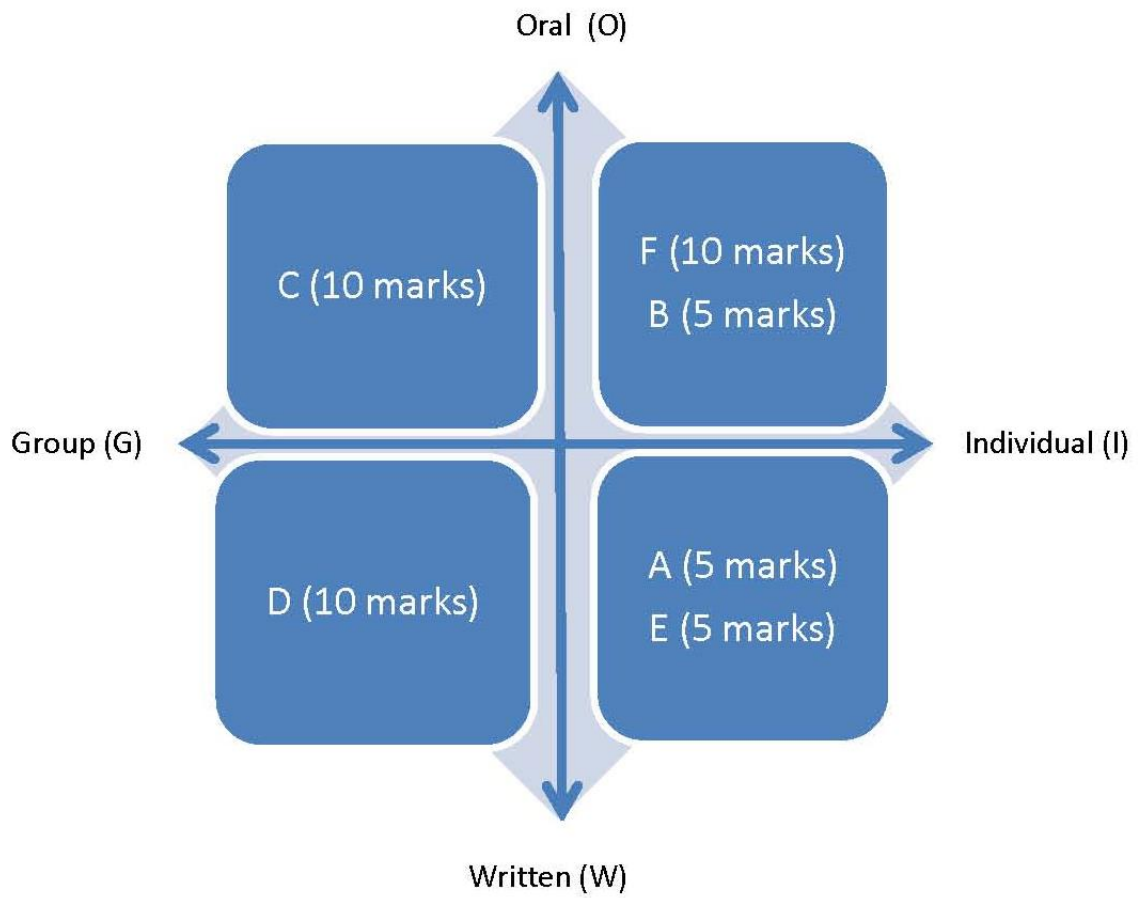
I-W: Individual – Written

G-O: Group – Oral

G-W: Group – Written

I-O: Individual – Oral

Map of Assessment Criteria



◆ **CRITERIA FOR MARKING THE SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT**

A. SCORING RUBRIC FOR PLAN OF INVESTIGATION

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

Areas		Rating Scale				Final Score
		0	1	2	3	
(a)	Reason for choosing the topic and selection of title	No reason and title given or obscure reason with inappropriate title	Reason given is vague or weak ; appropriate title given	Appropriate reason and title given	Original and insightful reason and title given	/3
(b)	Expected benefits to you as a student of English	No benefits given	Benefits given are not clearly stated, few are attainable	Benefits are clearly expressed, but they are not all sound, most are attainable	Benefits are clearly expressed , sound and attainable	/3
(c)	Proposal for collection and use of material	Material to be collected not stated	Material to be collected stated (type or nature of material) Limited list of sources given	Material to be collected stated (type or nature of material) Various sources for possible material (Internet etc...) given		/2
		Use of the English Language skills to be used in analysing the material not stated	Use of the English Language skills outlined and an attempt made to indicate how they will be used.	Use of the English Language skills clearly outlined and clear indication of how they will be used provided.		/2
						/10

Total marks for Plan of Investigation=10 marks

Scale down to 5 marks

Score awarded = $\frac{\text{Total Score}}{2}$ = _____

Name of Teacher: _____ Time/Date: _____

B. SCORING RUBRIC FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

The total mark for Individual Participation will be 5 marks based on the responses obtained from the sessions conducted by the teacher.

Areas	Questions for students	Final score
1.	<i>Do/Did you know what you are/were expected to do to work well in a team?</i>	<i>/1</i>
2.	<i>Are you able to focus on what is taking place in your group?</i>	<i>/1</i>
3.	<i>How do /did you feel in the group? I feel <u>self-confidence</u>, <u>self-esteem</u> and <u>self-efficacy</u>.</i>	<i>/1</i>
4.	<i>Do/Did you know how to manage how you behave in the group?</i>	<i>/1</i>
5.	<i>Do /Did you manage your tasks on time and thoroughly?</i>	<i>/1</i>
Total score		<u>/5</u>

Name of Teacher: _____ Time/Date: _____

NOTE:

This scale should be completed by the *teacher* in discussion with the *student* on two different occasions. After the first assessment, discussion should take place and feedback should be given to the student to allow for improvement. The second assessment should produce the final mark out of five agreed on by the teacher and student .

C. SCORING RUBRIC FOR QUALITY OF WITHIN – GROUP ACTIVITIES

Name of Group: _____

Date: _____

Facets of process		Rating Scale				Final Score
		0	1	2	3	
1	Communication	Plan of work not known by all group members	The plan of work exists and <u>most</u> group members have seen , read and discussed it	All members have seen , read and discussed the plan of work		/2
2	Collaboration	No awareness of what members of the group are doing	Some awareness of what members of the group are doing	Members seek out and are aware of what all members of the group are doing		/2
6	Reflection*	Group members show <u>no</u> evidence of reflecting on their work	Group members engaged in reflection on work at the end of <u>some</u> of the activities or sessions	Group members engaged in reflection on work at the end of <u>most</u> of the activities or sessions	Group members engaged in reflection on work at the end of <u>all</u> of the activities or sessions	/3
7	Interaction	There is obvious misunderstanding among members. Group unable to resolve problems	Members attempt to resolve issues and problems to ensure a comfortable relationship among group members	Members are actively creating interaction with each other and displaying trust and respect	Members respect and appreciate each other; and show empathy to all members	/3
<i>Total marks for Quality of Within-Group Activities = 10 marks</i>					Total Score	/10

*THIS IS NOT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE THREE ENTRIES

Name of Teacher: _____

Time/Date: _____

NOTE TO TEACHER: The mark awarded is a group mark. All students receive the same mark.



Definitions for Quality of Within-Group Activities

	<i>Facet of Process</i>	<i>Definition</i>
1	Communication	<i>The means and processes by which information is constructed and transmitted from person to person, within the group by speaking, writing and non-verbally.</i>
2	Collaboration	<i>The social conditions of learning, developing affective skills, and solving problems related to acquiring language skills. Group members each work towards a common goal.</i>
3	Reflection	<i>The bringing together in “easily accessible” memory, the mental images of what the individual student thinks, feels and does as he/she participates in group activities. These mental images are then manipulated – analysed, compared, applied, and evaluated anew – in order to impact on the individual.</i>
4	Interaction	<i>The act of enabling persons within a group to engage in two-way flow of thoughts, feelings and emotions, so that any one person can act upon and influence the thoughts, or feelings or emotions of another person, and reciprocally.</i>

D. SCORING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN REPORT

Facets of Task	Rating Scale			
	1	2	3	4
1. Content	<p><i>Does not meet the required number of pieces</i></p> <p><i>Stimuli chosen are of little relevance or a weak attempt is made to force relevance</i></p> <p><i>Only one or two tasks attempted</i></p>	<p><i>The required number of stimuli has been selected but some of the issues are only implied.</i></p> <p><i>Some tasks are noted but generally there seems to be inadequacy, and lack of clarity.</i></p> <p><i>The report indicates an understanding of tasks but execution is insufficient</i></p>	<p><i>Contexts in/from which the stimuli are chosen are explicitly given.</i></p> <p><i>There is evidence of the procedures used in selecting the three stimuli</i></p> <p><i>Some of the issues associated with the stimuli are not clearly stated(more information is needed)</i></p> <p><i>There is indication of the tasks to be done but some aspects are left out</i></p>	<p><i>Contexts in/from which the stimuli are chosen are explicitly given.</i></p> <p><i>There is clear evidence of the procedure used in selecting the three stimuli</i></p> <p><i>Issues raised (in the stimuli) are clearly defined and fully explored</i></p> <p><i>All relevant tasks (processes, procedures) which should have been/ are to be, performed by group members and described in the reporting are noted and defined.</i></p>
2. Evidence of investigation	<p><i>Weak response to the tasks: (focus, summary, analysis)</i></p> <p><i>Issues are not clearly identified</i></p> <p><i>Inadequate evidence of research</i></p>	<p><i>Analysis focuses on some of the key issues.</i></p> <p><i>Good evidence of research</i></p> <p><i>Good handling of documentation with the occasional error.</i></p>	<p><i>Excellent response to the tasks: (focus, summary, analysis)</i></p> <p><i>Analysis focuses on the key issues.</i></p> <p><i>Findings of discussions and research of the relevance to the stimulus material are clearly stated</i></p> <p><i>All sources of the various stimuli are acknowledged and documented.</i></p> <p><i>Any comments on the stimuli, apart from students' original comments, are appropriately acknowledged and documented</i></p>	



Facets of Task	Rating Scale			
	1	2	3	4
3. Language use and vocabulary	<p><i>The report:</i></p> <p><i>Good control of basic grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. Competent sentence structure but lacking in maturity of expression</i></p>	<p><i>The report:</i></p> <p><i>Very good control of language (grammar and vocabulary) - errors do not suggest lack of capacity</i></p>	<p><i>The report:</i></p> <p><i>Excellent use of Standard English in the appropriate tone and register</i></p> <p><i>The vocabulary shows excellent knowledge of and interaction with the issues and context.</i></p>	

Total marks for Written Report = 10 marks

Score awarded = _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Name of student: _____

Name of assessor: _____

Time/Date of assessment: _____ / _____
Time Date



E. SCORING RUBRIC FOR ORAL PRESENTATION

Facets of Tasks	Rating Scale				
	0	1	2	3	4
1. Fluency of delivery	jerky, halting	choppy fragmentary long pauses	awkward but acceptable intonation; continuous; natural	Intelligible; clear; smooth; well-paced flow	
2. Structure, Comprehensibility, and development of topic	connections with topic/issue unclear; incomprehensible; key issues not depicted; style of presentation does not always aid in depicting the key issues.	Connections with topic/issue unclear; Very incoherent in parts; Utterance incorrect	Limited comprehension lacks elaboration; Slightly incoherent in parts; Somewhat limited;	Coherent; Key issues well developed Well expressed in many parts; very effective style	Clear organisation of ideas; Sustained treatment of topic/theme/issues; Style very effective and impactful in communicating
3. Language use and vocabulary	lacks basic words; lack specificity; very many errors in words and sentences	Ideas limited to inadequate words and jargon Lacks specificity Limited range of grammar	Adequate style of presentation Basic sentences are used; Control of basic grammatical structures; Reliance on practical expressions;	Accurate use of grammar Effective use of grammar and vocabulary; High degree of fluency; Rich vocabulary	

Score awarded = _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Name of student: _____

Name of assessor: _____

Time/Date of assessment: _____ / _____
Time Date



F. SCORING RUBRIC FOR REFLECTION

The assessment of this component will be based on the following:

Theme factors – critical knowledge related to theme, how material shaped thinking

Language factors – analysis of language, good organisation.

Process factors – personal value, benefits clearly identified

Reflection on topic/issue/ theme, use of language, process and its effects

Descriptors	Marks	Final Score
<p><i>Candidate produces an excellent reflection comprising THREE entries which</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>discusses how the THREE pieces of material have affected the candidate's thinking about the issue</i> • <i>examines the use of language in the three pieces</i> • <i>discusses the process and its effect on the candidate</i> 	5 marks	/5
<p><i>Candidate produces a very good reflection which</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>integrates the treatment of the issue in the three pieces</i> • <i>provides a very good examination of the use of language</i> • <i>discusses the process and its effect</i> 	4 marks	/4
<p><i>Candidate produces a good reflection which</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>addresses the treatment of the issue in the three pieces</i> • <i>provides a good examination of the use of language</i> • <i>gives little discussion of the process and its effects</i> 	3 marks	/3
<p><i>Candidate produces a limited reflection which</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provides a limited treatment of the issue in the three pieces</i> • <i>attempts to provide an examination of the use of language with limited success</i> • <i>gives very little or no discussion of the process and its effect</i> 	2 marks	/2
<p><i>Candidate produces a weak reflection which</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>mentions the issue</i> • <i>very weak examination of the use of language OR none provided</i> • <i>no discussion of the process and its effect.</i> 	1 mark	/1
	5 marks	/5

Name of Teacher: _____

Time/Date: _____

◆ GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS USED IN THE ENGLISH A AND B EXAMINATIONS

WORD	TASK
Compare	<p>Examine the similarities as well as differences to reach a general conclusion.</p> <p>For example: Compare the ways in which the two parents in the poems “Ana” and “Little Boy Crying” demonstrate their love for the children.</p>
Compare and Contrast	<p>Examine the similarities as well as differences to reach a general conclusion.</p> <p>For example: Compare the ways in which the two parents in “Ana” and “Little Boy Crying” demonstrate their love for the children.</p> <p>It must be noted that the word “compare” used by itself takes into consideration both similarities and differences. However, the word contrast used by itself indicates that only the differences must be provided.</p> <p>For example: Discuss TWO ways in which Lady Macduff is contrasted with Lady Macbeth.</p>
Comment	<p>Examine how the writer uses different elements (for example, literary device, stage props) to create effect and meaning. The overall effect on the piece of work must also be provided. The effect must take into account the writers purpose, and other elements of the piece of work, for example, theme, structure, diction and tone.</p> <p>For example: Comment on the shifts of mood in the scene in which Lady Macduff appears.</p>
Describe	<p>Provide a detailed account, including significant characteristics or traits of the issue in question.</p> <p>For example: Describe Macbeth’s conflicting thoughts and feelings as he contemplates the murder.</p>
Discuss	<p>Provide an extended answer exploring related concepts and issues using detailed examples but not necessarily drawing a conclusion.</p> <p>For example: Discuss the importance of Katherina’s final speech in <u>The Taming of the Shrew</u></p>
Explain	<p>Focus on what, how and why something occurred. State the reasons or justifications, interpretation of results and causes.</p> <p>For example: Explain the dramatic significance of this scene.</p>

WORD	TASK
Identify	<p>Extract the relevant information from the stimulus without explanation.</p> <p>For example: Identify TWO phrases in the last four lines that create the atmosphere of abandonment.</p> <p>In English B Paper 02 questions can also ask for an explanation.</p> <p>For example: Identify and explain TWO ways in which Shakespeare later impresses upon his audience what a horrible crime it is to kill a king.</p>
Illustrate	<p>Provide examples to demonstrate or prove the subject of the question.</p> <p>For example: Identify the character traits that can be seen in Amanda from the beginning of the play to this point. Illustrate EACH of the character traits you have identified.</p>
List	<p>Itemise the requested information. Details are not required.</p> <p>For example: List the main points of the opening speech.</p>
Outline	<p>Show or trace the development of something from the point of origin to that specified in the question.</p> <p>For example: Briefly outline what happens in the poems “Richard Cory” and “God’s Work”.</p>
State	<p>Provide short concise answer without explanation.</p> <p>For example: State TWO factors which the fitness proponents recommend that society should emphasise more.</p>
Summarise	<p>Present the main points, ideas or concepts in your own words as far as possible.</p> <p>For example: Summarise the MAJOR factors which contribute to the disadvantages encountered by women in the labour market.</p>

Western Zone Office
26 January 2017



TEST CODE **01218010**

SPEC 2017/01218010

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE®
EXAMINATION

ENGLISH A

SPECIMEN PAPER

Paper 01 – General Proficiency

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

1. This Specimen Paper consists of 60 items. You will have 1 hour and 30 minutes to answer them.
2. In addition to this test booklet, you should have an answer sheet.
3. Each item in this test has four suggested answers lettered (A), (B), (C), (D). Read each item you are about to answer and decide which choice is best.
4. On your answer sheet, find the number which corresponds to your item and shade the space having the same letter as the answer you have chosen. Look at the sample item below.

Sample Item

Choose the word that BEST completes each sentence.

Someone who is suffering from influenza needs to be isolated as the disease is _____.

- (A) lasting
- (B) serious
- (C) destructive
- (D) contagious

Sample Answer



The best answer to this item is “contagious,” so (D) has been shaded.

5. If you want to change your answer, erase it completely before you fill in your new choice.
6. When you are told to begin, turn the page and work as quickly and as carefully as you can. If you cannot answer an item, go on to the next one. You may return to that item later.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

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Items 1–5

Instructions: Each sentence in this section has ONE underlined word. Choose from the four options, the word which is closest to OPPOSITE in meaning to the underlined word.

1. The guest speaker’s words reinforced the view that capital punishment can influence the rate of crime in a country.

(A) destroyed
(B) damaged
(C) demolished
(D) dispelled

2. The barren land was a result of agricultural practices that have been passed down from generation to generation.

(A) stony
(B) fertile
(C) infertile
(D) unproductive

3. The affluence displayed in the beach-side communities indicated the significant difference in economic status from dwellers in the city.

(A) misery
(B) wealth
(C) poverty
(D) richness

4. John’s parents acknowledged that his recent behaviour was contemptible and therefore deserved the outcome.

(A) correct
(B) regretful
(C) trustworthy
(D) commendable

5. He was always adept at evading questions at interviews, and that skill was often needed to reduce conflict.

(A) polite
(B) careless
(C) unskilled
(D) convincing

Items 6–10

Instructions: Each sentence in this section is followed by four sentences, A, B, C and D. Choose the one NEAREST IN MEANING to the original sentence. Be sure to read all four options before you select your answer.

6. When Mr Peets was transferred on promotion from South Point to Maraval Mrs Adams succeeded him.
- (A) Mrs Adams worked at Maraval after Mr Peets left on promotion.
(B) Mr Peets was succeeded by Mrs Adams when he was promoted to a post at Maraval.
(C) Both Mr Peets and Mrs Adams were transferred on promotion: Mr Peets to Maraval and Mrs Adams to South Point.
(D) In order to be promoted, Mr Peets had to be transferred to Maraval to allow Mrs Adams to work at South Point.
7. Recent floods have made the route impassable.
- (A) People are unable to travel because of the floods.
(B) The road cannot be used as a result of the floods.
(C) Travelling has been brought to a standstill because of floods.
(D) Because of heavy showers, commuters were forced to detour.
8. The competitors in the long jump event were daunted by the performance of Kevin Jones.
- (A) Kevin Jones was the best participant in the long jump event.
(B) No one expected to do better than Kevin Jones in the long jump.
(C) The long jump event daunted all the competitors except Kevin Jones.
(D) Since Kevin Jones jumped so well the other competitors in the event were discouraged.
9. An interest in their nation's development plans should be displayed by its young people.
- (A) Young people should take an interest in plans for national development.
(B) National development is dependent upon the youth.
(C) Young people ought to be aware of plans for the purpose of national development.
(D) The nation will advance through plans proposed by its young people.
10. In spite of their size, whales are no longer an even match for man.
- (A) Whales are no longer even a match for man.
(B) Men are no longer a match for whales in spite of their size.
(C) Because of their size whales should be better able to hold their own against man.
(D) Although they are large, whales can no longer adequately defend themselves against man.

Items **11–15**

Instructions: Revise each of the following sentences according to the directions that follow it. You may delete or include words but do not change the meaning of the original sentence. Look at the options A, B, C, D for the word or phrase that must be included in your revised sentence and mark the corresponding space on your answer sheet.

11. The masqueraders who were jumping to the rhythm of the steel band music became very exhausted after a while and had to go home early.

Substitute so for very

- (A) and consequently they
- (B) and they
- (C) for they
- (D) that they

12. She told her parents a lie in order to escape punishment.

Substitute in order that for in order to

- (A) she might escape
- (B) she escaped
- (C) she escape
- (D) she will escape

13. The Australian cricketers fought valiantly against the West Indies team, but all their efforts were in vain.

Begin the sentence with:
Despite their valiant efforts

- (A) would defeat
- (B) were defeated
- (C) defeated
- (D) would be defeated

14. She found, even after she had made several attempts to regulate the sprinkler, that the water was still reaching the furniture on the verandah.

Begin the sentence with:
Having made

- (A) she found that
- (B) she had found that
- (C) she was finding that
- (D) and finding that

15. Intending to declare the innings closed, the captain told his bowlers to conserve their energy.

Begin the sentence with:
“I intend to declare the innings closed.”
the captain said

- (A) “so conserve your energy”
- (B) “and their energy should be conserved
- (C) “because they should conserve their energy”
- (D) “if your energy should be conserved”

Items 16–20

Instructions: Some of the following sentences are unacceptable because of inappropriate grammar, idiom or vocabulary. Some sentences are acceptable as they stand. No sentence contains more than one inappropriate element.

Select the ONE underlined part that you feel is inappropriate and choose the appropriate letter A, B, C. If the sentence is acceptable as it stands, choose D.

16. While driving through the fields on a conducted tour the farmers were appal to see several diseased cattle. No error

A B C D

17. The soundness of the proposal introduced by the opposition members was quite evident, though the presentation was both criticised by the President and the Secretary of State. No error

A B C D

18. We always feel good whenever our cricketers play well enough to win a series of matches convincingly. No error

A B C D

19. The two robbers, not knowing the value of the loot, were unable to agree on how to divide it among themselves. No error

A B C D

20. One must be aware of threats to your health if happy living is one's goal. No error

A B C D

Items 21–25

Instructions: Select the option A, B, C, or D that BEST describes EACH of the sentences and mark your choice on your answer sheet.

- (A) The sentence is acceptable as it stands.
- (B) The sentence contains clichés or misused metaphors.
- (C) The sentence is incorrect grammatically or faulty in diction.
- (D) The sentence is too wordy, that is, repetitive or contains redundancies.

- 21. In my opinion, I think that your suggestion to upgrade housing facilities in rural areas is impractical.
- 22. It is his view, and one which he strongly holds, that constitutionally elected governments should not be toppled by force of arms.
- 23. When the clerk raised his voice in protest, his boss asked him to hold his tongue since empty vessels made the most noise.
- 24. The extremely extravagant girl was so animated, cheerful and high-spirited, she was invited to many parties.
- 25. Is it any wonder why the children that Miss Brown knows behave like delinquents when they have a heroine that thinks the worst of them and their kind?

Items 26–31

Instructions: Read the following poem carefully and then answer Items 26–31 on the basis of what is stated or implied.

Leisure

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?
No time to stand beneath the bough
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
5 No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty’s glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
10 Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W.H. Davies, “Leisure”.
In Ten Twentieth-Century Poets, 1957, p.35.

26. When the poet says “full of care” (line 1) he means a life full of
- (A) anger
 - (B) duties
 - (C) boredom
 - (D) happiness
27. The poet uses the idea “stare as long as sheep or cows” (line 4) because he thinks we should
- (A) relax beneath the boughs
 - (B) stop being busy and relax
 - (C) gaze at the beauty of the skies
 - (D) stand and observe our surroundings
28. The poet implies that we need leisure in our life for it to be
- (A) vital
 - (B) relaxing
 - (C) important
 - (D) meaningful
29. “Streams full of stars, like skies at night” (line 6) is an example of
- (A) rhyme
 - (B) simile
 - (C) repetition
 - (D) onomatopoeia
30. “No time to turn ... her eyes began” (lines 7–10) is an example of
- (A) pun
 - (B) simile
 - (C) personification
 - (D) onomatopoeia
31. In which of the following lines does the poet answer the question asked in lines 1 and 2?
- (A) Line 3
 - (B) Line 5
 - (C) Line 9
 - (D) Line 11

Items 32–39

Instructions: Read the following passage carefully and then answer Items 32–39 on the basis of what is stated or implied.

After a decade of hard work, 2006 was the year Richie Spice joined the top tier of international reggae artists. Who can forget that summer’s soundtrack, “Brown Skin”? Its infectious lyrics and heavy rotation across the islands had boys serenading girls, and dance floors grooving until the early hours. It brought Spice invitations to perform in New York, London, Port of Spain, and elsewhere, alongside artists like Anthony B and Capleton, and won him a reputation for mesmerizing live performances. November saw the release of Spice’s latest album, *In the Streets of Africa*, featuring, alongside newer tracks, “Youths So Cold”, “Open the Door” and “Brown Skin”. It was the culmination of years of effort, plus immense talent, a supportive record label, and an enthusiastic international fan base.

10 Born Richell Boner in Kingston, Spice endured years of label-less grind on his own — playing stage shows, writing lyrics, and recording singles with little support — before Devon Wheatley and his label, *Fifth Element*, came along. “The songs were there,” Spice recalls. “They were all good songs, but they weren’t getting any promotion, and with just me going out there singing them, it was like one man against the world.” According to Spice, *Fifth Element* came along and
15 put their strength and promotion behind the songs, and people took to them and accepted them.

With his *Fifth Element* album release, 2004’s *Spice in Your Life*, his emotive singing and sincere message got noticed in the United States. Ignoring any urge to kick back and relax after his first taste of hype, Spice kept working hard to maintain momentum, worried that his sincerity could work against him. “When you are singing positive songs, success may take a little longer, but
20 it has to manifest,” says Spice philosophically.

After his long journey to reggae’s “higher heights”, Spice offers this advice to others setting out to make it: “Whenever you reach anywhere, there is a lot of work to be done, so just go to it and do the necessary things until you reach that space where you are supposed to be.” As 2006 has proven, he certainly knows what he is talking about.

Dylan Kerrigan, “Higher Heights”, *Caribbean Beat*,
November/December, 2006, p80.

32. Based on paragraph one, which adjective BEST describes the song “Brown Skin”?

- (A) Lyrical
- (B) Romantic
- (C) Conscious
- (D) Provocative

33. Richie Spice had to work hard for years because he

- (A) recorded few singles
- (B) had to perfect his talent
- (C) hadn’t developed viable music
- (D) needed a record label to promote him

34. Richie Spice’s international success BEST shows that
- (A) it takes ten years to succeed in music
 - (B) the music industry is difficult to enter
 - (C) a record label is essential for any artist
 - (D) live performance is the basis of a music career
35. Which of the following does the passage suggest lead to an artiste’s popularity?
- I. Faith
 - II. Talent
 - III. Support
 - IV. Persistence
- (A) I and II only
 - (B) II and III only
 - (C) I, III and IV only
 - (D) II, III and IV only
36. The word “grind” (line 10) indicates that trying to achieve success without a label
- (A) wastes time
 - (B) is very boring
 - (C) demands determination
 - (D) uses up physical energy
37. “The world” (line 14) refers to
- (A) audiences
 - (B) record labels
 - (C) radio stations
 - (D) competing artistes
38. The MAIN intention of the author is to
- (A) outline Richie Spice’s path to success
 - (B) advise budding artistes about record labels
 - (C) instruct readers of the pitfalls in a music career
 - (D) highlight the particular things that made Richie Spice successful
39. The purpose of the passage is to
- (A) direct
 - (B) inform
 - (C) persuade
 - (D) entertain

Items 40–47 refer to the following passage.

Instructions: Read the following passage carefully and then answer Items 40–47 on the basis of what is stated or implied.

From time immemorial, men have hunted wild animals in forests, tilled the soil and, caught fish in the sea and rivers, all with the object of obtaining food, that basic commodity essential to existence. Agriculture is part and parcel of life, and is as old as mankind. Yet, even in the most primitive times, man always had certain tools, hunting implements, knives, spears, and flints, to help him conquer nature and support himself.

As knowledge progressed over the centuries, so man developed more and more devices to aid and adorn his life; the corn from the soil was ground into flour and baked into bread; textile and clothing were made, and buildings such as castles and churches were created. The art of printing was discovered, and this led to the production of more and more books. Metal goods were turned out at forges and workshops throughout the country; great sailing vessels were constructed and a whole host of goods, ever increasing in variety as time went by, were manufactured by men.

Industry, which is the name given to those occupations in which something is manufactured, has thus for a very long time been an important part of man's existence. Tinkers, tailors, candlestick makers, ironmongers, blacksmiths, tanners, weavers, spinners, and many others were all an essential part of life in olden days. These were the people who manufactured the goods and articles that society wanted and needed.

The manufacturing industry was very closely associated with agricultural life. Many of the spinners, weavers and others did not work in the cities or towns, but in their own cottages in the rural villages. During sowing, ploughing and harvest time all activity was concentrated on the fields, but in the long winter months, with little or nothing to be done on the land, industrial work took the place of agricultural work. Spinning wheels spun wool into yarn, and weaving looms wove yarn into cloth.

In many parts of the country, agricultural labourers in summer became industrial workers in winter.

(Source Unknown)

40. Man has always been involved in agriculture in order to

- (A) earn a living
- (B) conquer nature
- (C) become wealthy
- (D) obtain his food

41. According to the passage, which of the following has man used throughout his life to improve his agricultural production?

- (A) Tools
- (B) Books
- (C) Nature
- (D) Machines

42. The word “adorn” as used in line 7 is CLOSEST in meaning to
- (A) protect
 - (B) improve
 - (C) lengthen
 - (D) decorate
43. According to the passage, tinkers, tailors, candlestick makers and weavers were all important in the olden days because they
- (A) set the trends in fashion
 - (B) provided employment for the society
 - (C) were considered the providers in the society
 - (D) established themselves as people in authority
44. In medieval times, spinning and weaving were considered
- (A) cottage industries
 - (B) heavy industries
 - (C) weekend jobs
 - (D) pastimes
45. The writer makes it clear that many villagers were
- (A) disenchanted with life in the city
 - (B) underemployed during the winter
 - (C) threatened by the growth of industry
 - (D) involved in both manufacturing and farming
46. The writer suggests that the overall result of manufacturing has been to
- (A) raise living standards
 - (B) increase food production
 - (C) mechanize the production of goods
 - (D) increase the spread of information
47. From the passage it is evident that
- (A) man has turned increasingly to industry
 - (B) many labourers did not like agricultural work
 - (C) manufacturing industries did not exist in primitive times
 - (D) there were many large factories for manufacturing goods

Items 48–54

Instructions: Read the following advertisement carefully and then answer items 53–60 on the basis of what is stated or implied.

Caribbean Jewel Beach Resort

Nestled among the grandeur of unspoiled Caribbean mountainside, the Caribbean Jewel Beach Resort is an idyllic, serene island retreat with spacious, luxuriously appointed rooms, each with its own dramatic view of the Bay and the Caribbean Sea. An unmatched private atmosphere coupled with Saint Lucia’s finest views of picturesque Rodney Bay, Pigeon Island and neighbouring
5 Martinique make this intimate setting one of the island’s most sought-after destinations.

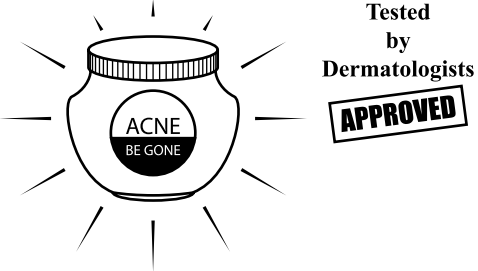
The resort is in close proximity to the many leisure amenities Saint Lucia has to offer. Shops, restaurants, an international marina and the island’s best beach are all at the foot of the property.

48. The word “nestled” (line 1) suggests that
- (A) the resort compliments its environment
 - (B) the resort buildings are as majestic as the mountain
 - (C) the foliage and mountain surround the buildings of the resort
 - (D) the guests can consider themselves as safe as birds in a nest
49. The use of the word “unmatched” (line 3) in the extract is an appeal to the human desire to be
- (A) ahead of the rest
 - (B) envied by others
 - (C) better than others
 - (D) among an elite group
50. What does the Caribbean Jewel Beach Resort highlight as its BEST feature?
- (A) Private ambiance
 - (B) Beautiful scenery
 - (C) National popularity
 - (D) Convenient location
51. Who is the MOST likely intended audience for this extract?
- (A) Couples
 - (B) Families
 - (C) Adventurers
 - (D) Yachtsmen

52. Which of the following words in the extract BEST indicate that the resort’s clientele are usually NOT nationals of Saint Lucia?
- I. “international marina”
 - II. “unspoiled Caribbean mountain-side”
 - III. “idyllic, serene island retreat”
- (A) I only
 - (B) II only
 - (C) I and III only
 - (D) II and III only
53. The expression “Caribbean Jewel” is an example of
- (A) metaphor
 - (B) symbolism
 - (C) metonymy
 - (D) synecdoche
54. Visitors to the Caribbean Jewel Beach Resort are MOST likely to describe their experience as
- (A) calm
 - (B) relaxing
 - (C) romantic
 - (D) stimulating

Items 55–60

Instructions: Read the following advertisement carefully and then answer Items 55–60 on the basis of what is stated or implied.

A C N E * B E * G O N E * # * 1 * P R O D U C T * I N * T H E * W O R L D	<p>Teenagers across the Caribbean are all talking about it</p> <p>ACNE BE GONE![™]</p> <p>#1 product on the market</p>  <p>Tested by Dermatologists APPROVED</p> <p>Do you want to clear all unsightly blemishes? Do you want your confidence back? Do you want a date for graduation? You can do all these things with</p> <p>ACNE BE GONE![™]</p> <p>Now available in stores near you at this special introductory price of</p> <p>\$20.00 \$15.00 \$9.99 (while stocks last)</p> <p>It really works! Take the CHOCOLATE TEST! You can eat anything you want and not break out with</p> <p>ACNE BE GONE![™]</p> <p>Side effects include swelling and rashes. Consult your doctor.</p>	A C N E * B E * G O N E * # * 1 * P R O D U C T * I N * T H E * W O R L D
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|---|--|
| <p>55. The advertisers use the word “unsightly” to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(A) motivate people to use Acne Be Gone!(B) suggest that acne should be hidden(C) ensure that the reader visualizes the problem(D) make the reader feel more ashamed of his/her blemished appearance | <p>56. The graphical representation of the product is MAINLY used to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(A) show people what the product looks like(B) illustrate the packaging and suggest that the product is magical(C) portray the product as being better than its competitors(D) demonstrate visually the blemish removing power of Acne Be Gone! |
|---|--|

57. Which of the following techniques are used to persuade in this advertisement?
- I. Financial enticement
 - II. Showing of the container
 - III. Appeal to fears and desires
- (A) I and II only
 - (B) I and III only
 - (C) II and III only
 - (D) I, II and III
58. A language device used in the advertisement to persuade is
- (A) paradox
 - (B) metaphor
 - (C) hyperbole
 - (D) rhetorical questions
59. The size of the font used to describe the side effects
- (A) hides possible consequences of using the product
 - (B) suggests that the side effects are minor
 - (C) misdirects the reader and leads to erroneous conclusions about acne
 - (D) demonstrates that the problems are minor in comparison to the benefits
60. The words “while stocks last!” under the checked price MOST likely would have the effect of
- (A) enticing the customer to save money
 - (B) persuading the reader to buy the product quickly
 - (C) prompting Caribbean people to go in search of the product
 - (D) fooling the prospective buyer into thinking he/she needs the product

END OF TEST

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE®
EXAMINATION

ENGLISH A

SPECIMEN PAPER 2017

Item No.	Key	Syllabus Reference
1	D	U.A.
2	B	U.A.
3	C	U.A.
4	D	U.A.
5	C	U.A.
6	B	U.A.
7	B	U.A.
8	D	U.A.
9	A	U.A.
10	D	U.A.
11	D	U.A.
12	A	U.A.
13	B	U.A.
14	A	U.A.
15	A	U.A.
16	C	U.A.
17	C	U.A.
18	D	U.A.
19	C	U.A.
20	B	U.A.
21	D	U.C.
22	A	U.C.
23	B	U.C.
24	C	U.C.
25	C	U.C.
26	B	U.C.
27	B	U.C.
28	D	U.C.
29	B	U.C.
30	C	U.C.

Item No.	Key	Syllabus Reference
31	D	U.C.
32	B	U.C.
33	D	U.C.
34	C	U.C.
35	D	U.C.
36	C	U.C.
37	A	U.C.
38	A	U.C.
39	B	U.C.
40	D	U.B.
41	A	U.B.
42	B	U.B.
43	C	U.B.
44	A	U.B.
45	D	U.B.
46	A	U.B.
47	A	U.B.
48	C	U.D.
49	C	U.D.
50	B	U.D.
51	A	U.D.
52	C	U.D.
53	A	U.B.
54	B	U.B.
55	A	U.B.
56	C	U.B.
57	D	U.B.
58	D	U.B.
59	B	U.B.
60	D	U.B.



TEST CODE **01218020**

SPEC 2017/01218020

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**C A R I B B E A N S E C O N D A R Y E D U C A T I O N C E R T I F I C A T E[®]
E X A M I N A T I O N**

E N G L I S H A

S P E C I M E N P A P E R

Paper 02 – General Proficiency

2 hours 55 minutes

READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

1. This paper consists of **FOUR** sections: A, B, C and D.
2. Section A consists of **ONE** question. You **MUST** answer this question.
3. Section B consists of **ONE** question. You **MUST** answer this question.
4. Section C consists of **TWO** questions. You **MUST** answer **ONE** question from this section.
5. Section D consists of **ONE** question. You **MUST** answer this question.
6. You are advised to take some time to read through the paper and plan your answers.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

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SECTION A

(Suggested time: 40 minutes)

You **MUST** answer this question.

Write your answer on the **RULED PAGES** provided, pages 4 and 5. There may be more space than you need. There is a blank page for any notes you may want to make. **THIS WILL NOT BE MARKED.**

1. Read the following article on tattoos carefully and list **FIVE MAIN** points discussed, then write a summary of the article in **NOT MORE THAN 120 words**. If this limit is exceeded, only the first 120 words of your answer will be read and assessed.

As far as possible, use your own words. Your summary must be in continuous prose. You may use your answer booklet to jot down a plan.

In your answer, you will be assessed on how well you

- (a) identified the main ideas and opinions in the extract
- (b) organized and expressed these ideas and opinions in your own words
- (c) used appropriate grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

Tattoos

Since the beginning of civilization, they have served as marks of identification, spiritual protection and decoration. Now at the cusp of another millennium, tattoos and other varieties of body markings are resurfacing as a popular form of individual self-expression.

Tattoos are timeless and can be as unique as the bearers they adorn. They don't fade away like favourite T-shirts, or get lost or broken like school rings. They stay with you forever, until death. They become a part of you from the day you sit in the artist's chair, etching your emotions alongside the needle's sting, transforming an instant of your life into a symbol for the world to see.

Tattoos and other body markings arrived in the Caribbean with African slaves and indentured workers from China and India. They were sometimes the only permanent keepsakes of peoples snatched from their ancestral places. The Caribbean's original Amerindian inhabitants also used tattoos to mark spiritual milestones. The Taino of the Northern Caribbean Islands, for instance, used vegetable dyes to affix images of their guardians onto their skin. These images also indicated an individual's lineage, or his or her social position. Each tattoo was both a personal history book and a mark of belonging.

Over the centuries, however, tattoos and other forms of bodily adornment have mutated, exchanging religious and cultural significance for individualist associations. Sometimes that mark of individuality has been confused with rebellion and non-conformity, often alluding to a stain of bad character. Tattoo-wearers have seemed wild, dangerous, even just plain bad.

But today, tattoos have come full circle. Celebrities, writers, lawyers, housewives, all proudly display their marks of rebellion. An entirely new perception of the art of tattooing has arisen, which is more than just a preoccupation with style. This rediscovered form of expression has spawned an entire subculture of individuals among us. They carry this common bond of distinction through their daily routines. Via the images on their forearms, shoulders, ankles, or torsos, they connect to each other, announcing to the world that it is OK to be unique and different.

*Adapted from "Pictures made flesh".
Caribbean Beat, July/August 2003.*

Total 25 marks

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

SECTION A

You may make notes here. This will NOT be marked.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the student to write notes during the test.

SECTION A

Question 1.

You MUST write your answer on this page.

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SECTION A

Question 1.

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SECTION B

(Suggested time: 35 minutes)

You MUST answer this question.

Write your answer on the RULED PAGES provided, pages 8 and 9. There may be more space than you need. There is a blank space for any notes you may want to make. THIS WILL NOT BE MARKED.

2. Study the situation presented below and then answer the question that follows.

You purchased an item from a supermarket. On arrival home you noticed that the expiry date had passed. You attempted to return the item but you were told that it was on sale and the manager refused to give you a refund or replacement.

Write a letter to a consumer protection group or the editor of a newspaper in which you complain about the quality of the product and treatment which you received.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you

- **formatted your letter**
- **selected relevant and complete information**
- **organized and expressed the information in your letter**
- **used appropriate grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.**

Your letter MUST be in continuous prose.

Make sure to include all the details that would help in highlighting the matter. Your letter should include:

- Details of the complaint, for example:
 - Date and time of purchase
 - Cost of the item
 - Specific condition of the item
 - Response of staff

Total 30 marks

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

SECTION B

You may make notes here. This will NOT be marked.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the student to take notes during this section of the exam.

SECTION B

Question 2.

You MUST write your answer on this page.

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SECTION B

Question 2.

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SECTION C

(Suggested time: 45 minutes)

You **MUST** answer **ONE** question from this section.

Your answer should be approximately 400 to 450 words in length.

You **MUST** write in Standard English. However, dialect may be used in conversation.

Write your answer on the **RULED PAGES** provided, pages 13 - 16. You are expected to write within the word limit. There may be more space than you need. There is a blank space for any notes you may want to make. **THIS WILL NOT BE MARKED.**

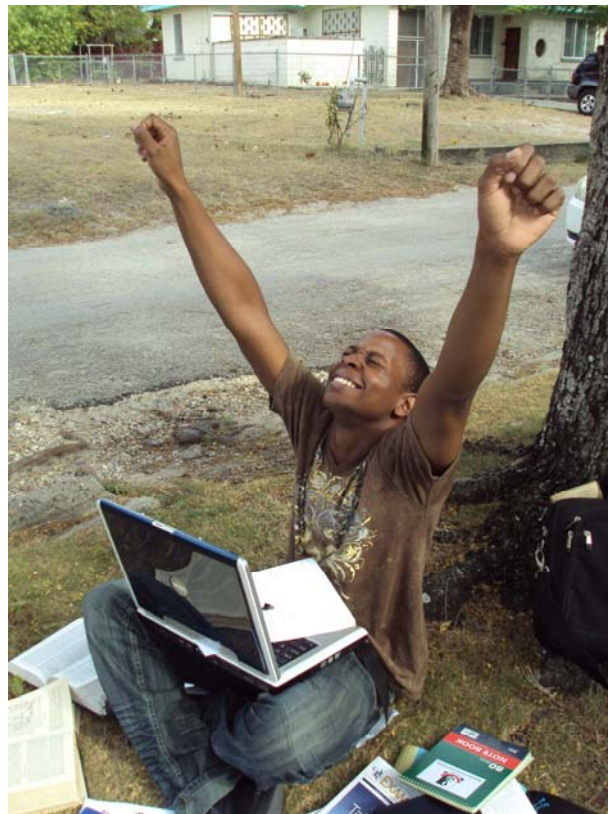
In your answer, you will be assessed on how well you

- (a) used the stimulus provided
- (b) developed and organized the content of your writing
- (c) used language appropriate to your audience, purpose and content
- (d) used appropriate grammar, sentence structure, paragraphs, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

EITHER

SHORT STORY

3. Write a story based on the picture below.



(25 marks)

OR

4. She held her son close by her side as she walked quickly along the narrow road. This was the moment.

Write a story which includes these words.

(25 marks)

SECTION C

You may make notes here. This will NOT be marked.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the student to take notes during this section of the exam.

SECTION C

Write your answer to the question you have chosen to answer in Section C here.

Remember to write your question number in the box provided below.

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SECTION C

Write your answer to the question you have chosen to answer in Section C here.

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SECTION D

(Suggested time: 45 minutes)

You MUST answer this question.

Your answer should be approximately 250 to 300 words in length.

You MUST write in Standard English. Write your answer on the RULED PAGES provided, pages 19-21. You are expected to write within the word limit. There may be more space than you need. There is a blank page for any notes you want to make. THIS WILL NOT BE MARKED.

In your answer you will be assessed on the

- (a) clarity, organization and development of your argument**
- (c) correctness of grammar, sentences, paragraphs, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.**

- 5.** You are a member of a school board that is considering reforms. One of the suggestions is that all schools should make provisions for students who have disabilities of any kind. Write the speech you would make to the board, giving your views on the statement.

(25 marks)

SECTION D

You may make notes here. This will NOT be marked.

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SECTION D

Question 5.

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SECTION D

Question 5.

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END OF TEST

IF YOU FINISH BEFORE TIME IS CALLED, CHECK YOUR WORK ON THIS TEST.

The Council has made every effort to trace copyright holders. However, if any have been inadvertently overlooked, or any material has been incorrectly acknowledged, CXC will be pleased to correct this at the earliest opportunity.

EXTRA SPACE

If you use this extra page, you MUST write the question number clearly in the box provided

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01218020/SPECIMEN 2017

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L
H E A D Q U A R T E R S

ENGLISH A

PAPER 02

MARK SCHEME

SPECIMEN PAPER 2017

ENGLISH A
PAPER 02 - GENERAL PROFICIENCY
MARK SCHEME

Question 1

P ₁	UNDERSTANDING PROFILE:	Maximum - 5 marks	Content - 5
P ₂	EXPRESSION PROFILE:	Maximum - 20 marks	Organization - 10 Mechanics - 10

Marks are to be awarded on the basis of information within the first 120 words.

Marks will be awarded as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| (1) | Content | - | 5 marks |
| (2) | Organization of Content | - | 10 marks |
| (3) | Language Usage/Mechanics | - | 10 marks |

(1) CONTENT

The candidate's response will be judged for its adequacy with respect to the following criteria within the set word limit:

- Selection, accuracy and completeness of main points identified
- Achieving purpose, and intent of the message
- Establishing a tone with roughly similar features

(2) ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT

- Arrangement of material with regard to sequencing, coherence, conciseness and sense of audience

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Question 1 cont'd

(3) LANGUAGE USAGE

The following will be considered in awarding the grades:

(i) Correct use of structure and language:

- Sentences must be complete
- Sentences must be clear and meaningful
- There must be effective and appropriate transition between sentences
- Subjects and verbs must agree
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents
- There must be consistency in the use of tense

(ii) Accuracy of mechanics

Correct spelling and punctuation (for example, use of capitals, full stops, commas, question marks, etc.)

Marks will be awarded on the following scale:

N.B. Students who have performed incompetently in Areas(1)and(2) will be limited to **4 marks** in Mechanics of Writing/Language.

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The following grid should be used in the assessment of Question 1.

SUPERIORITY	6.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (1)&(2) Superiority in addressing the criteria (3) Excellent, efficient and error-free use of language (as indicated under points 1 and 2 in Mechanics of Writing)	5	10	10
	5.	<u>Suggests:</u> (1)&(2) Superiority in addressing the criteria (3) Very good use of language though there may be the occasional lapse in accuracy	4	9	9
COMPETENCE	4.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (1)&(2) Competence in addressing the criteria (3) Effective and accurate use of language though there may be a few lapses	3	7-8	7-8
	3.	<u>Suggests:</u> (1)&(2) Competence in addressing the criteria (3) Some ability to use language accurately and effectively but with some inconsistency in accurate usage	2	5-6	5-6
INCOMPETENCE	2.	<u>Suggests:</u> (1)&(2) Incompetence in addressing the criteria (3) Inability to use language accurately OR: Insufficient information presented in some area	1	4	4
	1.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (1)&(2) Total incompetence in addressing the criteria (3) Frequent, inaccurate use of language. OR: Too little information presented to make an assessment	0	0	0

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POINTS

- Tattoos are permanent markings which have been around from the beginning of civilization.
- They were brought to the Caribbean from Africa, China and India, but the Amerindians wore them even before.
- They were used by people in the Caribbean for religious, ethnic and cultural purposes
- Over the years they came to be personal expressions identified with rebellion and deviance.
- Attitudes have changed towards tattoos and today they have become acceptable as marks of uniqueness and difference.

(5 marks)

SAMPLE SUMMARY

From the beginning of civilization tattoos and other body markings have been marks of identification, spiritual protection and decoration.

Tattoos are permanent markings which vary greatly and can be personally very revealing. A tattoo is an instant of your life etched forever on you for the world to see.

Tattoos and other body markings were characteristic of the Amerindians of the Caribbean as well as of the Africans, Chinese and Indians who came there. For all these people they had cultural, spiritual and ethnic significance.

Over the centuries tattoos and other body markings have changed back and forth from group significance to individual significance, presenting a daily image of difference and uniqueness.

(20 marks)

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Question 2

P ₁	UNDERSTANDING PROFILE:	Maximum - 10 marks	Content	- 10
P ₂	EXPRESSION PROFILE:	Maximum - 20 marks	Organization	- 10
			Language,	
			Mechanics	- 10

Marks will be awarded as follows:

- (1) Content - **10 marks**
- (2) Organization of Content - **10 marks**
- (3) Language Usage, Mechanics - **10 marks**

(1) CONTENT

The answer will be judged for its adequacy with respect to the following criteria:

- Format and conventions - **3 marks**
- Relevance and clarity of information - **3 marks**
- Accuracy, completeness, appropriateness - **4 marks**

(2) ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT

- Arrangement of information with regard to sequencing, coherence, conciseness and sense of audience

(3) LANGUAGE USAGE

The following will be considered in awarding the grades:

(i) Correct use of structure and language:

- Sentences must be complete.
- Sentences must be clear and meaningful.
- There must be effective and appropriate transition between sentences and between paragraphs.
- Subjects and verbs must agree.
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.
- There must be consistency in the use of tense.

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(ii) Accuracy of mechanics

Correct spelling and punctuation (for example, use of capitals, full stops, commas, question marks, apostrophes, semicolons, hyphens)

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The following grid should be used in the assessment of Question 2.

SUPERIORITY	6.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Superiority in addressing the criteria (3) Excellent, efficient and error-free use of language (as indicated under points 1 and 2 in Mechanics of Writing)</p>	10	10	10
	5.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Superiority in addressing the criteria (3) Very good use of language though there may be the occasional lapse in accuracy</p>	9	9	9
COMPETENCE	4.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Competence in addressing the criteria (3) Effective and accurate use of language though there may be a few lapses</p>	7-8	7-8	7-8
	3.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Competence in addressing the criteria (iii) Some ability to use language accurately and effectively but with some inconsistency in accurate usage</p>	5-6	5-6	5-6
INCOMPETENCE	2.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Incompetence in addressing the criteria (3) Inability to use language accurately OR: Insufficient information presented in some area</p>	4	4	4
	1.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(1)&(2) Total incompetence in addressing the criteria (3) Frequent, inaccurate use of language. OR: Too little information presented to make an assessment</p>	0-3	0-3	0-3

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Question 2 cont'd - Sample Letter

No 67 Happy View
St James

October 12, 2014

The Manager
The Fair Trade Commission
Green Hill
Barbados

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to complain against Best Line Supermarkets from which I purchased a box of cereal on October 10, 2014. I have two areas of concern: the treatment I received, and the quality of the product.

The item was on sale and I paid \$8.45 for it. On arrival home I realized that the product had expired since September. I returned the package, with the bill, and was directed to speak with the supervisor. He simply said that it was my duty to check any product I wanted to buy.

I went to the manager, explained the issue and expressed my disappointment. I also requested a refund but he too told me that I should have checked the date before making the purchase. In addition, he said that their policy is no exchange or refund on sale items. He promised to speak to his colleague, then he dismissed me and went to the telephone. I believe this treatment is unjust and would like you to intervene to rectify this matter.

Yours sincerely

Hadia Rogers

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Questions 3 and 4 Short Story (25 marks)

EXPRESSION C: **25 marks**

The following criteria will be used to assess the composition:

(a) Content and relevance of story:

(i) Story Line/Plot - Action Structure

- The story line must be clearly developed (for example, the events in the story must be linked appropriately).
- Links must be maintained appropriate to the choice of technique.
- Conflict(s) must be satisfactorily resolved.
- Action must be satisfactorily concluded.
- Actions/events must be clearly motivated (for example, there must be some plausible reason(s) for the things that happen).
- Setting must be established (for example, there must be a clear indication of where and when the action takes place).

(ii) Characterization:

- Characters must be believable (for example, characters must act and use language that is consistent with who they are).
- Any change in character (for example, personality/behaviour) must be clearly established.
- Characters must be sufficiently developed.
- Dialogue, when used, should be functional (for example, may develop character, action and atmosphere).

(b) Organization:

- Details/events must be logically and effectively sequenced.

(c) (i) Effective use of language:

- Appropriate choice of words to create characters, atmosphere and setting.
- Economic and lively use of language to create story elements listed under (a) and (b).

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Questions 3 and 4 Short Story (25 marks)

(ii) Correct use of structures of the language:

- Sentences must be complete.
- Sentences must be clear.
- Sentences must be meaningful.
- There must be effective and appropriate transitions between sentences and paragraphs.
- Subjects and verbs must agree.
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.
- There must be consistency in the use of tense.

(iii) Accuracy of mechanics:

- Correct spelling, punctuation (for example, use of capitals, full stops, question marks)
- Paragraphing

N.B. If the student's response satisfies no criteria in (a) page 10, the response must be given **zero marks**.

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The following grid should be used in the assessment of Questions 3 and 4.

SUPERIORITY	6.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (a) Excellent manipulation of features of action structure and characterization (b) Excellent organization (c) Excellent, effective and error-free use of language	24-25
	5.	<u>Suggests:</u> (a) Very good manipulation of features of action structure characterization (b) Very good organization (c) Very good use of language though there may be the occasional lapse in accuracy	20-23
COMPETENCE	4.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (a) Good manipulation of features of action structure but with some unevenness in the presentation of these features (b) Good organisation (c) Effective and accurate use of language, though there may be a few lapses	15-19
	3.	<u>Suggests:</u> (a) Inconsistency in the manipulation of features of action structure (b) Some ability to organize events/details (c) Some ability to use language accurately and effectively but with some slight inconsistency in accurate usage	10-14
INCOMPETENCE	2.	<u>Suggests:</u> (a) An inability to manipulate vital features of action structure (b) An inability to organize events and details in a logical manner (c) Frequent, inaccurate use of language OR: Insufficient information presented in some areas	5-9
	1.	<u>Demonstrates:</u> (a) Total inability to manipulate features of action structure (b) Total inability to organize events and details. (c) Inability to use language accurately OR: Too little information presented to make an assessment	0-4

Note: A response that is too short (less than one page, 200 words) should not be given a mark higher than 14/3.

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Question 5 (25 marks)

EXPRESSION D: **25 marks**

Marks will be awarded for the following:

Area I:

1. Content - Argument and Comment

- (a) The selection of information/details must be relevant to the focus of the argument.
- (b) The argument must show a clear sense of the writer's awareness of audience (for example, the writer may take the position that the audience: (i) knows nothing about the topic or (ii) shares basic information about the topic).
- (c) The writer must use register and tone appropriate to the audience selected.
- (d) The writer's purpose must be clearly linked to audience needs (indicated in (b) (i) and (ii), for example, (i) to inform, persuade and convince of a point of view (ii) to persuade/convince).
- (e) The supporting details that are used to develop the argument must fulfil one or more of the following functions: (i) expand, (ii) explain, (iii) illustrate (for example, by means of anecdotes, etc.) the main argument(s).
- (f) In illustrating, explaining or expanding the argument, the writer must make use of a range of strategies, for example, defining, showing causes and effects, making meaningful comparisons.
- (g) The writer must argue from a consistent point of view, this means the writer may anticipate the opposition's arguments but must not contradict his/her own argument(s)/position.

2. Organization - Logical development and reasoning

- (a) The writer must present the details in a logical sequence that maintains the focus of the argument.
- (b) The logical sequence of ideas/details must be clear within sentences, across sentences in paragraphs and between paragraphs.
- (c) The conclusions the writer draws must arise naturally and logically from the arguments presented.

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Question 5 (25 marks)

Area II

Expression (A) skills

1. Correct use of structures of the language:

- Sentences must be complete (for example, subordinate clauses chosen must be of the appropriate type).
- Sentences must be clear.
- Sentences must be meaningful.
- There must be effective and appropriate transitions between sentences and between paragraphs.
- Subjects and verbs must agree.
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.
- There must be consistency in the use of tense.

2. Accuracy of mechanics:

- Correct spelling, punctuation (for example, use of capitals, full stops, question marks)
- Paragraphing

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The following grid should be used in the assessment of Question 5.

			Area I	Area II
SUPERIORITY	6.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(a) Excellent management of argument and content as indicated under Area I (a)-(g).</p> <p>(b) Excellent organization of arguments and details as indicated under Area I(a)-(c)</p> <p>(c) Excellent, effective and error-free use of language as indicated under Area II</p>	14-15	10
	5.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(a) Very good management of argument and content as indicated under Area I (a)-(g)</p> <p>(b) Very good organization of arguments and details</p> <p>(c) Very good use of language though there may be the occasional lapse in accuracy</p>	11-13	8-9
COMPETENCE	4.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(a) Good management of argument and content as indicated under Area I (a)-(g)</p> <p>(b) Good organization of arguments and details</p> <p>(c) Good use of language, though there may be a few lapses</p>	7-10	6-7
	3.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(a) Inconsistency in the management of argument and content as indicated under Area I (a)-(g)</p> <p>(b) Some ability to organize arguments and details</p> <p>(b) Some ability to use language accurately and effectively but with some inconsistency in accurate usage</p>	6-9	4-5
INCOMPETENCE	2.	<p><u>Suggests:</u></p> <p>(a) An inability to manage vital features of argument as indicated under Area I (a)-(g)</p> <p>(b) An inability to organize arguments and details</p> <p>(c) Frequent, inaccurate use of language</p> <p>OR: Insufficient information presented</p>	4-5	1-3
	1.	<p><u>Demonstrates:</u></p> <p>(a) Total inability to manage features of argument</p> <p>(b) Total inability to organize arguments</p> <p>(c) Inability to use language accurately</p> <p>OR: Too little information presented to make an assessment</p>	0-3	0-1



TEST CODE **01218032**

SPEC 2017/01218032

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE®
EXAMINATION**

ENGLISH A

SPECIMEN PAPER

Paper 032 – General Proficiency

2 hours

READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

1. This paper consists of **THREE** questions. Answer **ALL** questions.
2. Write your answers in the spaces provided in this booklet.
3. You are advised to take some time to read through the paper and plan your answers.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

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01218032/SPEC 2017

Read the **THREE** texts carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

Text 1 – Editorial from a Newspaper

DISCIPLINE IS AT THE CRUX OF THE ISSUE

It was triggered weeks ago when two female students wearing natural hair posted their pictures on Facebook complaining that their principal expressed disapproval of their hairstyles. In an interview with this newspaper, the principal said her only edict which she indicated clearly to students, was that they be neat and tidy in their school uniforms and that certain hairstyles were simply not appropriate for classes.

We endorse these comments by the principal, whose intention, it appears, is to set standards for the school she leads and the students in her charge. Students need to clearly understand there are rules that govern the regular operation of schools and those that speak to the deportment of those attending these institutions.

President of the National Council of Parent–Teacher Associations, put the issue into perspective when she said this was not about hair, but discipline and respect for rules.

We also agree with her on the point that schools are not just about the teaching of Mathematics and English. Schools help prepare students for life. From schools, students go on to the world of work and if they find it difficult to follow school rules, how will they fare on the job when there are regulations in place that must be obeyed?

While there are natural rights and freedoms which cannot be suppressed, children in school must conform to the standards set.

This issue came to the fore again just yesterday when this newspaper revealed that a new dress code was implemented for police officers banning them from wearing dreadlocks, make-up, extreme hair colour or having visible tattoos. Some police officers are reportedly upset by the new rules outlined in a section of the RBPF Policy on General Appearance of Police Officers dated January 15, 2015.

We do not believe the issue at hand is simply the wearing of natural hair. The larger point speaks to upholding discipline in society and the need for respect for rules and authority, whether it is in our schools or police force. Without these, we would be a lost society.

Adapted from “Discipline is at the crux of the issue”, Editorial, Nation News, 22 January, 2015.

Text 2 – Song by India Arie

I am not my hair

Little girl with the press and curl
 Age eight I got a Jheri curl
 Thirteen I got a relaxer
 I was a source of so much laughter
 At fifteen when it all broke off
 Eighteen and went all natural
 February two thousand and two

I went and did
 What I had to do
 Because it was time to change my life
 To become the women that I am inside
 Ninety-seven dreadlock all gone
 I looked in the mirror
 For the first time and saw that HEY...

I am not my hair
 I am not this skin
 I am not your expectations no no
 I am not my hair
 I am not this skin
 I am a soul that lives within

What'd she do to her hair?
 I don't know it look crazy
 I like it. I might do that.
 Umm I wouldn't go that far.
 I know.. ha ha ha ha

Good hair means curls and wave
 Bad hair means you look like a slave
 At the turn of the century
 It's time for us to redefine who we be
 You can shave it off
 Like a South African beauty

Or get in on lock
 Like Bob Marley
 You can rock it straight
 Like Oprah Winfrey
 If it's not what's on your head
 It's what's underneath and they say HEY...

*"I am Not my Hair", India Arie, Songs of Windswept Pacific,
 Retrieved 09 March 2015*

Text 3 – Poem by Sunkissed Gem**Resilience**

Perfectly patterned particles
push perpetually,
emerging: emancipated, elated,
enthusiastic.
Pushing proudly
up through layers upon layers of denial.
Past denaturing chemicals
and excessive heat;
curls emerge: triumphant.
Blatant refusal
to be ignored.
Blatant defiance of standards.
Despite countless chemicals
and incessant heat curls return:
a complexly simple statement
and reminder
of identity and culture.
Our hair is
as our land is
as we are:
EVER BEAUTIFULLY
RESILIENT.

*Sunkissed Gem, "Resilience", Retrieved 27 February 2015 from
<http://www.naturallycurly.com/curltalk/newreply.php?do=newreply&p=945996>*

1. (a) Outline the **main** issue addressed in EACH of the THREE texts.

(6 marks)

- (b) For any ONE of the texts given, assess the appropriateness of that medium for the purpose of communicating the specific issue.

(3 marks)

- (c) For any TWO of the texts given, choose ONE language technique used in EACH and explain its effectiveness.

(6 marks)

Total 15 marks

2. (a) State THREE features that distinguish an oral presentation from a written presentation.

(6 marks)

(b) You have been asked to make an oral presentation on ONE of the issues identified in 1 (a) on page 5. List THREE points you would discuss in the oral presentation.

(3 marks)

(c) Identify THREE features of the group to which the presentation would be made and THREE techniques that you would use to hold the attention of the group.

(6 marks)

Total 15 marks

3. Create a response based on ONE of the points listed in 2 (b) above. You can use drama, poetry, lyrics to a song or prose. Your response will be assessed for

- relevance of content
- organization of ideas
- effective use of language
- vivid word choice
- unique voice/style

Total 15 marks

END OF TEST



01218032/SPEC2017

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE®

EXAMINATION

ENGLISH A

PAPER 032 - GENERAL PROFICIENCY

MARK SCHEME

SPECIMEN PAPER 2017

ENGLISH A

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Question 1

(a) While the three stimulus pieces chosen deal with the topic of the wearing of natural hair it is dealt with from varying perspectives. The editor who penned the newspaper editorial used the topic to address the issue of the need to conform to standards and show respect for rules and authority if we want to maintain discipline in our society. The poet's main issue is that wearing natural hairstyles is an expression of the person you are and it cannot be denied while in the lyrics to the song the point is being made that who you are is much more important than how you choose to style your hair.

(6 marks)

(b) In the song, the issue is presented through the use of rhythm, repetition of the idea of you being more than your hair, as well as the references made to well known personalities. It is an entertaining way of dealing with a serious issue that would be appealing.

(3 marks)

(c) The writer in the article uses generalities, mentioning that students need to understand that there are rules that govern the regular operation of schools and officers are expected not to just uphold the law but to also uphold discipline. Since most people would tend to agree with these statements they are effective in persuading people to accept the argument.

In the poem, the first four lines make use of alliteration. This technique helps to add emphasis and causes the reader to pay attention to the message as it creates a pleasant rhythmic effect.

(6 marks)

Total 15 marks

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Question 2

- (a) Three features that distinguish an oral presentation from a written presentation are:
- The speaker can gauge audience reaction and adjust his message accordingly
 - It allows for audience interaction and clarification of misunderstandings
 - The voice can be used to create a desired effect and this can help to promote understanding of the message
- (b) In a presentation on the issue of persons wearing natural hairstyles as an expression of who they are, I would make these three points:
- This promotes an understanding of cultural diversity
 - The texture of the hair allows for creativity in developing distinguished hairstyles
 - It is a choice which supports a healthy approach to the treatment of your hair
- (c) The oral presentation is being made to a group made up of:
- Females
 - 14-16 years
 - Participants in a cosmetology course

The following techniques would be used to hold the attention of the group.

- Integrate relevant, supportive, attractive visual aids, props and samples to heighten the interest and stimulate the imagination of the audience to the possibilities for natural hairstyles.
- Allow for audience participation through the use of 'hands up' feedback to questions giving them an opportunity to feel connected to the issue.
- Make eye contact and display enthusiasm to help to transfer some of my energy and interest to the audience.

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Question 3 - Personal Response (15 marks)

The following criteria will be used to assess the composition:

(a) Content and relevance of response

- The focus of the response must be clear and must be fully developed.
- Actions/events must be clearly motivated (for example, there must be some plausible reason(s) for the things that happen).
- Rich detail must create a clear and authentic picture and hold reader's attention.

(b) Organization

- Details/events must be logically and effectively sequenced.
- There must be a memorable introduction and conclusion (explicit or implicit).
- Transitions must tie the ideas together.

(c) Effective use of language

- Sentences must be clear.
- Sentences must be deliberately used to affect style.
- Sentence structure is varied and complex.

(d) Voice/Style

- The writing must be reflect a unique, consistent personal voice.
- Connection to audience and purpose must be clear.
- Individual commitment to the topic must be obvious.

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(e)

Word Choice

- Vivid natural language must create a clear picture of characters and atmosphere.
- Strong verbs, precise nouns and appropriate adjectives must be used to enhance meaning.
- Original phrases and words must allow for reflection and thoughtful insight.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE**

JANUARY 2004

ENGLISH A

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ENGLISH A

GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

JANUARY 2004

GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination in January 2004 followed the format used in previous years. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested the Understanding profile of the syllabus, and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as the Understanding of literary and persuasive writing.

When performance in 2004 is compared with performance in 2003, an increase in the percentage of candidates achieving Grade III and above is evident. In 2003, 36 per cent of the candidates achieved Grade I to III, while in 2004, 54 per cent achieved Grade III or higher.

The overall mean in 2003 was 52.5 whereas in January 2004 it was 57.90. The overall improvement is attributable to improvement in Paper 01 and in all areas of Paper 02. Performance in the Comprehension section of Paper 02 showed the most dramatic change, and the overall quality of the responses in this section was impressive.

The improvement in performance this year, especially, in comprehension, is welcome. Hopefully, this level of performance can be maintained.

DETAILED COMMENTS

GENERAL PROFICIENCY

Section One

Question 1 (Expression)

This question tested candidates' ability to summarise information given in an advertisement. Generally, candidates seemed to understand what was required of them, although far too many exceeded the maximum length specified in the instructions. Candidates should be made aware that the part of their answer that goes beyond the specified maximum length will NOT be marked by the Examiners.

The text this year contained several technical terms. Candidates were required to re-use a number of words from the test, rather than their own language, as is generally required of this answer. It was, however, still necessary for candidates to take all the itemised technical information and put it into prose, that is, in the form of well constructed, grammatically and semantically logical sentences.

Generally, candidates were able to identify the main points of the advertisement. There was still, however, the need to be selective and for candidates to be aware that all the pieces of information were not of equal value and significance in capturing the basic meaning of the text.

Teachers should remember that summarising is a specialised skill which requires special attention and emphasis, and should provide their students with abundant practice, on a variety of textual stimulus material.

Section Two

There was a general improvement when compared with January 2003, although a number of candidates failed to score any marks on each question in this section.

Question 2 (Understanding)

This question tested candidates' ability to read and understand a prose passage from a work of fiction written in Standard English. Candidates were required to show an appreciation of the writer's craft, the impressions which the work creates, and relationships between characters, rather than simply an understanding of the overtly stated facts. Some candidates were unable to deduce what the setting of the text was (it was the waiting room of an Embassy), and this affected their responses to some of the parts of this question.

It was gratifying to see the improvement in performance. In response to Part (f), many students answered correctly, with a variety of lexical choices, including 'professional'. Teachers are to be congratulated and are urged to make every effort to ensure that the improvement is sustained, by making clear to candidates the particular nature of the text for this question and the type of response required.

Question 3 (Understanding)

This question tested candidates' ability to read and understand a prose passage on the importance of investing in social services. The overall performance on this question was good, and there was, no substantial difference between the performances in

Question 2 and Question 3.

Many candidates failed to answer correctly one of the interpretive questions; they were unable to distinguish between “narrative, argumentative and descriptive” in a characterisation of the passage. Part (d) also went beyond the mere factual, and required candidates to perceive and appreciate the metaphorical expression of the author. This part was quite well answered.

Teachers should make sure that candidates are able to perceive the different kinds of responses required, for example, the difference between “What, according to the passage ...?” and “What effect ...?”, “What impression ..?”. Some candidates left these latter questions unanswered, which may suggest that they did not quite understand what was required.

There still seems to be some uncertainty among some candidates as to what is a “phase” (vis-à-vis “word”, “sentence”). Part (d) asked for ‘three phrases’. Some candidates gave entire sentences. Generally speaking, candidates should be made aware that their responses should be precise, not long-winded and explanatory, and should most particularly NOT reproduce lengthy portions of the passage, perhaps in the hope that somewhere in that volume lies the correct answer.

Section Three

Question 4, 5, 6 (Expression)

This section tested candidates’ ability to express themselves creatively in continuous prose. The most popular choice was Question 5, but Question 6 had the highest mean. These were only a relatively small range of difference among the three questions.

Some candidates had difficulty fitting the statement in Question 5 into their stories. Thus these stories seemed to come to an abrupt end without the final statement being well motivated.

There was some reduction in the incidence of candidates merely describing the picture stimulus (Question 4). Teachers should continue to stress to candidates that the picture stimulus requires the imaginative creation of a story. In giving freedom to their imagination, however, candidates should not simply write their own story unrelated (or only barely so) to the stimulus.

Question 6 was the most successfully done, and some candidates achieved the highest scores (up to 24/25) on this question. It will have been observed that in Question 5 the main protagonist is male, while in Questions 4 and 6, it is female. The examiners strive to make the question paper gender-equal, but these were no real reason why males should write only about their own gender and females likewise. A good short story writer should be able to write about both male and female protagonists and candidates should be encouraged to practise writing about a variety of themes.

While some candidates have more of a flair for short story writing than others, it is clear that those who like to read, whatever their subjects may be, become more familiar with words and experiences and thus give themselves an advantage over those who do not.

Section Four

Question 7 and 8 (Expression)

This section tested candidates' ability to write persuasively and present sound arguments in Standard English. There was a marked preference for Question 8 over Question 7, and in addition the mean for Question 8 was substantially higher than the Question 7 mean. A further dramatic difference was the much larger percentage of candidates receiving zero marks for Question 7 than for Question 8.

Question 7 was the more problematic of the two questions. A large number of candidates mis-interpreted the terms "independent" and "patriotic", both in general and as they relate to newspapers in particular. These concepts should not be unfamiliar to an educated Caribbean young person and schools may wish to consider whether sufficient attention is being paid to such basic concepts as media bias/independence/partiality and loyalty to country/party/government, in Social Studies and Communication classes.

In one, particularly extreme case, "independent" was related to one's ability to cook and keep house. In other cases, there was no attempt to relate the concepts to the particular case of the Media.

Most candidates chose Question 8. It was clearly within the current experiences of the candidates and many were able to provide personal anecdotes to support their arguments.

It is very important that candidates notice and respond to all the parts of the propositions, and to the precise instructions ('write a letter', 'write an essay giving your views', and 'EITHER supporting OR opposing'). For example, in Question 7, some candidates ignored the specific allusion to 'a newspaper', and in Question 8 some candidates ignored 'punished as adults' and were content simply to argue that 16 year olds deserved to be punished for crimes committed.

The usual argumentation and writing/composition inadequacies were evident: mere assertions without any supportive arguments or examples; misuse of pronouns; incorrect subject-verb agreement especially where the noun subject is distant from the verb; punctuation including paragraphing; and spelling, especially 'there', 'their'. Students should be made aware that English spelling is not generally and consistently phonetic and the spelling of many words has to be learned individually, which is best achieved through careful reading, punctuation including paragraphing.

GENERAL ADVICE

For the third time in recent years, one candidate was found to reproduce a published story with amazing accuracy while another candidate reproduced a variant of a "CXC Best Story", retaining several chunks from the original. Teachers need to remind candidates who are preparing to write the examination that at the very best, short stories that demonstrate a lack of originality will not be awarded high scores. At worst, short stories that bear a very close similarity to previous short stories or to published work may raise suspicion of irregularity.

Teachers are again advised that, in the preparation of candidates, they should make sure that they are familiar with the syllabus. The specific tasks set will vary from year to year but they all fit the specifications set out in the syllabus. Further, it must be noted that a new revised syllabus will take effect for examination from May/June 2006. Candidates should be encouraged to write legibly, conform to the instructions (for example, maximum length of answers) and to complete the required number of questions set.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

JUNE 2004

ENGLISH A

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ENGLISH A

GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

JUNE 2004

GENERAL COMMENTS

The examinations in 2004 followed the format used in previous years. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of literary and persuasive writing.

In 2004, 49.5 per cent of the candidates at **General Proficiency** achieved Grade III and above, while 19.1 per cent of the **Basic Proficiency** candidates achieved similar grades. The number of candidates taking the General Proficiency examination was 81 120, while 3 068 sat for the Basic Proficiency examination.

The decline in the number of candidates taking **Basic Proficiency** continued in 2004, the numbers over the past four years have been 4 502 (2001); 3 792 (2002); 3 777 (2003); 3 068 (2004).

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 - Multiple Choice

Basic Proficiency

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2004 showed only a very marginal upward change over 2003. The mean score in 2003, out of a possible 60, was 25.08 and this moved to 25.58 in 2004.

General Proficiency

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2004 showed a slight decline when compared with 2003. The mean score in Paper 01 moved downward from 34.63 in 2003 to 33.03 in 2004, out of a possible 60.

PAPER 02 - FREE RESPONSE

Basic Proficiency

Candidates' performance in Paper 02 in 2004 was better than in 2003. The mean score increased from 22.10 in 2003 to 25.72 in 2004, out of a possible 80. Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 in 2004 was as follows:

Section 1 – Summary Skills	(out of 20 marks)	5.06
Section 2 – Comprehension	(out of 24 marks)	9.87
Section 3 – Story Writing	(out of 16 marks)	5.17
Section 4 – Argument	(out of 20 marks)	5.62

General Proficiency

In Paper 02 performance, as indicated by a comparison of the section means in 2003 and 2004, is summarised as follows:

Section 1 (Summary skills): there was an improvement in performance compared with 2003: 8.20 (2003) and 9.23 (2004)

Section 2 (Understanding): there was an improvement in performance compared with 2003: 8.22 (2003) and 9.30 (2004)

Section 3 (Story telling): there was no substantial difference in performance between 2003 and 2004: 8.84 (2003) and 8.79 (2004)

Section 4 (Argument): there was a slight decline in performance compared with 2003: 9.29 (2003) and 8.66 (2004)

Candidates' performance in expression tasks on Paper 02 (that is, Sections 1, 3 and 4) was very similar in 2004 to what it was in 2003, with means of 26.68 and 26.33 in 2004 and 2003 respectively, out of a possible 75.

A comparison of the average mark in the four sections shows that there is little difference in performance across the sections. It could suggest that teachers are covering all four areas evenly.

General Advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates must, above all, demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. The fundamental preparation for the examination is that candidates should develop high-level skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression) in the English language. These skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons and semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers, whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. The kind of writing that has become popular in e-mail messages and in advertisements is not acceptable in this examination.

In Section 1, when a straightforward summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale, the CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates; it should not be treated as a deletion exercise or a copying exercise.

The questions in Section 2 are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked and to frame their answers appropriately. For example, instructions sometimes say 'give a word'; at other times they say 'give a phrase'; at other times still they say 'give a clause'. In each case candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Candidates need to read and re-read the questions themselves as well as the passages on which the questions are set. Answers should be to the point. These questions never require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer.

In Section 3 many candidates are exceeding the suggested length for the short story and though excess is not penalized in the marking, spending too much time on one question can affect performance in others. Every candidate doing this examination should have read the best stories from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC.) These stories, however, should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations.

In the case of Section 4, candidates should note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that support their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some inexplicable reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously) or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will achieve higher scores than those they earn by merely agreeing with what they perceive to be the examiners' views.

General Proficiency

SECTION ONE

Question 1 (Expression)

In this question candidates were asked to read an extract from a report on migration and to write a summary of it in no more than 100 words. Candidates had to select the main information, organise it logically and present it in standard English. All three components are important, but perhaps logical organisation of the information is of the greatest importance in the teaching exercise. Candidates should be made aware that a summary is not simply a series of statements presented with no expressed links between them.

Candidates were expected to identify the classes of migrants; the direction of migration; the relationship between migration, population growth/decline and the labour market; and the consequences of migration on source country and destination.

Performance on this question was slightly better than it was last year. However, there are still too many candidates who pay absolutely no attention to the word limit given or dishonestly write an incorrect number of words at the end. This latter strategy does not work.

Teachers should:

- (i) advise students against relying heavily on the original text and making just a few minor changes; and using a deletion strategy to try to reduce the number of words in the original text
- (ii) give students more practice in distilling essential information and expressing it, as far as possible, in their own words
- (iii) advise students not to repeat points or insert too many illustrative examples of points made
- (iv) above all remind students to observe the stated length

Advice to Teachers

In the training of students in summary writing, teachers should use a variety of selections, including sources outside the textbooks, such as daily newspapers and current popular magazines. Teachers should remind students to work with what is given – real-life material has imperfections and part of the training in summary writing is to be able to determine what is important or critical and what is not in such material. Report and summary writing is as much about arranging relevant points as it is about picking out the main points in what someone else has said or written. In order to reflect the original accurately, attention should be paid to time sequence and cause and effect relationships, as they occur in the original. Practice in the effective use of words such as *because*, *although*, *as a result* and *in spite of the fact that*, which link clauses (containing relevant points), will help immensely the task of summary and report writing.

SECTION TWO

Question 2 (Understanding)

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of ideas expressed in a narrative passage, a selection from Eugenia O'neal's "The Parillon Sisters". For the most part, candidates responded correctly to the items (a), (b), (c), (d) and (g). Item (e) was answered correctly (= to indicate that it was not English) by only a small percentage of candidates. Item (f) did not ask for words from the passage, which meant that those candidates who interpreted it in that way restricted themselves unnecessarily. Item (h) was not answered correctly by most candidates; the answer (the attitude) required was 'pity' or some equivalent. As usual, as soon as the questions go beyond "who" and "what", a great number of candidates find it difficult to cope with inferences and implications.

Question 3 (Understanding)

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a view put forward by the editor of the Weekend Nation newspaper about the relationship between freedom and the law. Item (a) was answered incorrectly by a great number of candidates because they did not pay attention to the instruction that only *a phrase* should be given, not the whole of the first sentence. Items (b) and (c) were correctly answered by most candidates. The answer to (c) hinged on the understanding of the word 'ironically', which involves an opposite relationship (that is, contrary to expectation) between one thing and another. Item (d) required candidates to link the word *latter* to a preceding idea but only a minority of candidates managed to do this successfully. Item (e), which was intended as a straightforward question requiring an understanding of punctuation (*Our supreme law, our Constitution = Our supreme law is our Constitution*), was answered correctly by only a small percentage of candidates. Item (f) required candidates to solve a simple verbal logical problem. This was not correctly done by most candidates. The two-part answer to (g) did not present any major problems.

Advice to Teachers

Reading of material from outside the Caribbean should help to expand the passive vocabulary and general knowledge of students. Teachers still have to do more work on the literary devices used by writers in order to get students to move beyond literal interpretations. In the explanation of literary devices and specific phrases/sentences used by writers, candidates have to be accurate and precise in their answers. Teachers should dissuade students from giving long-winded answers which really conceal ignorance.

SECTION THREE

Questions 4, 5 and 6 (Expression)

Candidates did not seem to have any difficulty understanding the topics set, but there were still too many who did not know what elements are required in short stories or who could not demonstrate those elements in their writing. There were some candidates who wrote brilliant stories and generally candidates seemed to be reasonably well prepared for this section of the examination. On the other hand, this section, as it usually does, exposed the weaknesses of candidates who had not mastered the fundamentals of writing in English.

The picture stimulus in Question 4 seemed to appeal to many candidates and encouraged a variety of stories, but this year there were more stories of a better standard. Happily, there was a smaller number of candidates this year who just described the picture. This question elicited several excellent responses, including the one deemed to be the 'best story'. On the other hand, some stories had no more than a tenuous connection with the stimulus. Teachers should remind candidates that when a story has no connection whatsoever to any of the three stimuli given, it automatically is given zero marks.

Question 5 was a fairly popular choice and it produced a number of action stories. Some of these were very good and imaginative in some cases and realistic in others. Some of these stories were awarded marks in the top ranges. On the other hand, some candidates did not convincingly link the two parts of the stimulus together in their stories or did not convincingly suggest that 'life would be different' from then on.

Question 6 was not a very popular choice. Candidates seemed to have difficulty tying the two parts of the stimulus together. This question did not produce any outstanding stories.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers should not encourage students to over-indulge in the expression of literary devices. There has to be a match between the setting and the action. Students whose stories are impressive are those who use details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Teachers need to give all students practice in action-oriented stories and not restrict choices to emotional stories. Boys seem to prefer the former and not the latter, and teachers, if they want all their students to succeed, should be aware of this. Students should be encouraged, as often as possible, to interpret topics in a positive and wholesome way and not to restrict themselves to situations of poverty, degradation and stress. Training in short story writing should include a lot of oral work and the telling of funny stories and anecdotes where there is a concentration on the characters and what they say. Training in short story writing must stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading. Although there is no penalty for writing stories that are longer than is suggested in the rubric, a perusal of the scripts reveals that longer stories tend to be weaker as they often get out of control.

SECTION FOUR

Question 7 and 8 (Expression)

On the whole, responses in this section were satisfactory. Candidates seemed to find the topics interesting and manageable.

In responding to the statement in Question 7 many candidates did not address all of the points and so automatically weakened their argument. It is necessary in a question such as this for candidates to be methodical in their answers and not to contradict earlier points made.

In the case of Question 8 most candidates agreed with the topic statement, sometimes passionately, but did little to show any further insightfulness. Some good responses from among those who disagreed pointed out the problems and difficulties involved in such a proposal (for example, why 15 years of age, why only young men, who would pay for the training, where would the trainees be housed). There were many spirited and well written responses from candidates supporting the proposal as well as those opposing it.

Advice to Teachers

More attention should be paid to the organisation of arguments, that is, paragraphing of different points with the relevant supporting evidence. The language should be clear and the reader should have no doubt about the writer's position on the issues. Candidates should not contradict their stated position. Poor sentence structure, punctuation and spelling are sources of distraction and cause the reader to lose the focus of an argument. Careful re-reading should help to remove such distractions.

Basic Proficiency

SECTION ONE

Question 1 tested the candidates' ability to summarise a passage from a daily newspaper – a commissioner of police's report on offences and crimes during the year 2002. The majority of candidates showed a reasonable level of understanding of the passage, though numbers and simple statistics proved difficult for many. Most, however, in their summary, did not mention the point about the challenges faced by the police. The stronger candidates were able to identify the main ideas in the passage and present a response largely using their own words. The weaker candidates often exceeded the word limit and presented responses in the exact words of the passage. Many of these simply reproduced sections of the passage joining them together incoherently. The majority of these failed to master the mechanics of the language.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers need to ensure that their students receive more practice in summary writing since Question 1 is compulsory. Special attention should be paid to concord, tense and sentence structure.

SECTION TWO

Question 2 (Understanding)

This question tested candidates' understanding of ideas expressed in a narrative passage. The chosen extract was from Ama Ata Aidoo's 'Changes'. In general, the items were answered fairly well, though items (b) and (c) proved to be much more challenging than the others. Very few candidates answered (b) correctly. In the case of Item (d) (what kind of person), some candidates incorrectly interpreted this to mean occupation rather than personality.

Advice to Teachers

Students need more practice in answering the kinds of questions set on the paper, questions requiring precise answers. In preparing for these questions teachers should make sure that students read questions a number of times before they attempt to write their answers. After reading the whole passage, candidates should also re-read the section of the passage relevant to each specific question to make sure that what they are thinking of writing is what the passage says. Students should be advised to re-read what they have written to make sure that it makes sense to someone reading it. As is the case generally, candidates would be helped tremendously if they read more, which would make them more accustomed to written material.

Question 3 (Understanding)

This question tested candidates' ability to read and understand a persuasive passage. In the one chosen, the writer argued for a lengthening of the school year for American students. Items (a), (e) and (f) proved difficult for most candidates. In many cases the candidates' responses to Item (a) were not clear as to whether summer was getting shorter in terms of days or whether it was coming to an end. In the case of Item (e), candidates seemed to know what the word 'attitude' meant, but were confused with the word 'sobering'. For Item (f) many candidates incorrectly identified the American students as the correct response instead of students of other industrialised nations.

Advice to Teachers

In preparation for Section Two teachers should give students more practice in comprehending extracts of writing other than narrations. In fact, teachers should use various types of material from varying sources. Students should get constant practice in responding directly and concisely to questions asked, using their own words instead of lifting large pieces from the passage given. Students need to expand their vocabulary and one effective way of doing this is by reading more.

SECTION THREE

Questions 4, 5 and 6 (Expression)

This section tested candidates' ability to express themselves creatively by writing a story based on a given stimulus. Question 5 was the most popular choice and the least popular was Question 4, which was poorly interpreted. In Questions 5 and 6 many candidates simply added the statement to the end of their story without proper linkage. The majority of those who attempted Question 4 did not produce stories, but rather presented descriptions of the boy or expositions on child care and abuse. Most of those who attempted Question 5 gave depictions of a classroom scene so that the statement with 'the pen' would be relevant. However, there were a few who depicted a farm scene because for them 'the pen' was an animal pen. A few of those who attempted Question 6 based their stories on mysterious happenings, like ghosts and unidentified flying objects, but the majority wrote stories about lies, theft and rape. The better candidates were able to develop a strong and credible story line, presenting their work in acceptable standard English. The weaker candidates had difficulty presenting a good story line and this was compounded by problems in the mechanics of grammar and sentence construction. Many merely presented reports of events without conflict.

Advice to Teachers

Students should be encouraged to read more widely and practise writing more often. Students should get more practice in writing stories based on pictures. Teachers should spend more time with students on the basic elements of story writing. For example, students need more practice in incorporating dialogue into story writing. They should also be given more exposure to figurative expressions.

SECTION FOUR

Questions 7 and 8 (Expression)

This section tested candidates' ability to write persuasively in Standard English and to present sound arguments. Many more candidates did Question 8 than Question 7. In Question 7 very few candidates were able to distinguish between a reason and an excuse. Question 8 elicited many responses that vaguely addressed the various qualities needed for success (for example, determination, manners, respect, hard work) rather than focus on skills and knowledge. The stronger candidates gave evidence of persuasive techniques such as rhetorical questions, proper use of statistics and appeal to authority. Many of these used what seemed like real life experiences to support their positions. The weaker candidates were often very repetitive in presenting their argument. Errors in the mechanics of writing were prevalent and many had difficulty writing continuous prose in standard English. Often the structures used gave evidence of interference from the vernacular.

Advice to Teachers

More time needs to be spent on oral English to give the students familiarity and experience with the patterns and rhythms of standard English. Teachers need to allot some time to teaching students to write clear opinion statements which are supported by relevant examples.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

JUNE 2005

ENGLISH A

Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 (all out of 25 marks) is as follows:

	2003	2004	2005 (Carib)	2005 (Guyana)
Section 1 Summary skills	8.20	9.23	8.80	11.02
Section 2 Comprehension	8.22	9.30	9.16	11.53
Section 3 Story Writing	8.84	8.79	9.70	8.29
Section 4 Argument	9.29	8.66	10.54	10.26

A comparison of the average mark in the four sections for 2005 (Caribbean minus Guyana) shows that there was a decline in performance in Section 1 (Summary skills). There are still too many candidates who come to the examination with no knowledge of what a summary entails. The rise in the average mark for Argument is attributable to the accessibility of the topics given.

General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates must, above all, demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. The fundamental preparation for the examination is that candidates should develop high-level skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression) in the English language. These skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons, semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case and lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. The kind of writing that has become popular in e-mail messages and in advertisements is not acceptable in this examination.

In Section 1, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale by the candidate, CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates.

The questions in Section 2 are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. For example, instructions sometimes say 'give a word'; at other times they say 'give a phrase'; at other times still they say 'give a clause'. In each case candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Candidates need to read and re-read the questions themselves as well as the passages on which the questions are set. Answers should be to the point. These questions never require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer.

In Section 3 many candidates are exceeding the suggested length for the short story and though excess is not penalized in the marking, spending too much time on one question can affect performance in others. Every candidate doing this examination should have read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC). These stories, however, should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations. Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better candidates tend to write stories that fall within or not too far out of the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak. Often too, the candidates have insufficient time left to complete the paper properly. Teachers are encouraged to help their candidates to plan their stories, focusing on building plots, intensifying conflict, and creating a good sense of characters, instead of merely relating one or a string of events.

In the case of Section 4, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that support their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. Some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think are the examiners' views.

General Proficiency (All territories except Guyana)

SECTION ONE (Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read a passage taken from a supermarket magazine, identify the problem (about the processing of chicken) as stated in the passage and to give Somerfield's response to it in no more than 120 words. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose as in the model below:

In response to concerns that some chickens that are imported have a higher water content and possibly other animal proteins, Somerfield has issued a statement assuring the public that its mission is to provide quality chicken.

Somerfield further states that although it is legal to add water and proteins to chicken, if the labelling does not adequately specify the contents, this may deceive the consumer. Somerfield assures the public that its chickens, chilled, frozen, local or imported, undergo a process that uses water in a controlled way for rinsing at different stages of the operation. No protein is added. Furthermore, Somerfield has outside analysis done by an independently certified and sophisticated laboratory to ensure quality chickens. (117 words/or below)

Performance on Question 1 this year was worse than last year. There are still too many candidates who pay absolutely no attention to the word limit given. Some candidates did not put the reading material in proper perspective/context and did not recognize or did not understand the statement "Adapted from Somerfield magazine". As usual, many candidates lifted relative portions of the passage verbatim or paraphrased them indiscriminately. Superior scripts clearly demonstrated satisfactory reading and writing skills, assisted by a fine vocabulary and the ability to write with purpose and a sense of audience.

Advice

To facilitate preparation for this section of the paper teachers should:

- i) remind candidates to observe the stated length.
- ii) drill candidates in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done; insist that candidates read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- iii) help candidates to recognize the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills)
- iv) help candidates to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using one's own words as far as possible
 - b) using straightforward English with clarity and conciseness

- c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation or context
 - d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing and reading
 - e) correct mechanics of the language
- v) stimulate candidates to read widely so that there can be an easier connection with the stimulus material.

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

This section requires candidates to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that candidates have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. So, candidates should know how to select words or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also candidates need to do as the question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong – it is an indication that the candidate does not know exactly what the answer is. This is a recurrent problem which is likely to be the kind that would respond to more oral and written practice in class with immediate feedback and discussion.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of ideas expressed in a narrative passage, a selection from Anthony Winkler's *Going Home to Teach*. The following were deemed to be the correct answers. In the case of (a) and (d) suitable alternatives were accepted.

- (a) officious/pompous
 - (b) three members of staff
 - (c) moored; ocean
 - (d) He disliked it
 - (e) Her ill-fitting dentures made her appear bad tempered, but she really had a pleasant personality
 - (f) School administrator/principal/headmaster
 - (g) She used to scold the labourers for their swearing
- (a) Weaker candidates simply felt that the author thought of or was representing Dr Levy as a king. Many of them did not pay attention to the wording of the question – “What opinion does he want you to have?”, NOT “what does he say”.
- (b) This question required candidates to make a simple mathematical deduction. Many could not. It appears that several included Dr Levy and therefore gave ‘four’ as the answer.
- (c) Most candidates got one or the other of the two words (“moored”, “ocean”), but only a few got both and many got neither. This suggests that candidates either do not know the term “metaphor” or do not fully appreciate how it works. A few candidates ignored the stipulation that said “two words” and wrote phrases. They received no marks as there was no indication that they knew what the words were.
- (d) The question required candidates to summarize the author’s feelings about Dr Levy’s office. Most candidates gave weak answers, answers that simply described the office.
- (e) This question required evidence. Some candidates paraphrased; others simply quoted.
- (f) Many candidates deduced that Dr Levy must be the principal of an institution or some kind of school administrator. However, several candidates simply assumed that “Dr” meant medical doctor or dentist.
- (g) This question also asked for evidence. Candidates needed to select the words that answered the question (“boisterous labourers below whose profanity occasionally drifted in and buzzed her ears” did not answer the question).

The responses suggest that many candidates understood the passage at the literal level. A large number also seem to have understood some of the inner meaning, but did not understand what the questions required of them. This seems to result from insufficient practice in, not simply how to answer questions, but also in how to be confident about their own thoughts, how to express those thoughts in relation to specific questions and how to make those thoughts clear to other people reading them.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a view put forward in an article titled "Capturing the Power of Classroom Assessment". The following were deemed to be the correct answers.

- (a) To remove the barriers to learning/to help candidates to overcome difficulty and learn.
- (b) Teachers still pass on information to candidates/Candidates are still expected to learn it/Teachers still employ a familiar variety of classroom assessments/Candidates still ask the critical question.
- (c) Poking fun at candidates' focus on the test above all else/trivialising their concern with the test.
- (d) It seeks to involve the reader, get the reader to share his point of view/It seeks to establish solidarity/direct appeal.
- (e) He is careful in making his statements/not dogmatic/moderate/guarded; he is seeking to convince the reader that he is reasonable, unbiased.
- (f) It will allow teachers to assess candidates' growth and development and identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Candidates did well on questions that required no more than quoting directly from the passage. Thus, candidates seemed to have little difficulty in answering (a), (b), and (f). In contrast, understanding the 'writer's intent' posed a challenge for many candidates – implicit meanings were not fully understood. Thus, (c) and (e) proved difficult for many candidates. In attempts to answer questions, candidates wrote long sentences and paragraphs hoping that the answer would emerge somehow.

Advice

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get candidates to move beyond literal interpretations. In the explanation of literary devices and specific phrases and sentences used by writers, candidates have to be accurate and precise in their answers. Teachers should dissuade candidates from giving long-winded answers which seek to conceal ignorance.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterization, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood and good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. There were several candidates who attempted to use words and structures with which they were not familiar. The result was that what they wrote was often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help candidates feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Two problems appearing on scripts in recent years and evident again this year were:

- a) an element of what appears to be plagiarism or the writing of rehearsed stories with the question stimulus merely tacked on;
- b) essays that are not stories.

In the case of (a) teachers are advised to encourage candidates to learn from others but not represent other people's work as their own. On (b) candidates should be told and reminded that total failure to answer the question results in zero marks being given to the response.

Some candidates also seem unable to differentiate description from story, especially when the stimulus is a picture (as was the case with Question 4). Teachers should spend time helping candidates to appreciate the power of description in storytelling but should stress the need for a story to do more than describe. This is likely to become even more important in relation to next year's paper which is expected to have topics for story as well as description.

Often candidates' ignorance of basic mechanics and spelling interferes with the examiner's appreciation of the story; sometimes the problem is not so great but is noticeable and affects the candidates' marks.

Advice

Teachers should not encourage candidates to over-indulge in the expression of literary devices. There has to be a match between the setting and the action. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Teachers need to give all candidates practice in action-oriented stories and not restrict choices to emotional stories. Candidates should be encouraged, as often as possible, to interpret topics in a positive and wholesome way and not to restrict themselves to situations of poverty, degradation and stress. Training in short story writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

Candidates displayed similar strengths and weaknesses in writing argumentatively as in previous years, although there were signs that candidates are being engaged more in how to structure their arguments. Nevertheless, too many candidates lack an awareness of topical issues. There is clear indication that they are uninformed about social and environmental factors within the region and globally and therefore experience great difficulty in responding adequately to the topics. Candidates at this stage of their education need to read more about what is happening around them; get information that can inform their opinion; and see how opinions are expressed in various media. Despite the apparent 'closeness' of the topics to the candidates' experiences, too many candidates were unable to take their arguments to the level expected. Some who have an opinion express their position in somewhat parochial and pedestrian ways. Others who had one idea kept repeating that idea throughout the essay.

It is noticeable where candidates have been 'taught' how to organize their points in paragraphs. In a few cases candidates had very similar beginning and closing statements. For example, several responses from the same centre had essays that began: "*It is fundamentally correct ...*" and ended: "*I conclude by restating...*" This kind of slavish reproduction should not be encouraged.

In summary the following were identified in candidates' responses:

Candidates who displayed superiority understood the demands of the topic; identified their audience; cogently presented their points and argued effectively using appropriate devices. Competent candidates demonstrated some ability to raise points, but faltered on argumentation. Weak responses came from candidates who had some knowledge of the topics, but lacked the skills of argumentation and displayed very weak language skills.

General Proficiency (Guyana)

SECTION ONE (Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to write a letter to their school principal pointing out the most important information about an advertised youth symposium. Candidates were expected to identify the time and place of the symposium, the topics to be covered, the contacts and deadlines. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose in not more than 100 words, as in the model below:

I am inviting you to the National Youth Symposium sponsored by the government and NGOs on the Challenges of Adolescent Health to be held at the Obana Conference Centre, January 8, 2006. Sessions are designed for youth and other persons. The sessions will be conducted by experts in the field of nutrition, human sexuality and diseases, drugs and other social issues. Bukawela Tudor will deliver the feature address. There will be testimonials from other influential young people and live entertainment. For information on registration and other details contact Yvonne Dalton at 111 2615 by December 15, 2005.

The format of the presentation lent itself to better summarising and there was consequently a much higher average achieved on this question than in previous years.

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

Question 2

Candidates were given a passage from O.R. Dathorne's *Dele's child* and were asked to answer eight questions on the passage.

(c) was the simplest of the questions requiring only a restatement of the last part of sentence 2 in paragraph 2. Most candidates had no trouble with this question, even though some thought it necessary to write lengthy paraphrases.

(a) was also a simple question which could be answered after a first reading of the passage. Only a minority of candidates had difficulty with this question.

(b) presented most candidates with little difficulty because it involved a straightforward contrast between sentence 2 and sentence 3.

(d) required candidates to read paragraph 2 and to come up with a word or phrase summarising the narrator's state of mind as evidenced in words such as 'spit at', 'hate', 'I checked myself suddenly', 'viciously', 'Damn them'. Any equivalent of 'unstable', 'resentful' or 'bitter' was acceptable. Many candidates did not understand the phrase 'state of mind'.

(e) may initially have seemed difficult, but the repetition of the idea of stillness/quietness no less than five times in lines 4-7 made the answer relatively simple.

(f) sought to find out whether candidates understood a sentence final comment by the narrator showing the difference between what was officially announced and the narrator's view of the matter (that he did not agree with it). This question proved difficult for most candidates.

(g) required the candidates to identify the narrator's reaction of hostility or anger to not being remembered. This partially overlapped with (d). Performance on this question was moderate.

(h) required candidates to identify 'kind/kindness' as a word being used sarcastically by the narrator. Most candidates did not seem to understand what sarcasm meant.

Question 3

Candidates were presented with an argumentative letter written to the editor of the Gleaner newspaper and asked to answer six questions on it.

(b) and (c) proved straightforward for most candidates. The most superficial reading of the passage would have allowed candidates to identify the 'major event' as a hurricane or more specifically Hurricane Ivan. Question (c) was based on paragraph 2 which identified 'laws of physical health', 'moral laws' and 'environmental laws'. Candidates variously gave one, two or all three parts in their responses

(a) and (d) were answered by most candidates by directly citing parts of the passage – (a) 'mankind's interventions'; (d) 'The Creator has equipped us with intelligence ... inform ourselves'. While (a) was answered correctly by most candidates, the reverse was true of (d).

(e) proved to be difficult for many candidates because it required a careful reading of paragraph 3 to work out the answer rather than just a quotation from the paragraph or a reliance on religious beliefs.

(f) was basically straightforward, but candidates had to identify the 'object' precisely ('hot stove'). Answers such as 'hot stove principle' or 'stove' did not get full marks.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

There were several stories of a much higher quality than usual, but the usual weaknesses surfaced in responses in this section. In the case of Question 4, the picture stimulus, there was the usual problem of concentration on description of the picture. Yet, there were several good stories given in response. In the case of 5 and 6, there were too many stories with tenuous connections to the stimulus; and, more generally, there was an inability to write a short story.

Recommendations for improvement in story writing given elsewhere in this report apply here.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

Performance in this section was much better than in previous years. Candidates seemed to find the topics familiar and to their liking and therefore produced better arguments. In the case of Question 7, which referred to "the government", some candidates took this as an opportunity to attack or defend a political party, according to their own political persuasion. In many cases bias prevented candidates from presenting reasoned arguments. In the case of Question 8 consistency in argument usually provided the critical division between good and weak answers.

The same recommendations for improvement in argument given elsewhere in this report apply here.

Basic Proficiency

General Comments

The examination in 2005 followed the format used in previous years. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of literary and persuasive writing. The table below shows the marks assigned to the different papers by profiles.

	PAPER 01 Multiple Choice	PAPER 02 Essay	TOTAL
Understanding	60	24	84
Expression	–	56	56
TOTAL	60	80	140

There was a slight increase in the number of candidates taking the examination in 2005:
4,502 (2001) Ø 3,792 (2002) Ø 3777 (2003) Ø 3,063 (2004) Ø 3,504 (2005).

The statistics show a significant increase in the percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in 2005:– 16.20 % (2003) Ø 16.78% (2004) Ø 29.42% (2005).

The performance mean over the last eight years has been up and down, but in 2005 it was better than the three previous years:-

(1998) 53.13 – (1999) 51.32 – (2000) 56.57 – (2001) 55.08 – (2002) 49.57 – (2003) 47.17 Ø (2004) 49.62 Ø (2005) 52.28.

Detailed Comments

Paper 01 - Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2005 showed an upward change over 2004. The mean score in 2004, out of a possible 60, was 25.58 and this moved to 27.84 in 2005.

Paper 02 - Free Response

Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 was as follows:

			2004	2005
Section 1	Summary skills	(20 marks)	5.06	5.56
Section 2	Comprehension	(24 marks)	9.87	9.93
Section 3	Story Writing	(16 marks)	5.17	5.14
Section 4	Argument	(20 marks)	5.62	6.90

SECTION ONE (Expression)

Question 1 tested the candidates' ability to summarise a passage written in continuous prose. The level of interpretation of the candidates who attempted this question was poor. Many of them used their personal experiences to give meaning to the responses. This was probably because they found the passage too difficult. Indeed very few candidates gave evidence of a clear understanding of the passage. The weaker candidates showed complete misunderstanding of the passage and wrote responses which demonstrated incompetence. In addition most candidates presented responses with just sentence fragments and lack of overall cohesiveness. They displayed lack of organization of material and their sequencing was poor. Many candidates simply reproduced the passage while others in their effort to use their own words exceeded the word limit without including the main points. The relatively few candidates who were able to identify the relevant points were to some extent able to give reasonable responses to the question. A few demonstrated ability which was seemingly above the level of Basic Proficiency. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose as in the model below:

Model Answer

When industrialisation started it was marked by terrible working conditions which would be unacceptable today. Working hours were based on those of peasants and handicraftsmen, the only workers at the time, and varied between 12 to 14 hours each day. Many of the workers were children who were among the persons who could most easily leave agriculture.

Inexperienced workers using machinery exposed themselves to the risk of injury. Protective measures were introduced and improved, recognising the advances in technologies and the importance placed on human life and safety.

Advice

It is recommended to teachers that they pay particular attention to concord, tense and sentence structure and reinforce the skills needed in summary writing. Teachers must be aware that in some cases English needs to be taught as a second language and so second language approaches need to be adopted if there is to be an improvement in the level of results of these candidates.

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

Question 2

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand a prose passage in Standard English. It assessed their ability to use interpretative and analytical skills. (b) posed the greatest difficulty. Most of the candidates based their answers on the increase on size of the family instead of stating that there was difficulty in identifying who was related to whom. Candidates also encountered great difficulty in responding to (e). As was the case in (b), many failed to score in (e). However, (f) proved to be the easiest and most candidates were able to give the correct response.

Advice

It is recommended that teachers concentrate on teaching comprehension skills, especially inference, with particular reference to reading material. Candidates need more practice in answering the kinds of questions set on the paper, questions requiring precise answers. In preparing for these questions teachers should make sure that candidates read questions a number of times before they attempt to write their answers. After reading the whole passage, candidates should also re-read the section of the passage relevant to each specific question to make sure that what they are thinking of writing is what the passage says. Candidates should be advised to re-read what they have written to make sure that it makes sense to someone reading it.

Question 3

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand a persuasive passage written in Standard English. Most candidates interpreted (c), (e) and (f) satisfactorily but had difficulty with (a), (b) and (d). The majority of candidates performed best on question (e). Many were also able to answer (c) and (f) correctly. In question 'a' however many candidates thought that 'Menu Dining and Entertainment Curacao' was a restaurant and focussed on getting food. For (b) the majority of candidates did not focus on the word 'precisely' and gave responses like 'the Caribbean', 'locals', 'international people'. The overall performance of the candidates showed an improvement over former years. Most candidates attempted this question and many of them earned six marks and more. It was encouraging to see so many candidates recognizing the passage as persuasive writing.

Advice

It is recommended that teachers reinforce the recognition of the different types of writing. More attention needs to be paid to identifying relevant information relating to particular questions set on chosen passages. Candidates also need to do much more reading. More attention should be paid to spelling and punctuation.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

This section tested the candidates' ability to express themselves creatively in continuous prose. The most popular question in this section was question 5, but questions 6 and 4 were done by an appreciable number of candidates. In response to question 4, many candidates wrote descriptively and ignored several elements of the story. In question 5, generally the sequence of events resulting in the disappearance of the character was credible. However, there were several stories which had a tenuous link with the stimulus. In question 6 the interpretation of 'surprise' was limited; the majority created 'birthday surprises' or the 'surprise' of meeting their father for the first time. In addition to this, there were many stories in which the link with the stimulus was weak. There were also a few candidates who fused the three topics into one story. There were a few candidates who demonstrated superiority and many scripts demonstrated competence. The majority of scripts were of the level of Range 3 (5-8 marks). There were a few in Range 1 where the candidates showed total inability to write Standard English. Much work needs to be done in developing candidates' narrative skills. Similarly, structures of Standard English need to be taught in a systematic way. In very many cases the lack of competence in Standard English interfered with the story line.

Advice

It is recommended that candidates be encouraged to read more widely in order to develop a richer vocabulary and so avoid mundane expressions. They need more practice in writing short stories and in incorporating dialogue in story writing. They should be given more exposure to figurative interpretations. This can be done by using model short stories and musical ballads. Candidates should be encouraged to edit their work before they write the final draft.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

This section tested the candidates' ability to write persuasively and present sound arguments in continuous Standard English. In question 7 a few candidates took the word 'argument' to mean a confrontation between two persons and so they wrote a dramatic sketch. Many had difficulty dealing with all parts of the stimulus. Most of these wrote about 'getting tough' and ignored the expulsion component. A few wrote about how candidates should 'deal with violence' when other candidates provoked them. Expulsion was often confused with suspension. Candidates who performed creditably showed an understanding of a good essay format with an introduction, a body with well-developed paragraphs and a conclusion. These candidates also made use of various persuasive techniques such as the rhetorical question, repetition, statistical data, authoritative statements, personal appeal and suitable quotations. Weaker candidates were generally unable to clarify a position in response to the stimulus beyond stating agreement and disagreement. While most of these candidates were able to make a few relevant statements there was very little evidence of ability to link and develop these ideas. Very few used paragraphs. Much of the language used was closer to the vernacular than to Standard English. Poor spelling made words almost impossible to be recognized: 'schped behavyer' for stupid behaviour, 'armynetions' for ammunition. Most of these candidates were unable to write clear introductions or relevant conclusions.

Advice

It is recommended that teachers pay greater attention to subject/verb agreement. Candidates must be encouraged to use their dictionaries to improve their spelling and vocabulary. They need more practice in logical development of argument, use of rhetorical questions and appropriate use of figurative language. It is felt too that candidates should be encouraged to do research on popular topics based on issues on the radio and the news-papers. Candidates need to be given many opportunities to write. Debates and discussions provide opportunity for candidates to practice expressing opinion. Reading West Indian literature that uses the vernacular and discussing the difference between this and Standard English can develop the candidates' ability to distinguish between the two. Candidates need more practice in the use of topic sentences and paragraphs.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2006

ENGLISH A

ENGLISH A
GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

MAY/JUNE 2006

GENERAL COMMENTS

General Proficiency

The examination in 2006 was the first year the revised syllabus was assessed. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of summary, literary and persuasive writing. In Paper 02 candidates were allowed a choice in Section 3 between story writing and description. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:-

	PAPER 01 Multiple Choice	PAPER 02 Essay	TOTAL
Understanding	60*46+	40*30+	76+ = 40%
Expression	-	90*114+	114+ = 60%

* raw score
+ weighted mark

The statistics this year have to be read more carefully because of the changes in the marks allotted and the changes in the weighting in Paper 02.

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above this year and previous years is as follows:

$\frac{2003}{49.53}$	$\frac{2004}{49.60}$	$\frac{2005}{52.70}$	$\frac{2006}{48.54}$
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The performance mean for the examination (out of a total of 125) for 2003-2005 and (out of a total of 190*) for 2006 is as follows:

(2003)50.62 (2004) 50.74 (2005) 52.76 (2006) 41.51

Average performance over the last four years on the multiple choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

$\frac{2003}{34.63}$	$\frac{2004}{33.09}$	$\frac{2005}{33.67}$	$\frac{2006}{32.36}$
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Average performance (2003-2005) in the component sections of Paper 02 (all out of 25 marks) is given below. Average performance in 2006 is given out of 25 for comparison with previous years and also out of the relevant 2006 totals.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Section 1 Summary skills	8.20	9.23	8.80	8.66/10.40 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension	8.22	9.30	9.16	10.85/12.15 (28)
Section 3 Story Writing/Description	8.84	8.79	9.70	10.22/14.31 (35)
Section 4 Argument	9.29	8.66	10.54	9.75/13.65 (35)

There was improvement in performance in Section 2 (Comprehension) and Section 3 (Story Writing/Description).

General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates must, above all, demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. The fundamental preparation for the examination is that candidates should develop high-level skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression) in the English language. These skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons, semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. The kind of writing that has become popular in e-mail messages and in advertisements is not acceptable in this examination.

Students should come to the exam with a well rehearsed procedure for tackling each question, that is, identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy, producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each student, based on the student's ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under CXC examination conditions. Teachers should give students specific instructions about deleting and editing in order that markers can read and understand what the candidate intended without undue difficulty.

In Section 1, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced verbatim by the candidate, CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates.

Some of the better candidates, in attempting to put the summary in their own words, sometimes change meanings or insert extraneous material. This is penalised. Therefore, those candidates who are seeking to achieve full marks or high marks should make sure that they preserve the meaning of the original.

The questions in Section 2 are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. For example, instructions sometimes say 'give a word'; at other times they say 'give a phrase'; at other times still they say 'give a clause'. In each case candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Candidates need to read and re-read the questions themselves as well as the passages on which the questions are set. Answers should be to the point. These questions never require paragraph-long answers. Responding to

a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer.

In Section 3 many candidates are exceeding the suggested length for the short story and though excess is not penalized in the marking in this case, spending too much time on one question can affect performance in others. Every candidate doing this examination should have read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC). These stories, however, should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations. Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better students tend to write stories that fall within or not too far out of the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak. Often too, students who write excessively long stories have insufficient time left to complete the paper properly. Teachers are encouraged to help their students to plan their stories, focus on building plots, intensifying conflict, creating a good sense of character, instead of merely relating one or a string of events. Candidates should not memorise published stories and hope that this kind of cheating escapes the attention of the examiners.

In the case of Section 4, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, supported by suitable examples. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that corroborate their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some inexplicable reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiners' views.

General Proficiency

SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read a passage taken from a newsletter and to summarise in no more than 120 words the major factors which contribute to the disadvantages encountered by women in the labour market . Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose.

According to the passage, the major factors contributing to disadvantages are:

- limited access to stable and well paid employment
- inability to pay for public education/training
- inability to qualify for entry to training
- choice of 'feminine' and non-technical fields in training
- socio-cultural factors in the attitudes of key people
- private sector training that possibly reinforces gender roles and biases.

Following are three excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) Many factors contribute to the disadvantages encountered by women *in the labour market*. Women have limited access to stable, well-paid employment and are confined to 'feminine' work. In vocational courses women opt for less technical fields which narrow their opportunities. Women are also faced with the attitudes of employers and society itself when they seek employment. This is due to socio-cultural factors. In poor countries, women are disadvantaged in secondary or tertiary education because of entrance requirements or the cost of courses. Although numerous programmes are put in place by non-governmental organizations, they do not look at the impact of this training due to lack of monitoring and reporting. Such programmes may reinforce existing gender roles and biases. [118 words]
- (2) Though women have increasing opportunity to earn income, they are still disadvantaged economically, being mostly restricted to low-level, low-paying jobs. Contributing factors include low female enrolment in the technical-vocational areas that pay well. Females make some poor choices in areas of study because of their own values. They are influenced by other negative social attitudes towards various areas of employment. Another factor is that the school system does not help already disadvantaged girls to reach the entry requirements for technical training nor can they pay the high costs. Informal training is provided by private companies, but the quality of this training is not monitored, and it may only serve to maintain a negative situation. [114 words]
- (3) The main factors that contribute to the disadvantages found by women in the world of work are educational and social. In relation to formal education and training, many women in most parts of the world cannot afford or do not qualify for entry to post-primary institutions. Those who do often restrict themselves to non-technical "feminine" subjects. This practice is reinforced by society and helps to limit the women in their job choices. Non-formal training is available in private institutions, but the courses in these situations are inadequately monitored and might reinforce the negative attitudes and gender issues that are already contributing to the disadvantages faced by these women in the arena of work. [113 words]

Performance on Question 1 this year was just marginally below last year's. There are still too many presumably genuine attempts which pay absolutely no attention to the word limit given. Some candidates operate with the casual assumption that excess will be overlooked in all answers. **This absolutely does not apply to Question 1.** As usual, many candidates lifted portions of the passage of varying lengths verbatim, or paraphrased them indiscriminately. Superior scripts clearly demonstrated satisfactory comprehension and writing skills, without any injection of extraneous material, that is, material not found in the passage.

Advice

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- (i) remind students to observe the stated length.
- (ii) drill students in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done; insist that students read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- (iii) help students to recognise the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills)
- (iv) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using one's own words as far as possible
 - b) using plain English with clarity and conciseness

- c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation/context
- d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing/reading
- e) observing correct mechanics of the language

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

This section requires students to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that students have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. So, students should know how to select word or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also students need to do as the question asks: if it requires ‘a word’ or ‘a phrase’, then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong – it is an indication that the student does not know exactly what the answer is. This is a recurrent problem which is likely to be the kind that would respond to more oral and written practice in class with immediate feedback and discussion.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates’ understanding of ideas expressed in a narrative passage, a selection from Michael Anthony’s “Pita of the Deep Blue Sea”. The following were deemed to be the correct answers:

- (a) Pita/the fish
 - (b) fast moving action; suspense; tension
 - (c) panic; anxiety; frustration; desperation
 - (d) to show the tremendous effort being made to escape
 - (e) the net
 - (f) because that is where the fate of the fish was decided, where death took place
 - (g) he was now free
 - (h) it was the sound of the place where he would have died
-
- (a) This question was answered correctly by most candidates. The initial difficulty which candidates had to overcome was that the fish was given a name. Where candidates did not come to terms with this, the passage as a whole was not well understood.
 - (b) This question was not answered correctly by most candidates. It is the type of question which reflects the level of instruction candidates received, since it deals with a writer’s craft.
 - (c) This question did not present great difficulty to most candidates. However, some candidates answered the question with words that were extreme or too vague.
 - (d) It was not satisfactory to make a general statement, that is, that ‘repeat’ means ‘emphasis’. Candidates needed to explain this specific situation. Candidates had to demonstrate that they understood the passage.

- (e) As in (a), candidates had to interpret the element of personification/animation correctly. Many candidates were unable to do this.
- (f) Some candidates interpreted 'fateful' as "faithful".
- (g) This question did not present great difficulty to most candidates.
- (h) This proved a difficult question for most candidates. Candidates needed to formulate their answers based on an understanding of the whole passage.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a view put forward in an article extracted from Time magazine. The following were deemed to be the correct answers:

- (a) The debate is 'Can people be overweight but still healthy?'
 - (b) The phrase suggests that most people are involved in the debate or that the debate is worldwide. Alternatively, the phrase gives weight to the issue or shows the importance of it.
 - (c) The impression that the writer wants to convey is that people take sides or that people hold strongly to particular views or that there are conflicting views.
 - (d) The writer uses the word 'however' to point out that other persons hold a contrasting view.
 - (e) The most important point in the last paragraph is that fitness and size are equally important.
 - (f) Two factors are people should eat well and people should exercise regularly.
 - (g) [As a result of confusion about the numbering of paragraphs, this question was removed from the examination and not marked]
 - (h) The writer is referring to fitness proponents.
-
- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (b) As usual, the word 'effect' was beyond the competence of the majority of candidates.
 - (c) In this case, the word 'impression' did not constitute any major difficulty. Most candidates were able to formulate satisfactory answers to this question.
 - (d) Most candidates understood that 'however' introduced a contrast and were able to formulate a correct answer.
 - (e) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (f) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (h) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.

Advice

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to move beyond literal interpretations. In the explanation of literary devices and specific phrases/sentences used by writers, candidates have to be accurate and precise in their answers. Teachers should dissuade students from giving long-winded answers which rarely conceal ignorance.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterisation, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. There were several students who attempted to use words and structures with which they were not familiar. The result was that what they wrote was often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help students feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Description must be clearly constructed and developed (e.g. the different components must be linked appropriately). Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different focuses and facets must be linked appropriately (e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements. Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself. Any change in perspective (e.g. visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. If characters are being described, they must be sufficiently developed. Dialogue, when used, should be functional (e.g. to develop character, atmosphere, mood, etc.) There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create characters, moods, tones, atmosphere and setting.

A specific problem which arose this year is that a vast number of candidates did not seem to be aware of the change made to Section 3, which now asked for a description in Question 6. Since this may not have been the fault of the candidates themselves and it is possible that in spite of the long lead time given they were not informed and prepared by their teachers, it was decided not to penalise candidates who wrote a story in answer to Question 6. **This concession will not be repeated next year.**

There were not many problems with Question 4. It produced a range of responses with several that were mainly descriptions. However, most candidates were able to integrate the picture into a story. Most candidates wrote stories with a theme of a lost son or daughter. Several stories described the old woman, her condition and circumstances and then developed the plot.

Question 5 was a popular choice, but it produced a preponderance of mediocre stories with hardly any superior writing. It encouraged candidates to create humour which sometimes was not more than simplistic. Many responses to Question 5 merely had the stimulus quotation tacked on and not satisfactorily integrated into the plot.

In the case of Question 6, a great number of candidates proceeded to write a response without reading the instructions carefully. In the relevant responses to this question, various situations were created – a person returning home from abroad, a person returning after many years, a person coming to the scene after a disaster and many others. The good responses to this question used details to create pictures of the environment, made comparisons or reflections that justified the comment “... she felt like she was in another country” and expressed

thoughts and feelings suited to the situation. Although the question itself assisted with what should be described – “what she saw and her thoughts and feelings”, many students did not follow the instructions of the question.

Advice

Use more and varied pictures to help stimulate and guide writing. This would help to stimulate classroom writing e.g. help students focus on use of details to create character, emotion, atmosphere, etc. The creation of humour in writing is something that students might enjoy doing in their writing classes – how to tell a joke, how to write a joke, how to hold back the punch line are part of story-writing that might interest even reluctant writers. How to use language effectively to do all this e.g. use of short sentences and exclamation marks for effect could be a natural way of calling attention to form.

In relation to integrating the given quotation into the story, teachers are advised to work more on logical development of plot, integration of story elements, along with the other story writing elements. A lot more story reading in preference to talking about story-writing elements. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short story writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

A majority of the candidates chose Question 8, while Question 7 was challenging for many who did it. In relation to the former, some candidates lambasted the Minister of Education instead of taking a stance, giving solid and strong arguments, expanding the arguments, sustaining a position and employing argumentative techniques. In relation to Question 7, too many responses lacked substance and information from which candidates could argue. Those who performed well on this topic most likely had the advantage of knowledge from Social Studies and were current with topical issues such as C(aribbean) S(ingle) M(arket) and E(conomy). Unfortunately, many candidates had no knowledge of Caricom as a regional institution and thus could not argue about what the ‘movement of skilled professionals’ could mean for the region.

In general, candidates who displayed superiority understood the demands of the topic, identified their audience, cogently presented their points and argued effectively using appropriate devices. Competent candidates demonstrated some ability to raise points, but faltered on argumentation. Weak responses came from candidates who had little or only vague knowledge of the topic and lacked the skills of argumentation.

Advice

Students need to be guided about the difference between ‘arguing’ and ‘quarrelling’. Students should be warned against making unsubstantiated, partisan political statements in an essay that requires logical arguments illustrated with relevant examples.

Basic Proficiency

GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination in 2005 followed the format used in previous years. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of literary and persuasive writing. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Understanding and Expression) across the two papers is as follows:-

	PAPER 01 Multiple Choice	PAPER 02 Essay	TOTAL
Understanding	60	37	97 = 60%
Expression	–	65	65 = 40%

There was a decrease in the number of candidates taking the examination in 2006:

4,502(2001) 3,792(2002) 3,777 (2003) 3,063 (2004) 3,063 (2005) 3,089 (2006).

There was a decrease in the percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in 2006:

16.20%(2003) 16.78%(2004) 29.42%(2005) 26.51%(2006).

The performance mean over the last nine years has been up and down, but in 2006 it was better than most of the previous years:

(1998) 53.13 – (1999) 51.32 – (2000) 56.57 – (2001) 55.08 – (2002) 49.57 – (2003) 47.17 (2004) 49.62 (2005) 52.28 (2006) 56.13 [actually 60.14 out of 150].

Not enough students are demonstrating competence in Profile II (expression). Students seem oblivious to spelling rules and their spelling is particularly weak and increasingly phonetic. The concept of paragraphing is ignored and, generally, punctuation is limited to full stops and commas.

There is increasing evidence that some candidates are short of ideas or material. For instance, some candidates used the passage in Question 1 as a response to Question 7 or in support of the moot in Question 8 and some candidates used Question 2 as material to answer Section III.

Detailed Comments

Paper 01 - Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2006 showed an upward change over 2005. The mean score in 2005, out of a possible 60, was 27.84 and this moved to 28.14 in 2006.

Paper 02 - Free Response

Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 was as follows:

	2004	2005	2006
Section 1 Summary skills (20 marks)	5.06	5.56	4.78/7.17 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension (24 marks)	9.87	9.93	10.99/12.36 (27)
Section 3 Story Writing/Description (16 marks)	5.17	5.14	5.32/6.65 (20)
Section 4 Argument (20 marks)	5.62	6.9	6.90/8.62 (25)

* Under 2006 the mark given first is for purposes of comparison with previous years and the second mark given is the actual average of out the 2006 totals for each section.

SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

Question 1 tested the candidates' ability to summarise a passage written in continuous prose taken from the San Juan Star newspaper. The passage examined the link between media violence and children's behaviour. Following are three excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- 1. Studies show that violence in the electronic media is linked to violence in society. Children exposed to such violence may imitate the acts and the actors who commit them. Consequently, their minds are becoming seriously affected as they begin to see life as an exciting game, not as reality. Parents do not always fully understand how damaging these violent acts are. Parents, therefore, should be more attentive to these shows and discuss them with their children. [76 words]*
- 2. Studies show a link between children's behaviours and the violence and aggression they are exposed to via television, movies and video games. These studies are important because, to deal effectively with the problem, we have to understand it thoroughly. Constant exposure to violence and aggression causes children to imitate these behaviours and view them as normal – even exciting! Parents don't realize how awful some video games are. They need to be more vigilant and talk to their children, many of whom see life as a game. Some don't even know what is real and what is not. [97 words]*
- 3. Studies show a link between children's behaviours and the violence and aggression they are exposed to via audio-visual and interactive media. This exposure causes children to admire and imitate acts of aggression and violence. In fact, it makes them see life as a game and some cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality. Parents and adults do not realise how awful video games are. They need to be more aware and discuss the negative content with their children. We need to understand the problem thoroughly so that we can deal with it effectively. [94 words]*

Too many students exceeded the word limit. Too many students were unable to use their own words in their attempt to summarise the passage. Many merely lifted parts of the passage and combined these to form a summary. A few candidates responded to the topic at an emotional level and were very forthright in expressing their views. The result was more an argument than a summary and therefore provided no basis for assessment of summary skills.

Advice

Exercises in summary writing should include passages that are contentious in their subject matter. In such cases, students should be taught to remain calm in the face of arguments they do not agree with and to summarise the argument given rather than to respond to it.

In order to help students express themselves logically and concisely, teachers should provide students with ample exercises in making construction shifts and in recognising and writing equivalent sentences. Students should be encouraged to constantly review the collective nouns they have learnt from primary school and to enrich their vocabulary by regular reading of good literature. One way of doing this would be to have a classroom book club.

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

Question 2

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand a prose passage written in Standard English taken from Nailah Folami Imoja's *Pick of the Crop*. It assessed their ability to use interpretative and analytical skills. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) Leroi had to stay humble because his mother reprimanded him if he wasn't.
- (b) Ma regarded him as his own man; she stopped sitting by the door; she stopped waiting up for him when he went out.
- (c) Her reward was that he could stay at home for as long as he chose.
- (d) Ma lay in bed awake at night because she was waiting for Leroi to come home.
- (e) The phrase tells us that he was respectful towards his mother and didn't want to offend her.
- (f) Her opinion was that he was a good boy – he wouldn't curse for her to hear.

The overall performance on this question was encouraging. Students performed well on questions which required a grasp of explicit statements made in the passage (a, b, c, d), but showed some difficulty with questions which required them to draw conclusions or make inferences (e, f) about opinions and attitudes.

- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (b) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (c) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (d) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (e) Many candidates had difficulty understanding and explaining 'attitude'.
- (f) Many candidates had difficulty formulating a response to the question of 'opinion of'.

Advice

It is recommended that teachers concentrate on teaching comprehension skills, especially inference, with particular reference to reading material. Students need more practice in answering the kinds of questions set on the paper, questions requiring precise answers. In preparing for these questions teachers should make sure that students read questions a number of times before they attempt to write their answers. After reading the whole passage, students should also re-read the section of the passage relevant to each specific question to make sure that what they are thinking of writing is what the passage says. Students should be advised to re-read what they have written to make sure that it makes sense to someone reading it.

Question 3

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand an argumentative passage written in Standard English published in The *Barbados Advocate* newspaper. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) The writer makes the comment because of the variety and quantity of cell phones available and abused in public.
 - (b) The writer's view of such people is that they are inconsiderate.
 - (c) The writer's opinion is that people use cell phones in public to show off.
 - (d) The writer makes the comment because nowadays everybody has a cell phone.
 - (e) He refers to them as culprits because their cell phones rang at inappropriate moments and they answered them.
 - (f) Two developments the writer is predicting are that new annoying traits will emerge and that the situation will get even worse.
 - (g) The effect that the writer expects it to have is to cause the person not to use the cell phone inappropriately in public.
-
- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (b) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (c) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (d) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
 - (e) The word 'culprit' was not generally understood. Many answers failed to mention the idea of 'inappropriate moments'.
 - (f) This proved a little more difficult than the first four because the answer was not restricted to one sentence.
 - (g) Many answers did not deal with the writer's expectation or intention.

Advice

In order to master this section, students should be given practice in being specific when answering questions. There is no need to write an answer of half a page for a question that is worth two marks. Various strategies should be employed to develop analytical skills in order to answer questions which require more than just quoting from the passage. Teachers need to get students to understand what is meant by the writer's expectation, intention, opinion and attitude and to realise that responses of this type require more than quoting from the passage, they require summarising and explanation.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

This section tested the candidates' ability to express themselves creatively in continuous prose. Instead of all of the questions requiring a story, this year this section included a question (Question 5) which tested candidates' ability to write a descriptive essay.

Question 6 was the most popular choice. In Question 4 many candidates simply described the picture while others wrote stories which had a tenuous link with the picture. Question 5 posed the greatest challenge with respect to interpretation. In several 'descriptions' 'Al' appeared only at the end, while in others he was nowhere in the scene.

An appreciable number of students demonstrated competence in employing all the elements of story writing: strong plots, good use of imagination, well-rounded characterization, appropriate resolution of conflict, satisfactory conclusion of action, skilful selection of details and effective use of dialogue. There were a few superior scripts. However, the majority of students continue to find this section a major challenge and some do not even attempt any of the three questions. Weak responses included unimaginative 'stories' which were a mere relation of loosely connected incidents. Other weaknesses included the following:

- Shift in perspective from first to third person and vice versa.
- Lack of or inadequate characterization
- Sudden appearance of characters; change of main character
- Underdeveloped stories
- Restricted vocabulary, faulty syntax and weak mechanics
- Stories far in excess of or below the suggested word limit.

Advice

Students should be provided with copious models of good short stories and should be taught the elements of story writing in a systematic way. After this they should be given regular practice in writing short stories using various stimuli. Students should be encouraged to read more widely in order to develop a more varied vocabulary. They should be given more exposure to figurative expressions. They need more practice in incorporating dialogue in story writing. Students should be encouraged to edit their work before they write the final draft.

SECTION FOUR(Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

This section tested the candidates' ability to express their views persuasively using various techniques of argument. Question 7 required students to state their views on a given topic while Question 8 required them to defend a position.

Candidates seemed to have no particular difficulty relating to the topics given. Generally the supporting details were pertinent to the topics. For example, candidates showed a clear understanding of the academic underachievement of Caribbean male youth (Question 7) as well as an awareness of the sometimes harsh realities of parenting (Question 8). Responses to Question 8, which was the more frequently answered question, focussed on either the negative socio-economic challenges of having more than two children or the sanction from God to "be fruitful and multiply". Because both Question 7 and Question 8 were in two parts, in responding, some candidates lost sight of the full argument and addressed only one part of the issue.

Weak responses ignored the use of punctuation and/or paragraphing, listed points rather than explain, expand or illustrate them, did not adhere to logical sequencing and used transitional words and phrases inappropriately. Some otherwise competent responses included slang words and expressions and MSN (computer) spellings.

Advice

Teachers are encouraged to continue to provide classroom activities for students to practice persuasive skills orally. They should encourage students to 'translate' popular slang expressions and should use 'teachable moments' to underscore the concept of appropriate use of language. They should also reinforce the conventions of writing Standard English. Interesting newspaper editorials could be used for class discussions. This would also help to develop students' analytical thinking and ability to respond concisely to higher order questions posed in Section 2. Students need more practice in logical development of argument, use of rhetorical questions and appropriate use of figurative language. Students need to be given many opportunities to write. Students need more practice in the use of topic sentences and paragraphs. Students would benefit from timed practice exercises in preparation for the examination.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS**

MAY/JUNE 2007

ENGLISH A

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ENGLISH A
GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS
MAY/JUNE 2007
GENERAL COMMENTS

General Proficiency

The examination in 2007 was the second year for the revised syllabus. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of summary, literary and persuasive writing. In Paper 02 candidates were allowed a choice in Section 3 between story writing and description. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:-

	Paper 01 Multiple Choice	Paper 02 Essay	Total
Understanding	60* = 46 +	40* = 30 +	76 + = 40%
Expression	-	90* = 114+	114 + = 60%
Total	46 +	144 +	190 + = 100%
* raw score + computed score			

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above this year and previous years is as follows:

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007

49.53 49.60 52.70 50.96 49.01

The performance mean for the examination (out of a total of 125) for 2003-2005 and (out of a total of 190*) for 2006 and 2007 is as follows:

(2003) 50.62 (2004) 50.74 (2005) 52.76 (2006) 79.14 (2007) 77.94

Average performance over the last five years on the multiple choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007
34.63 33.09 33.67 32.36 30.55

Average performance (2003-2005) in the component sections of Paper 02 (all out of 25 marks) is given below. Average performance in 2006 and 2007 is given out of the relevant totals.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Section 1 Summary skills	8.20	9.23	8.80	10.40 (30)	10.04 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension	8.22	9.30	9.16	12.58 (28)	15.45 (29)
Section 3 Story Writing Description	8.84	8.79	9.70	14.31 (35)	13.62 (35) 10.63 (35)
Section 4 Argument	9.29	8.66	10.54	13.65 (35)	13.74 (35)

General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates are required, above all, to demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. Preparation for the examination is a gradual process of acquiring and developing skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression), in the English language. In the examination, these skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons and semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. **The kind of writing that has become popular in e-mail messages and text messaging is not acceptable in this examination.**

Students should come to the examination with a well rehearsed procedure for tackling each question. In accordance with the concept of writing as a process (abbreviated under examination conditions), candidates should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure of identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each student, based on the student’s ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under CXC examination conditions.

Teachers should give students specific instructions about deleting and editing so that the appearance of their work is not off-putting to examiners. Though examiners have to make a great effort to decipher every word that some candidates have written, candidates should never forget that it is their own responsibility to write legibly.

The tasks in the examination are directly related, in most cases, to real-life skills. Employers and indeed the public at large generally regard performance in English language examinations as a measure of one’s ability to perform in the world of work. Consequently, it is not advantageous to treat English language as merely an academic subject or as a subject for “nerds”.

Specific advice on the sections of Paper 02

In **Section 1**, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale by the candidate, CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill (used, for example, by news reporters, policemen and CEOs reporting to their board of directors) and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates.

Some candidates, in attempting to put the summary in their own words, sometimes change meanings or

insert extraneous material. This is penalised. In real life such distortion would be seen either as an attempt to mislead or deceive or, in the case of a policeman presenting evidence to a court, it could lead to wrong,

unfair and disastrous decisions. So, those candidates seeking to achieve full marks or high marks should make sure that they preserve the meaning of the original.

In assessing Question 1, the examiners (keeping in mind the specified word limit) pay specific attention to the candidate's ability to use his/her own language, the accuracy and coverage of the major points and the ability to connect the main points to make the answer read smoothly.

The questions in **Section 2** are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. In response to each question candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Answers should be to the point. These questions never require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer. It is the candidates' responsibility to indicate clearly what the answer is; it is not the examiner's responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidate.

This section requires candidates to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that they have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. So, candidates should know how to select word or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also candidates need to do as the question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong - it is an indication that the candidates does not know exactly what the answer is.

In the preparation for **Section 3** every candidate should have read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC.) These stories should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations. More generally, candidates should not memorise published stories and hope that this kind of cheating escapes the attention of the examiners.

Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better candidates tend to write stories that fall within or not too far outside the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak.

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterization, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. Candidates should try to improve their own techniques of story writing, including the effective use of dialogue and the contrast between characters, by studying good stories written by Caribbean authors.

Candidates should use language that they can control. At times candidates use words and structures with which they are not really familiar. The result is that what they write is often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help students feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions - for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Since the descriptive essay is a new option in this section, greater attention should be paid to it. Description must be clearly constructed and developed (e.g. the different components must be linked appropriately). Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different focuses and facets must be linked appropriately (e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements. Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself. Any change in perspective (e.g. visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create

picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create moods, tones, atmosphere and setting.

In the case of **Section 4**, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Providing information without using good argumentative techniques is a weakness; so is the reverse. Candidates should pay attention to ‘tone’ and ‘audience’ and not indiscriminately use the language of debating in every argument they present. Candidates can learn different styles of argument by studying letters to the editor and editorials in newspapers as well as short, interesting articles in popular magazines or in the magazine section of newspapers.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that support their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some unfounded reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiners’ view.

DETAILED COMMENTS

General Proficiency

SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read and then summarise a passage taken from a popular magazine dealing with the history and significance of tattoos and other forms of body markings over the centuries. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose in no more than 120 words.

The examiners identified the major points in the passage to be the following:-

- Tattoos are permanent markings which have been around from the beginning of civilization.
- They were brought to the Caribbean from Africa, China and India, but the Amerindians wore them even before.
- They were used by people in the Caribbean for religious, ethnic and cultural purposes.
- Over the years they came to be personal expressions identified with rebellion and deviance.
- Attitudes have changed towards tattoos and today they have become acceptable as marks of uniqueness and difference.

Following are three excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) *From the beginning of civilization tattoos and other body markings have been marks of identification, spiritual protection and decoration. Tattoos are permanent markings which vary greatly and can be personally very revealing. A tattoo is an instant of your life etched forever on you for the world to see.*

Tattoos and other body markings were characteristic of the Amerindians of the Caribbean as well as of the Africans, Chinese and Indians who came here. For all these people, they had cultural, spiritual and ethnic significance. Over the centuries, tattoos and other body markings have changed back and forth from group significance to individual significance, presenting a daily image of difference and uniqueness. (112 words)

- (2) *Tattoos have been around from the beginning of time and were used originally as identification marks, spiritual protection and decoration, but now they are a popular form of self expression. Tattoos are permanent markings on the body which were brought to the Caribbean by slaves from Africa and indentured labourers from China and India, but were also used earlier by Amerindians.*

Over the years tattoos have changed from being positive to negative, often being confused with rebellion and deviance (non-conformity). Today, tattoos are once again seen as something positive: they are worn by people from all walks of life, on all parts of their body, saying to the world it's all right to be different. (115 words)

- (3) *Tattoos have been around from the earliest of times for identification as well as for spiritual and decorative purposes. They are more unique and permanent than other symbols and ornaments and can be seen by everyone.*

Tattoos and other body markings came to the Caribbean from Africa, China and India with slaves and indentured workers. Indigenous people also used tattoos for spiritual, cultural and personal reasons and to indicate social status.

Over time, tattoos displayed more personal expressions and were perceived by some to display anti-social or deviant behaviour. Today, however, tattoos have re-emerged as signs of personal expression, have gained respectability and are linked with cultural and social identity and individuality and not merely with style. (116 words)

Performance on Question 1 this year was about the same as last year, revealing the same strengths and weaknesses in candidates' answers. There were too many candidates who did not observe the word limit given. Among these, some seemed to operate with the casual assumption that excess would be overlooked in all answers, while a few attempted to deceive the examiners by putting an incorrect number of words at the end of their answer.

As usual, many candidates lifted portions of the passage, of varying lengths, verbatim or paraphrased them indiscriminately. Candidates who approached summary writing as a deletion exercise often ended up having sentences or pieces of sentences which were improperly connected to what preceded, were inaccurate or incoherent. This was especially so in relation to paragraph three, which dealt with the different ethnic groups.

Superior scripts clearly demonstrated satisfactory comprehension and writing skills, without any injection of extraneous material. They were able to bring different sentences and paragraphs together by the use of appropriate connectives and to cover all the main points.

Suggestions for teachers and students

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- (i) remind students to observe the stated length.
- (ii) drill students in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done; insist that students read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- (iii) help students to recognize the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills)
- (iv) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using one's own words as far as possible
 - b) using straightforward English with clarity and conciseness
 - c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation/context
 - d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing/reading
 - e) observing correct mechanics of the language

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

Performance in this section improved over last year with many candidates getting full or nearly full marks. There were no specific questions that candidates found particularly difficult, except for 2 (f). There were still a number of candidates who found it difficult to answer the question and stop, but felt the need to go on to write paragraph-long answers.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a passage taken from Noel Woodroffe's *Wing's Way*. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions set:

- (a) *Dawn; Midday; Evening*
- (b) *fish/ nets; cooking; oil*
- (c) *the flares of the oil refinery*
a huge red ball (1 mark)
- (d) (the kind of death) *found in the eyes of broken, old men*
(the kind of death) found on abandoned coasts ...
the hopelessness of this backwater village
- (e) *climbed*
- (f) An answer which suggested struggle and difficulty
- (g) The weight of the cars on the sun-softened pitch
- (h) *backwater village; missed and ignored; hopelessness of this backwater; swept clean of talent and vitality; dependent upon a stony earth and dwindling oil; vision of a hopeless future.*

Since 2 (f) required candidates to go beyond quoting from the passage and to construct the answer based on an understanding of the passage, this question was generally not well done. In many cases, it was clear that candidates were unable to follow the thread of meaning (as in the second paragraph of the passage) when sentences were beyond a certain length.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a view put forward about the 'generation gap' in an article extracted from *Time* magazine. The following were deemed to be the correct answers:

- (a) a large amount
- (b) the child has adult concerns; the child wants a lot of privacy; the child no longer trusts the goodwill of parents
- (c) not fixed; not forever; can be reversed; variable
- (d) the child's brain has matured; the child is capable of more independent judgement
- (e) parents
- (f) (i) their powerful feelings/their social lives/social power
(ii) power/opinion of other boys/anxiety about masculinity

- (g) they still need their mothers; even though bigger than her, they have to obey her
- (h) *but*

In response to a question as uncomplicated as 3 (a) for which candidates had to construct an answer using their own words, what several candidates wrote was either vague, misleading or inaccurate. This was also the case with answers to 3 (c).

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to move beyond the literal, to make logical judgements and to express these accurately.

Teachers should dissuade students from giving long-winded answers which rarely conceal ignorance.

Teachers should bear in mind that, in any one year, more questions like 2 (f) may occur on the examination paper and fewer which require direct citation from the passage. The incidence of particular question types will vary according to the selections the examiners make to ensure that the full syllabus is covered. Teachers should therefore familiarise themselves with this section of the syllabus or peruse papers over the years to make sure that they provide practice for students in all the question types specified in the syllabus.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 and 6

Question 4 required that candidates write a story based on a picture in which a man showed some measure of distress. Question 5 asked candidates to write a story which included the dramatic line *The phone rang once and stopped. It rang again. This was it now.* Question 6 required that candidates write a descriptive essay asking candidates to describe what some astronauts saw as they landed.

Question 6 was the least popular of the questions in this section (attempted by 10% of the candidates) and also the one least well done on average. Question 5 was the most popular (attempted by 52%) with Question 4 in between (attempted by 34%). Question 5 produced the best story for 2007. The overall performance on this section was not as good as last year.

Question 4 produced many responses dealing with the Iraq war or with disasters of Muslims/Arabs in various parts of the world. Most candidates were able to integrate the picture quite well into the story and many candidates were able to produce interesting stories.

Question 5 produced a variety of stories, some very well done and others which paid little attention to the significance of *This was it now* in the rubric. Even though most responses did not capture the idea of a pre-arranged signal, there was some element of panic or dreaming that allowed for a reasonable interpretation of the stimulus. As usual, many responses to this question had the stimulus quotation inserted without satisfactory integration into the plot.

In the case of Question 6, a great number of candidates, as was the case last year, wrote responses without reading the instructions carefully. Some of the responses suggest that candidates were unfamiliar with description and had had no practice dealing with it. In the relevant responses to this question, some candidates wrote about what the astronauts saw while landing on another planet, while others wrote on what they saw on returning to Earth. Weaker candidates found difficulty limiting themselves to describing what the astronauts saw as they landed and included in their responses a narration of the previous and subsequent travels of the astronauts.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers should treat Section Three as having two sections - two questions requiring short stories and one question requiring a descriptive essay.

Teachers should continue to use pictures from varied sources, especially those dealing with current topics and themes in newspapers, to help stimulate and guide writing. This helps to make classroom writing interesting and should help students to focus on the use of details to create character, emotion and atmosphere. The creation of humour in writing is something that students might enjoy doing in their writing classes - how to tell a joke, how to write a joke, how to hold back the punch line are part of story-writing that might interest even reluctant writers. How to use language effectively to do all this, for example, use of short sentences and exclamation marks for effect could be a natural way of calling attention to form.

In relation to integrating the given quotation into the story, teachers are advised to work more on logical development of plot, integration of story elements, along with the other story writing elements. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short story writing must always stress the process of thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

Students should be explicitly made familiar with the difference between narrative and descriptive writing. Students should imagine themselves using a camera and describing what they see through the lens as they move the camera gradually from left to right to take in the whole scene. While it is necessary for teachers to get students accustomed to description by practising descriptive phrases and sentences with striking adjectives and adverbs, students should be wary about memorising flowery phrases and sticking them willy-nilly into descriptive essays. In order to prepare students for this question, teachers have to focus specifically on vocabulary enrichment by providing students with a list of adjectives, one of nouns and another of adverbs and get students to combine them in a relevant way as they describe specific scenes. Teachers need to make these lists cover all the senses - sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 and 8

Question 7 asked candidates to present an argument for or against the use of cellular phones in school. Question 8 asked candidates to express their views on the topic *Popular music and dance on display in the Caribbean today are corrupting the youth and making them irresponsible*. Both these questions were within the immediate interest and current knowledge of candidates and candidates did not demonstrate any significant difference in preference for the one or the other. Even so, performance in this section this year was not significantly higher than last year.

Question 7 seemed to have been predicted and was practised in many schools throughout the region. This resulted in well-rehearsed answers in terms of points given for or against the proposition. The better responses to this question displayed good argumentative techniques/rhetorical devices. In addition, they anticipated the arguments on the other side and countered them satisfactorily.

Responses to Question 8 too often failed to examine and demonstrate the cause/effect relationship between music/dance and corrupt, indisciplined youth. They merely asserted that music and dance are a corrupting force and that the youth of today are corrupt.

Suggestions for teachers and students

While it is necessary to keep abreast of topics of local interest, students also need to read and discuss in class wider or international topics because it is not always that topics close to their immediate and current experience will be given in this section.

Students need constant practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Basic Proficiency

The examination in 2007 was the second year for the revised syllabus. However, this examination is due to be discontinued after next year. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of summary, literary and persuasive writing. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:-

	Paper 01 Multiple Choice	Paper 02 Essay	Total
Understanding	60	37	97 = 60%
Expression	-	65	65 = 40%
Total	60	102	162 = 100%

The number of candidates taking the examination in 2007 declined significantly when compared with previous years:

3,473 (2005) → 3,504 (2006) → 2755 (2007).

There was a decrease in the percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in 2007:

29.42% (2005) → 26.51% (2006) → 25.01% (2007).

The performance mean in 2007 was lower than in 2005 and 2006:

(2005) 52.28 (=37%) → (2006) 60.14 (= 37%) → (2007) 57.65 (=36%).

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 - Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2007 showed a decline when compared with 2005 and 2006. The mean score in 2005, out of a possible 60, was 27.84; this moved to 28.14 in 2006 and 27.43 in 2007.

Paper 02 - Free Response

Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 was as follows (The numbers in brackets are the maximum totals for the respective questions):

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Section 1 Summary skills	5.06 (20)	5.56 (20)	7.17 (30)	7.35 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension	9.87 (24)	9.93 (24)	12.36 (27)	12.93 (27)
Section 3 Story Writing/ Description	5.17 (16)	5.14 (16)	6.65 (20)	6.29 (20)/5.20 (20)
Section 4 Argument	5.62 (20)	6.9 (20)	8.62 (25)	6.41 (25)

SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

The passage to be summarized, adapted from Lester Brown’s *The interdependence of nations*, dealt with the unemployment crisis in Third World Countries. It appeared to be not only unfamiliar reading material for many candidates but also beyond their grasp. For example, many candidates seemed unable to fully understand the meaning of expressions such as *to bring under the plough, unique situation in historical terms, profound implications, political and economic well-being of countries.*

The candidates who demonstrated competence or superiority were able to summarize the passage in 80 words, as required, without losing either the focus or the content of the original passage. The weaker candidates simply lifted sections from the original passage to form a summary. As regards economy of expression, in several of the incompetent responses, the original passage was reproduced in a telegraphic style through omission of function words and transitional words and phrases, thus producing a string of disjointed sentences. Weaker responses also showed evidence of a lack of fundamental skills in summary writing. For instance, the listing of countries was quite notably preserved: “ ... *the densely populated countries of Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Central America and the Andean Region.*”

Advice to teachers

Students need to be exposed to a variety of reading material including basic magazines produced by international organisations on the health and economic conditions of people across the world. Students would thus expand and enrich their vocabulary by regular reading of relevant literature. This could be done within a classroom book club.

In order to help students express themselves logically, precisely and concisely, teachers should provide students with ample exercises in making construction shifts and writing/recognizing equivalent sentences. Routine oral practice in the use of transitional words and phrases would also be useful.

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

The general performance on this section was commendable to some extent. The fact that students could easily relate to the content of both passages resulted in a few of them integrating the content into their short stories.

Question 2 sought in part to test candidates’ understanding of a passage taken from Juliana Magloire’s *The Sea Hawk*.

Overall, those questions which posed the greatest difficulty were 2 (c) and 2 (g), with 2 (e) proving to be the easiest. The stronger candidates had no problem with the questions and offered appropriate and correct responses to the majority of them. The weaker candidates had difficulty in interpreting the passage and the evidence of this was given in the nature of their responses. For example, in response to 2 (a) (*What did Bo do for a living?*) candidates gave responses such ‘doctor’, ‘smuggler’, ‘engineer’, ‘lifeguard’ as well as other incorrect answers.

Question 3 sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a passage on beauty and the beauty industry taken from a newspaper magazine.

The last three questions (e-g) were better handled than the first four. Weaker candidates were unable to interpret expressions such as *going under the knife* and *beauty can no longer be considered skin deep* in 3 (a) and 3 (b) respectively. Many of the weaker candidates quoted large portions of the passage with the hope that these would provide the correct answer.

Advice to teachers

Students need more practice in answering the kinds of questions set on the paper, questions requiring precise answers. In preparing for these questions teachers should make sure that students read the questions a number of times before they attempt to write their answers. After reading the whole passage, students should also re-read the section of the passage relevant to each specific question to make sure that what they are thinking of writing is what the passage says. Students should be advised to re-read what they have written to make sure that it makes sense to someone reading it. A specific area that needs greater focus is getting students to recognise inference.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Question 4 required candidates to write a story based on a picture featuring an old man sitting playing a guitar. Question 5 asked candidates to write a story which ended with the words *I should have known better than to rely on someone like that*. Question 6 required candidates to describe the experience of someone named Chris who was seeing the city for the first time at Christmas.

The most popular of these questions was Question 4. The least popular was Question 5 and the weakest and most inappropriate responses came from those who attempted Question 6.

In relation to Question 4 and Question 5, the stronger candidates were able to use lively vocabulary and imaginative settings to give better than a pedestrian recounting of incidents. They were able to develop a plot adequately, set up interesting conflict situations and have a satisfactory resolution. They made use of well-selected details, had good characterization and effective use of dialogue. Their stories were credible.

The weaker candidates demonstrated various degrees of inability to use the elements of short story writing. They were unable to organize events and had great difficulty in using language effectively and managing the mechanics of grammar. There was usually a tenuous link between stimulus and story; the ending was most often forced, with the result that the whole strained one's credibility.

In relation to Question 6, most candidates wrote responses with long introductions and focussed very little on the description of Chris' experience.

Advice to teachers

Some of the weaknesses in this section that need special attention are:

- Grammatical problems (tense, use of pronouns, sentence structure)
- Mere recounting of events with little or no attempt to make the story come alive through development of plot, characterization, appeal to the senses, effective selection of details.
- Poor paragraphing and ineffective use of dialogue.

It is recommended therefore that teachers employ all available resources to:

- teach the elements of story writing systematically;
- provide students with models of good short stories;
- analyse good short stories as a classroom activity;
- clarify for students on an ongoing basis the difference between report writing and story writing;

- provide students with copious practice in writing stories;
- stimulate a desire among students to read;
- not to give up on the teaching of the mechanics of writing;
- monitor more carefully bad handwriting and careless errors such as the pervasive ‘the’ for ‘they’.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

This section tested the candidates’ ability to express their views persuasively using various techniques of argument. Question 7 required students to state their views on the topic *Too much feteing and partying in the Caribbean today is encouraging idleness and indiscipline*. Question 8 required candidates to write an argument either supporting or opposing the statement *As soon as children reach the age of 18, they should leave home, find a job and live independently*.

Question 8 was the preferred one of the two. Although most students who attempted the question clearly had views on it, some had difficulty in effectively developing points to support their arguments. There was, however, evidence of attempts to expand, show cause and effect and employ persuasive techniques in the presentation of the essay.

The better candidates selected relevant information and developed points clearly in support of the position taken. There were instances of logical development and appropriate reinforcement of the argument. Some candidates were able to clinch their arguments with an effective conclusion.

There was a general weakness in expression and mechanics of writing. In weaker scripts there was a mere listing of points, under-developed thoughts and limited views. There was also evidence of misuse of prepositions, awkward syntax, sentence fragments, run-on sentences and neglect of appropriate punctuation, especially question marks.

Advice to teachers

Classroom teachers need to emphasize language expression, especially sentence structure, appropriate vocabulary, mechanics and organisation of argument. There is also need for more concerted teaching of literary devices and techniques of persuasion. This will greatly assist in the coherence of responses, sequencing and logical development of argument. In addition, interpretative and organisational skills need to be mastered by students. For this to be possible, classroom teachers, especially those whose major was English literature rather than language, first need to be actively aware of these skills, master them and use effective strategies to get students to acquire the same.

Teachers are encouraged to continue to provide classroom activities for students to practise persuasive skills orally. They should encourage students to ‘translate’ popular slang expressions and should use ‘teachable moments’ to underscore the concept of appropriate use of language. Interesting newspaper editorials could be used for class discussions. This would also help to develop students’ analytical thinking and ability to respond concisely to higher order questions posed in Section 2. Students need more practice in logical development of argument, use of rhetorical questions and appropriate use of figurative language. Students need to be given many opportunities to write. Students need more practice in the use of topic sentences and paragraphs. Students would benefit from timed practice exercises in preparation for the examination.

Too few students are demonstrating competence in Profile 2 (Expression) simply because they are having problems with the mechanics of writing. Students seem oblivious of spelling rules and the need to spell correctly. For example, in Section 3 which provided a picture stimulus of an old man playing a guitar, there were at least a dozen different spellings of the word ‘guitar’. One noticeable element this year was that many students demonstrated competence in the use of quotation marks. Apart from this, punctuation was limited to full stops and commas. Paragraphing was ignored this year so often, as it has been in previous years, that one begins to wonder whether students ever get enough practice in this aspect of writing. There is therefore a constant need to monitor and address these elements of writing.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS**

MAY/JUNE 2008

ENGLISH A

Average performance (for 2008) in the component section of Paper 02 is given below.

	2008
Section 1 Summary skills	10.42 (30) (ROR) 8.78 (30) (T&T)
Section 2 Comprehension	8.84 (30) (ROR) 12.98 (30) (ROR)
Section 3 Story Writing Description	13.29 (35) (ROR) 14.25 (35) (T&T) 11.23 (35) (ROR) 13.82 (35) (T&T)
Section 4 Argument	12.78 (35) (ROR) 13.13 (35) (T&T)

General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates are required, above all, to demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. Preparation for the examination is a gradual process of acquiring and developing skills, both passive (comprehension) and production (expression), in the English language. In the examination, these skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons and semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. Teachers should try to build on young people's love of text messaging and have them convert this kind of writing into kind that is acceptable in this examination.

Students should come to the examination with a well rehearsed procedure for tackling each question. In accordance with the concept of writing as a process (abbreviated under examination conditions), candidates should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure of identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each individual student, based on the student's ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under CXC examination conditions.

Teachers should give students specific instructions about deleting and editing so that the appearance of their work is not off-putting to examiners. Even though examiners have to make a great effort to decipher every word that some candidates have written, candidates should never forget that it is their own responsibility to write legibly.

The tasks in the examination are directly related, in most cases, to real-life skills. Employers and indeed that public at large generally regard performance in English language examinations as a measure of one's ability to perform in the world of work. Consequently, it is not advantageous to treat English language as merely an academic subject or as a subject for 'dorks/nerds'.

Specific advice on the section of Papers 02

In **Section 1**, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organized logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale by the candidate, CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill (used, for example, by news reporters and policemen) and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates. In the case of business students who

may be told that an executive summary preserves the words of the full document, this is not the case here – candidates must be able to show that they can use words that condense the ideas of the original and words that can link sentences together smoothly so that the summary reads like a document in itself and not like a chopped-up version of another one.

Some candidates, in attempting to put the summary in their own words, sometimes changes meanings or insert extraneous material. This is penalized. In real life such distortion would be seen either as an attempt to mislead or deceived or, in the case of a policeman presenting evidence to a court, it could lead to wrong, unfair and disastrous decisions. So, those candidates seeking to achieve full marks or high marks should make sure that they preserve the meaning of the original.

In assessing Question 1, the examiners pay specific attention to the specified word limit, the candidates ability to use his/her own language, the accuracy and coverage of the major points and the ability to organize and connect the main points to make the answer read smoothly. There is evidence to suggest that some candidates from Belize did not have a clear idea of what was required to achieve a satisfactory mark in Section 1.

The questions in **Section 2** are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. In response to each question candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Answers should be to the point. These questions **never** require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer. It is the candidates' responsibility to indicate clearly what the answer is; it is not the examiner's responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidates.

This section requires students to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that students have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. So, students should know how to select word or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also students need to do as the question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong – it is an indication that the student does not know exactly what the answer is.

In the preparation for **Section 3** every candidates should have read the best story form preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC). These stories should not be memorized and reproduced with slight alterations. More generally, candidates should not memorise published stories and hope that this kind of cheating escapes the attention of the examiners.

Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better students tend to write stories that fall within or not to far outside the word limits. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak.

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterization, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. Students should try to improve their own techniques of story writing, including the effective use of dialogue and the contrast between characters, by studying good stories written by Caribbean authors.

Candidates should use language that they can control. At times candidates use words and structures with which they are not really familiar. The result is that what they write is often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help students feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Description must be clearly constructed and developed (for example, the different components must be linked appropriately). Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different focuses and facets

must be linked appropriately (for example, background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements. Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself. Any change in perspective (for example, visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create moods, tones, atmosphere and setting. Although responses to this question have improved over the last three years, there are still too many candidates who are writing a story and not paying attention to the instruction given.

In the case of **section 4**, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Providing information without using good argumentative techniques is a weakness; so is the reverse. Students should pay attention to ‘tone’ and ‘audience’ and not indiscriminately use the language of debating in every argument they present. Students can learn different styles of argument by studying letters to the editor and editorials in newspaper as well as short, interesting articles in popular magazines or in the magazine section of newspapers.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that support their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some unfounded reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiner’s view.

DETAILED COMMENTS

General Proficiency

Rest of the Region excluding Trinidad and Tobago

SECTION ONE (Profiles – Understanding and Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read and then summarise a passage taken from an article in a magazine dealing with the sea turtles, their habits, threats to them and attempts to conserve them. Candidates were expected to organize the information and present it in continuous prose in no more than 120 words.

The examiners identified the major points in the passage to be the following:-

- Turtles have been around for a very long time
- Turtles are capable of living very long lives
- Their number has been drastically reduced recently
- They are endangered now because of :
 - man-made treats
 - natural features
 - beach erosion causing loss of eggs
 - loss of eggs and hatchlings to predators
 - their own low rate of reproduction
- Conservation is difficult because of the turtles’ migratory habits
- There is now a more hopeful future since conservation attempts are being made
- Visiting sanctuaries to observe turtles can be a rich experience.

Following are two excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) *There are seven species of turtles, ancient creatures capable of living very long lives. Yet, these animals are now endangered. The threats to them are both man-made and natural. Man-made threats include pollution, bad fishing practices and coastal development. Natural threats include predators, the fact that the animal lays its eggs on beaches and therefore the eggs are vulnerable, beach erosion and the turtle's own low rate of reproduction. In addition, since the turtles migrate vast distances and spend most of their time at sea, conservationists have difficulty in helping with their situation. Some attempts are being made, however, including having sanctuaries here in the Caribbean. These regional organisations provide the additional service of educating and entertaining visitors. (118 words)*
- (2) *Sea turtles, which have been around for a very long time, are now under threat of extinction. Their number has decreased drastically over the last ten years because of several threats, man-made and natural. Man-made threats include pollution, fishing and coastal development. Natural threats include predators and beach erosion. Not only do eggs take a long time to hatch, but they have only a slim chance of coming to maturity. There are current attempts being made to conserve turtles, but conservation is difficult because turtles migrate long distances, do not reproduce often and nest at night. Organisations in the Caribbean have been working in various ways towards increasing their survival. Their efforts provide visitors with enriching experiences. (117 words)*

Performance on Question 1 this year was about the same as last year, revealing the same strengths and weaknesses in candidates' answers. There were still too many candidates who did not observe the word limit given. Among these, some seemed to operate with the casual assumption that excess would be overlooked in all answers, while a few attempted to deceive the examiners by putting an incorrect number of words at the end of their answer.

As usual, many candidates lifted portions of the passage, of varying lengths, verbatim. Candidates who approached summary writing as a deletion exercise often ended up having sentences or pieces of sentences which were improperly connected to what preceded, were inaccurate or incoherent. In most cases, such candidates reached the word limit when they were about two thirds in the passage and then they added a sentence from the last paragraph or simply disregarded the rest. As in this passage, important points may occur at the end and if you do not recognise them, you will lose the writer's main intention.

Superior scripts clearly demonstrated satisfactory comprehension and writing skills, without any injection of extraneous material. They were able to cover all the main points, omitting unnecessary details and repetitions and using language which demonstrated appropriate word choice.

Suggestions for teachers and students

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- i) remind students to observe the stated length.
- ii) drill students in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done; insist that students read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- iii) help students to recognize the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills).
- iv) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using one's own words as far as possible
 - b) using straightforward English with clarity and conciseness
 - c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation/context

- d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing/reading
- e) observing correct mechanics of the language.

SECTION TWO (Profile – Understanding)

Performance in this section was significantly below last year's and this was principally because of candidates' response to the poem.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of part of the poem "The way we were" by Maureen Roberts. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions set:

- (a) *West Indians*
- (b) *dollars and cents*
- (c) *It is reaction of surprise/amusement/disbelief/ sarcasm*
- (d) *She is confident; she thinks highly of herself; she has a sense of humour*
- (e) *line 23*
- (f) *'fingers stiff with fear'; 'vocal cords contracted with the curse of shyness'*
- (g) *Her attitude is (positive) appreciative, thankful.*

In the case of (a), any reasonable and appropriate alternative was accepted. Most candidates answered (b) incorrectly, giving *shillings* and *pence* as the answer. Since 2(c) and (d) especially required candidates to go beyond quoting from the passage and to make an assessment of the narrator, this question was generally not well done. In the case of 2(e), candidates were expected to see the difference between the harsher first part of the poem and the more pleasant second part and to identify where the change occurred. Only a small number were able to identify the point of change accurately. On the whole, therefore, Question 2 was not well done. This may partly be attributable to the fact that the passage was in verse.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a letter to the editor of *The Saturday Voice* newspaper about Carnival. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) *She does not like it.*
- (b) *You/We cannot; none (because it is a rhetorical question).*
- (c) *Move/barely/swaying to.*
- (d) *To create the impression that beads are overused.*
- (e) *Carnival/the participants in Carnival/the costumes of Carnival*
- (f) *Sand/Sandy colour/ the desert*
- (g) *She uses alliteration, that is , a number of words beginning with 's'.*
- (h) *July*

Performance on Question 3 was better than on Question 2. However, a significant percentage of candidates lost marks because their answers were not precise enough, as in the case of (g) which required ‘alliteration’ or some accurate paraphrase. Even though most candidates answered 3(h) correctly, there were some who could not get beyond the time of Carnival in their own country.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to grasp implied meanings and not just obvious ones, to make summary assessments of characters and to express these accurately.

Teachers should dissuade students from giving long-winded answers which really conceal ignorance – any answer which provides two or more alternatives in the hope that the examiner will select the correct one will automatically be awarded zero marks.

The incidence of particular question types will vary according to the selections the examiners make to ensure that the full syllabus is covered. Teachers should therefore familiarize themselves with all sections of the syllabus or peruse papers over the years to make sure that they provide practice for students in all the question types specified in the syllabus, including prose and verse.

SECTION THREE (Profile – Expression)

Question 4, 5 and 6

Question 4 required that candidates write a story based on a picture in which a woman appeared to be screaming. Question 5 asked candidates to write a story which included the sentences *The amusing thing is that I didn’t plan it this way. It was just a series of unexpected turns.* Question 6 (the descriptive essay) required candidates to describe the scene before a match between two high school teams.

Question 6 was the least popular of the questions in this section (attempted by 26% of the candidates) and also the one least well done on average. Question 4 was the most popular (attempted by 39% with Question 5 in between in terms of the number of candidates who attempted it (35%), but the best done on average. Question 4 produced the best story for 2008. The overall performance on this section was about the same as last year.

Question 4 produced a variety of responses. Most candidates were able to integrate the picture quite well into the story and many candidates were able to produce interesting stories.

Question 5 proved to be challenging for many candidates who seemed unable to illustrate *a series of unexpected turns* in their story. As usual, many responses to this question had the stimulus quotation inserted without satisfactory integration into the plot.

In the cases of Question 6, there was marked improvement over last year, indicating that candidates were better prepared to write a descriptive essay. However, too many candidates seemed unable to resist the temptation to write about the match itself instead of limiting themselves to *the scene just before the match*.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers should treat Section Three as having two sections – two questions requiring short stories and one question requiring a descriptive essay.

Teachers should continue to use pictures from varied sources, especially those dealing with current topics and themes in newspapers, to help stimulate and guide writing. This helps to make classroom writing interesting and should help students to focus on the use of details to create character, emotion and atmosphere. The creation of humour in writing is something that students might enjoy doing in their writing classes – how to tell a joke, how to write a joke, how to hold back the punch line are part of the story-writing that might interest even reluctant writers.

Over the years, candidates have used the story lines in films they have seen as the basis for their short stories. However, even though originality in story line is not an absolute requirement, candidates should not get into the habit of slavishly copying other people's material. It is not only illegal but it will also result in the copied parts of stories being discredited.

In relation to integrating the given quotation into the story, teachers are advised to work more on logical development of plot, integration of story elements, along with the other story writing elements. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

Students should be explicitly made familiar with the difference between narrative and descriptive. Students should imagine themselves using a camera and describing what they see through the lens as they move the camera gradually from left to right to take in the whole scene. While it is necessary for teachers to get students accustomed to description by practising descriptive phrases and sentences with striking adjectives and adverbs, students should be wary about memorizing flowery phrases and sticking them willy-nilly into descriptive essays. In order to prepare students for this question, teachers have to focus specifically on vocabulary enrichment by providing students with a list of adjectives, one of nouns and another of adverbs and get students to combine them in a relevant way as they describe specific scenes. Teachers need to make these lists cover all the senses – sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste.

SECTION FOUR (Profile – Expression)

Question 7 and 8

Question 7 asked candidates to present an argument for or against the idea that Caribbean countries would be better served if they had women as prime ministers. Question 8 asked candidates to express their views on the topic *Planning for the future is a waste of time. Too much of our future is beyond our control.* Candidates did not demonstrate any significant difference in performance for the one or the other question. Performance in this section this year was slightly lower than last year. On average, Question 8 produced better answers than Question 7. Most of the good responses to Question 8 outlined the benefits to be derived from planning and give illustrative examples. Responses to Question 7 overwhelmingly concentrated on traditional concepts of women arguing that such characteristics would make them either good or bad prime ministers respectively. Added to this, there was a fairly general assumption (except in the case of Guyanese candidates) that prime ministers were all-powerful.

Suggestions for teachers and students

While this section of the paper often gives topics which are immediate to teenagers, students also need to keep abreast of topics of regional as well as wider or international interest. It is not always that topics close to the immediate and current experience of teenagers will be given in this section.

Students need constant practise in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

DETAILED COMMENTS

General Proficiency

Trinidad and Tobago

SECTION ONE (Profile – Understanding and Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read and then summarise a passage taken from an article in a magazine dealing with ethanol production in America. The topic was chosen because it was seen to be topical, even if not local. Candidates were expected to organize the information and present it in continuous prose in no more than 120 words.

The examiners identified the major points in the passage to be the following:-

- Ethanol production has increased tremendously and is still increasing
- Ethanol seems to offer the USA a chance to become less dependent on imported oil
- That would free the USA from concerns about oil prices and uncertainty of supply
- However, a sufficient increase in ethanol production is unlikely because:
 - the land space to produce the corn is unavailable
 - Americans are addicted to cheaper oil
 - ethanol is less cost effective
 - ethanol production and distribution depend on oil
 - expensive basic elements need to be put in place to facilitate ethanol distribution

Following are two excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) *Ethanol production in the USA has increased tremendously and is still increasing. There are significant benefits should the USA manage to reduce dependence on foreign oil through the production of ethanol. The price of oil would fall significantly; oil producing countries would have less power; and the USA would be less worried about fluctuating oil prices and supply. However, reduction of dependence on oil is unlikely. One reason is that there is insufficient land to grow the volume of corn needed. In addition, America has become addicted to oil which is more cost effective than ethanol. Also, ethanol brings problems as its production and distribution depend on the use of oil and require infrastructural change. (115 words)*
- (2) *Ethanol production in the USA has increased dramatically to the point where it exceeds the farmers' ability to produce the necessary amount of corn. Ethanol could reduce the dependence on foreign oil so that the USA would not be subject to fluctuating prices or the threat of interrupted oil supply. The price of oil would fall and the power of OPEC reduced. The biggest hindrance is that the USA does not have enough land to produce the required amount of corn. Furthermore, production costs are high and ethanol itself requires the use of oil in all stages of its production and distribution. In addition, since the traditional forms of distribution are unsuitable for ethanol, costly modifications need to be made. (120 words)*

Performance on Question 1 was below standard, probably because the subject matter was not within the immediate interest of many candidates. Since candidates had to read the passage carefully instead of depending on their general knowledge of the subject, the exercise proved difficult for many of them. Many candidates, probably more so than usual, lifted portions of the passage, of varying lengths, verbatim, without understanding them and without properly connecting them. There were still too many candidates who did not observe the word limit given.

Suggestion for teachers and students

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- i) remind students to observe the stated length
- ii) drill students in the skill of reading paragraphs and identifying the topic
- iii) help students to recognize the fact that summary writing comprises both comprehension and composition skills
- iv) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using their own words as far as possible
 - b) using straightforward English with clarity and conciseness
 - c) using connectives to achieve fluency
 - d) observing correct mechanics of the language.

SECTION TWO (Profile – Understanding)

Performance in this section was below last year's but about the same as that of 2006. On average Question 3 was done better than Question 2.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a passage taken from Mark McWatt's *Suspended Sentences: Fictions of Atonement*. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions set:

- (a) *rain/mud*
- (b) *He laughed because the idea of reaching Annandale was ridiculous/He laughed because the writer did not realize that it was impossible to get to Annandale in the rainy season*
- (c) *unpleasant/dreary/gloomy*
- (d) *because he could not get down the river/because he could not get to where he wanted to go*
- (e) *because it was isolated/because it 'seemed to lie ... between reality and dream'*
- (f) *meandered*
- (g) *the almost opaque curtain of rain*
- (h) *disgust/frustration*

Since 2(c) and (d) especially required candidates to go beyond quoting from the passage and to make an assessment of the narrator, this question was generally not well done. In the case of 2(e), candidates were expected to see the difference between the negative first part of the poem and the more pleasant second part and to identify where the change occurred. Only a small number were able to identify the point of change.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of an article in the *Sunday Sun* newspaper about 'boys on the block'. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the question asked:

- (a) *It gives you the topic of the passage/It tells you what the passage is about*
- (b) *Intelligent*
- (c) *by using a quotation from a magazine/by citing an authority/by giving evidence that it is widespread throughout the Caribbean*
- (d) *underachievers/ the unqualified/slower children*
- (e) *the failure of education to provide adequate, serious compensatory schooling*
- (f) *It will become a social cost to all of us/There boys will become liabilities*
- (g) *The problems must be tackled root and branch systematically and in a sustained manner*
- (h) *education*

As is usually the case, candidates found those questions which required identification of words from the passage easier than those which required a judgement or assessment. In the case of 3(a), instead of stating the relevance of the quotation, many candidates simply explained what it meant. A significant number of candidates gave the answer 'Yes' to 3(h) and/or repeated the three alternatives in the question, showing clearly that they did not understand a straightforward question structure.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to move beyond the literal, to make logical judgements and to express these accurately. Teachers should ensure that students understand the structure and wording of questions and not assume that they do. Teachers should dissuade students from giving answers with several alternatives. Such answers are generally awarded zero marks.

Teachers should bear in mind that questions which require judgements and assessments will always occur on the examination paper, in Question 2 and Question 3, the balance across the two questions differing from year to year. The incidence of particular question types varies to make sure that the full syllabus is covered.

SECTION THREE (Profile – Expression)

Question 4, 5 and 6

Question 4 required that candidates write a story based on a picture in which a woman appeared to be dancing or performing a ritual or reaching for something. Question 5 asked candidates to write a story which included the words *As my parents sat there discussing me, I could not believe what they were saying. This was my life, not theirs.* Question 6 (the descriptive essay) required candidates to describe the scene from a building as people *stared out at the city*. Performance on this section was generally better than last year and candidates are coming to terms with the requirements of Question 6.

Question 5 was by far the most popular of the questions in this section (attempted by 75%) and the best done on average. Question 6 was the least popular (attempted by 6% of the candidates) and Question 4 did not fare much better in terms of the number of candidates who attempted it (14%). The performance on Question 4 and 6 was about the same and it was not significantly lower than that on Question 5.

Question 4 produced a variety of interpretations. Most candidates were able to integrate the picture into the story and many candidates were able to produce interesting stories.

Question 5 proved to be attractive to many candidates who seemed to be familiar with the situation. As a result, the stories were generally interesting and satisfactorily written.

In the case of Question 6, there was variety in the responses with many candidates choosing a science-fiction type of story.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers should continue to use pictures from varied sources, especially those dealing with current topics and themes in newspapers, to help stimulate and guide writing. This helps to make classroom writing interesting and should help students to focus on the use of details to create character, emotion and atmosphere. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short story writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

Students should continue to stress the difference between narrative and descriptive. In the case of the descriptive, a good approach is to imagine oneself using a camera and describing what one sees through the lens as one moves the camera gradually from left to right to take in the whole scene. While it is necessary for teachers to get students accustomed to description by practising descriptive phrase and sentences with striking adjectives and adverbs, students should be wary about memorizing flowery phrases and sticking them willy-nilly into descriptive essays. In order to prepare students for this question, teachers have to focus specifically on vocabulary enrichment by providing students with a list of adjectives, one of nouns and another of adverbs and get students to combine them in a relevant way as they describe specific scenes. Teachers need to make these lists cover all the senses – sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste.

SECTION FOUR (Profile – Expression)

Question 7 and 8

Question 7 asked candidates to support one of two opinions given about who should determine employees' dress at work. Question 8 asked candidates to express their views on the topic *Governments should make it compulsory for all householders to take precautions against natural disasters*. Candidates demonstrated a decided preference for Question 7 over Question 8 but, on average, performance on Question 8 was marginally better than Question 7.

Suggestion for teachers and students

While it is necessary to keep abreast of topics of local interest, students also need to read and discuss in class wider or international topics because it is not always that topic close to their immediate and current experience will be given in this section.

Students need constant practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Candidates' performance in Paper 02 in 2008 was lower than in the preceding years. The mean score in 2006 was 31 per cent; this declined to 29 per cent in 2007 and further declined to 26.07 per cent in 2008. Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 was as follows (The numbers in brackets are the maximum totals for the respective questions):

	2006	2007	2008
Section 1 Summary skills	7.17 (30)	7.35 (30)	7.23 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension	12.36 (27)	12.93 (27)	11.27 (27)
Section 3 Story Writing/Description	6.65 (20)	6.29 (20)	6.76 (20)
		5.20 (20)	7.14 (20)
Section 4 Argument	8.62 (25)	6.41 (25)	5.56 (25)

SECTION ONE (Profiles – Understanding and Expression)

The passage to be summarized was adapted from an advertisement in a newspaper for 'The Caribbean Awards for Excellence'. It was organized in three sub-sections under the following headings: 'Mission', 'the Magnitude of our appreciation', 'Award categories'. The layout presented a stout challenge to some candidates, many of whom began their summaries with a sentence fragment that was simply a re-statement of the Mission Statement, but with no clear linkages. The few candidates who demonstrated competence were able to identify the main ideas and write the summary comprehensively. They were able to use standard English, organize their ideas sequentially and summarise the passage in 80 words, as required, without losing either the focus or the content of the original passage.

The weaker candidates presented summaries that retained the organization and language of the original passage. In such cases it was difficult to assess whether the candidate had meaningfully selected relevant details or whether these were stumbled upon by chance. As regards economy of expression, in several of the incompetent responses, the original passage was reproduced in a telegraphic style, omitting function words and transitional words and phrases and thus producing a string of disjointed sentences. Weaker responses also showed evidence of a lack of fundamental skills in summary writing. For example, the three award categories were mentioned and subsequently elaborated: "...This includes those who..."

Apart from its layout, the language of the passage also presented difficulties to candidates, who seemed unfamiliar with such phrases as 'increased visibility', 'financial component', 'scale and scope', 'give impetus to'. Some candidates interpreted the word 'candidates' as synonymous with 'students' and therefore wrote summaries not about citizens being rewarded for community work, but about students being rewarded for excellent performance on exams. A number of students also exceeded the word limit by rewriting the passage, while others took ideas from different sections and mixed them to form a summary.

Students' responses suggested that they needed more practice in summary writing: it is quite evident that they were unable to identify main ideas and paraphrase these ideas.

SECTION TWO (Profile – Understanding)

Question 2 and 3

The general performance on this section was below that of previous years.

Question 2 tested the candidates' ability to respond to a passage taken from Earl Lovelace's *Salt*, featuring the experiences of a boy. Most students performed well in contextual questions, but produced weaker responses in questions which required synthesis and evaluation. For example, in 2(d) "To what does 'it' refer in line 9 of paragraph 1?" Students gave erroneous responses (the sun; the cemetery) and were unable

to correctly identify ‘the town’. Question 2(f) and 2(g), particularly the former “(What does the father think of the son in paragraph 3?)” also presented difficulties to students.

Question 3 tested the candidates’ ability to respond to an argumentative passage from a newspaper article (‘Carnival Survives’) written by Caspar London. Again, questions which required assessments proved difficult. For instance, in 3(e) “What does the author imply by the words ‘whatever than means’ in lines 14 and 15?”, many students missed the sarcasm and responses quite literally that the author did not understand the expression. In this question, as in Question 2, many of the weaker candidates quoted large portions of the passage with the hope that these would provide the examiners with the correct answer. However, this strategy does not work.

SECTION THREE (Profile – Expression)

Question 4, 5 and 6

As usual, this section posed a major challenge to the majority of candidates.

Question 4 required candidates to write a story based on a picture featuring a man apparently jumping through the air or running. Question 5 asked candidate to write a story based on the sentence *It was then that I remembered my mother’s words “What you sow is what you reap”*. Question 6 provided the words *The spacecraft blasted off. Mars here we come!* and asked candidates to describe the astronaut’s journey and their landing on Mars. The most popular of these questions was Question 5 and the least popular was Question 6. Question 5 was satisfactorily interpreted, as was Question 4. In Question 6, students generally did not pay attention to key words: describe; journey; landing.

Some of the weaknesses in this section that need special attention are:

Grammatical problems (tense, use of pronouns, sentence structure)

Mere recounting of events with little or no attempt to make the story come alive through development of plot, characterization, appeal to the senses, effective selection of details. Poor paragraphing and ineffective use of dialogue.

SECTION FOUR (Profile – Expression)

This section tested the candidates’ ability to express their views persuasively using various techniques of argument. Question 7 required students to state their views on the topic *There is nothing wrong with children being subjected to hardships and being denied privileges in life; it will build character*. Question 8 required candidates to write an argument either supporting or opposing the statement *Victims of violent crimes should be compensated by the relatives of the criminals*.

A significant percentage of the candidates did not attempt this section. Among those who did, virtually the same number did each of the questions, but Question 7 was not as poorly done as Question 8. Candidates had problems interpreting some important words and expressions in the topics for example, ‘privilege’ and ‘hardship’ (Q7); ‘compensate’ and ‘victims’ (Q8). These misinterpretations sometimes rendered their arguments invalid. Although most students who attempted the questions clearly had views on the topics, some had difficulty in effectively developing points to support their arguments. There was, however, evidence of attempts to expand, show cause and effect and employ persuasive techniques in the presentation of the essay.

The better candidates selected relevant information and developed points clearly in support of the position taken. There were instances of logical development and appropriate reinforcement of the argument. Some candidates were able to clinch their arguments with an effective conclusion.

There was a general weakness in expression and mechanics of writing. In weaker scripts there was a mere listing of points, under-developed thoughts and limited views. There was also evidence of misuse of prepositions, awkward syntax, sentence fragment, run-on sentences and neglect of appropriate punctuation, especially question marks.

General comments

Not enough students demonstrated competence in Area II (Expression). Poor expression was most obvious in Section 3 where students wrote phrases such as:

It was graduation day and we receive medels for our achievements;

The senter of my hair was balled

They need freedom to associate with people to know their upstands and their downfalls

When you are in your cells you are very board

I laided on my bed and I decided to fall asleep

One encouraging fact is that many students demonstrated competence in the use of quotation marks. Apart from this, punctuation was limited to full stops and commas. The concepts of paragraphing is ignored so often that it prompts the question as to whether this aspect of writing is overlooked by teachers.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS**

MAY/JUNE 2009

ENGLISH A

ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2009

GENERAL COMMENTS

General Proficiency

Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, accounted for most of the UNDERSTANDING COMPONENT of the examination overall and Paper 02, the free response paper, accounted for all of the EXPRESSION COMPONENT as well as part of the Understanding (all of Section 2 and part of Question 1).

The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:-

	PAPER 01 Multiple Choice	PAPER 02 Essay	TOTAL
Understanding	60* = 46 ⁺	40* = 30 ⁺	76 ⁺ = 40%
Expression	–	90* = 114 ⁺	114 ⁺ = 60%
TOTAL	46⁺	144⁺	190⁺ = 100%
*raw score	+ weighted score		

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in the two papers this year, and the three previous years is as follows:

<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
48.54	49.01	(RoR*) 41.86 (T&T*) 49.56	56.44

*Rest of Region
*Trinidad and Tobago

The performance mean for the examination (out of a total of 190*) for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 is as follows:

<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
79.14	77.94	(RoR*) 74.74 (T&T*) 78.58	81.82

Average performance over the last three years on the multiple choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
32.36	23.44	(RoR*) 26.24 (T&T*) 26.98	27.92

Average performance (2007-2009) in the component sections of Paper 02 is given below.

	2007	2008	2009
Section 1	10.04 (30)	10.42 (30) (RoR)	10.69 (30)
Summary skills		8.78 (30) (T&T)	
Section 2 Comprehension	15.45 (29)	8.84 (30) (RoR)	11.13 (30)
		12.98 (30) (T&T)	
Section 3		13.29 (35) (RoR)	13.27 (35)
Story Writing	13.62 (35)	14.25 (35) (T&T)	
Description	10.63 (35)	11.23 (35) (RoR)	13.30 (35)
		13.82 (35) (T&T)	
Section 4	13.74 (35)	12.78 (35) (RoR)	14.44 (35)
Argument		13.13 (35) (T&T)	

General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that candidates are required to demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. Preparation for the examination is a gradual process of acquiring and developing skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression). In the examination, these skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (full stops, commas, colons and semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing.

Teachers should try to build on young people's love of text messaging and other interactive types of communication on the computer (e.g. e-mail, Facebook) to enhance their understanding of skills that are required in non-face-to-face communication, and have them adapt these skills to fit the kind of writing that is acceptable in this examination.

No matter how frustrating it may be, teachers must continue to use all their resources to encourage students to read because it is only by reading consistently that students will become comfortable with the written word. Furthermore, it is only by writing consistently that students will learn to write well. Reading (on its own) will not make a child acquire the skills of writing – passive skills (e.g. reading) cannot automatically transform themselves into active skills (e.g. writing).

Candidates should come to the examination with a well practised procedure for tackling each question. Candidates should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure of identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. It is only through repeated practice beforehand that each student will come to some understanding of the best way to process a rough copy into a fair copy under examination conditions.

Teachers should give students specific instructions about deleting, making insertions and making additions to their work so that what they write is intelligible to the examiners. Candidates must also acquire the habit of numbering answers correctly and setting out their answers on the page in a way that the examiners can recognise them. Even though examiners are required to make a great effort to decipher every word that some candidates have written and to find all the pieces of an answer, candidates should never forget that it is their own responsibility to write their answers legibly and clearly. Unlike the situation in school where in most cases one teacher corrects a whole test paper, in the CXC examination each answer is corrected by a different examiner.

The tasks in the examination are directly related, in most cases, to real-life skills. Employers and indeed the public at large generally regard performance in English language examinations as a measure of one's ability to perform in the world of work. It is almost a sure way to fail the English 'A' examination by starting off believing that you already know English and all that you need is a little practice on one or two questions. This becomes even more critical for those who have to repeat the examination after failing to perform satisfactorily in it.

Specific advice on the sections of Paper 02

In **Section 1**, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale by the candidate, CXC examiners are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill (used, for example, by news reporters and policemen) and should be treated as such by teachers and students. In the case of business students who may be told that an executive summary preserves the words of the full document, this is not the case here – candidates must be able to show that they can use words that condense the ideas of the original and words that can link sentences together smoothly so that the summary reads like a document in itself and not like a chopped-up version of another one.

The passage to be summarised is usually taken from a newspaper or magazine which caters to the general public. In order to understand the passage, candidates must be familiar with English words and structures that educated people use in their general writing. In some cases a few words may not be familiar to a reader, but in those cases the reader will very likely be able to work out the meaning from the context. Candidates should therefore get into the habit of reading at least the editorial page in their local newspaper as well as letters to the editor. In addition, candidates should read one or two articles from magazines that cater to their age group: Caribbean magazines and even international magazines for the general public. In this way they will become better able to work out, among other things, unfamiliar words in context.

The examiners look first of all to see whether the word limit has been exceeded. They stop their reading at that point, disregarding all else. The examiners then look to see whether the candidate has understood and can clearly identify the main points in the passage and award marks accordingly. The examiners then assess whether the candidate has put those points together in an intelligible and logical manner using his/her own words and award marks accordingly.

- When candidates exceed the word limit, the marks may be reduced by as much as 20%.
- When candidates use only the words in the original passage, the marks are automatically reduced by 33%.

Some candidates, in attempting to put the summary in their own words, sometimes change meanings or insert extraneous material. This is penalised. In real life such distortion would be seen either as an attempt to mislead or deceive or, in the case of a policeman presenting evidence to a court, it could lead to wrong, unfair and disastrous decisions. Those candidates seeking to achieve full marks or high marks should make sure that they preserve the meaning of the original.

The questions in **Section 2** are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. In response to each question, candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Answers should be to the point. These questions **never** require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer. It is the candidates' responsibility to indicate clearly what the answer is; it is not the examiner's responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidate.

This section requires students to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that candidates have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. Students should know how to select words or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also students need to do as the question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong – it is an indication that the candidate does not know exactly what the answer is.

In the preparation for **Section 3**, every candidate should have read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC). These stories should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations. More generally, candidates should not memorise published stories and hope that this kind of cheating escapes the attention of the examiners. Cheating is punished severely and can have serious consequences.

Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better students tend to write stories that fall within or not too far outside the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak.

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterization, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. Students should try to improve their own techniques of story writing, including the effective use of dialogue and the contrast between characters, by studying good stories written by Caribbean and other authors.

Candidates should use language that they can control. At times candidates use words and structures with which they are not really familiar. The result is that what they write is often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help students feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous storytelling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Description must be clearly constructed and developed (e.g. the different components must be linked appropriately). Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different focuses and facets must be linked appropriately (e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements. Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself. Any change in perspective (e.g. visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create moods, tones, atmosphere and setting. Although responses to this question have improved over the last three years, there are still too many candidates who are writing a story and not paying attention to the instructions given.

In the case of **Section 4**, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Providing information without using good argumentative techniques is a weakness; so is the reverse. Students should pay attention to ‘tone’ and ‘audience’ and not indiscriminately use the language of debating in every argument they present. Students can learn different styles of argument by studying letters to the editor and editorials in newspapers as well as short, interesting articles in popular magazines or in the magazine section of newspapers.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that support their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some unfounded reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiners’ view or what they ought to say.

General Proficiency

SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read and then summarise a passage taken from a magazine article dealing with difficulties faced by the sugar industry in the English-speaking Caribbean and solutions proposed. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose in no more than 120 words.

The examiners identified the major points in the passage to be the following:–

- Sugar remained the English-speaking Caribbean’s premier export crop because of high prices and preferential treatment.
- Sugar has now become unviable since prices have declined because large global producers have entered the market.
- Sugar is important, however, because of its ecological impact and because it is a part of the life of a significant part of the population.
- Caribbean economies have to change because of the WTO ruling.
- Change will not be easy because it requires money, modernization and retraining.

Following are three summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) *Although many Caribbean states have abandoned sugar, chiefly because of competition from bigger producers, it remains the most important export crop in the English-speaking countries supported as it is by high prices and preferential trading agreements with the UK and the EC.*

In Jamaica, sugar still provides the livelihood for many in almost every parish and is a major foreign exchange earner. It is also environmentally friendly. However, elsewhere price cuts ruled by the WTO have led to changes in the importance and nature of the sugar industry, including the end of production in some cases. The success of this transition will depend on several factors, including European support, investments for modernization and retraining some workers. (116 words)

- (2) *Although cane production was abandoned in some Caribbean countries, the industry has flourished in others because of high prices and preferential trading arrangements with Europe. In Jamaica, sugar plays a vital part in contributing foreign exchange, in preserving the natural environment by preventing soil erosion and in providing a haven for animals. Recently, however, some Caribbean sugar industries became less profitable as larger countries started to export sugar. In response to this, some Caribbean countries have diversified. Europe’s decision to cut its preferred price, as directed by the WTO, has led to new industries being established, but this kind of change is difficult since European support is required as well as re-training of personnel to do other jobs. (117 words)*

- (3) *Caribbean economies have to reorganize in response to changes in the market economy for sugar. This means modernizing the industry as well as re-training and re-deploying human resources into other areas. The situation is partly a result of a WTO ruling against preferential conditions offered to the Caribbean by Europe, and partly because of the advent to the market of large producers like Brazil and Australia. These factors have made sugar production in the region less viable.*

Though some countries chose to stop producing sugar, the Caribbean cannot afford to abandon the industry entirely not only because significant parts of the population rely on it for a livelihood, but also because it is an essential part of the ecological landscape. (120 words)

Performance on Question 1 this year was marginally better than last year's, though revealing the same strengths and weaknesses in candidates' answers. However, there were still too many candidates who did not understand what is required in a summary.

As usual, many candidates lifted portions of the passage verbatim, often because they were not quite sure of the meaning of a key word. Because the passage used Jamaica to show the continuing importance of the sugar industry in some places, some candidates concentrated almost their entire summary on Jamaica. Those candidates who tried to summarise by simply following the sequence of the passage (without reading the whole passage first and identifying the main points) reached the word limit when they were about two thirds in the passage and then simply disregarded the rest. This meant that they automatically lost marks for not identifying some of the main points and they lost marks for poor organisation of their summary.

Superior scripts clearly demonstrated excellent comprehension and writing skills, without any injection of extraneous material. They were able to identify all the main points, omitting unnecessary details and repetitions, and they were able to put together the points in a coherent way, using their own language as far as possible .

Suggestions for teachers and students

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- (i) remind students to observe the stated length
- (ii) drill students in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done
- (iii) insist that students read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- (iv) help students to recognize the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills)
- (v) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
 - a) using one's own words as far as possible
 - b) using straightforward English with clarity and conciseness
 - c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation/context
 - d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing/reading
 - e) observing correct mechanics of the language

SECTION TWO (Understanding)

Performance in this section was similar to last year's overall performance.

Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a passage from George Lamming's "Of thorns and thistles". The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions set:

- (a) *She entered on tiptoe; she whispered*
- (b) *that there is tension; that there is conflict; a dramatic effect; an effect of give and take*
- (c) *Her normal attitude was pleasant and agreeable.*
- (d) *A tense or unpleasant atmosphere existed.*
- (e) *She disapproved of it; she disliked it; it was outrageous and offensive*
- (f) *She prepared herself to receive Rose; she was trying to calm herself; she shut herself off determined to ignore Rose; she wanted to appear to be asleep; she assumed a position of protest*
- (g) *She was old and weak*
- (h) *She had difficulty seeing.*

Most candidates found no difficulty answering (a), (e) and (g). In the case of (b), as is usually the case, whenever a question asks *What effect does ...*, there is a sharp separation of weaker students from stronger students. In the case of (c), a high percentage of candidates seemed not to be able to contrast the incident in the passage from what was 'normal'. It is clear that they expected a clue or the answer to be near the beginning of the passage and paid little attention to *It was seldom that Angela displeased her*, which occurred in the last paragraph. In the case of (d), it seemed as if the word *atmosphere* in this context posed a problem for many candidates or that they found difficulty finding an appropriate word to identify an atmosphere. (f) was probably the most testing of the questions in that it required candidates to formulate a conclusion about Mother Barton's posture based on what had happened before. This kind of task seemed to be beyond the reach of the majority of the candidates. In the case of (h), too many candidates found it difficult to understand that a summary answer was required rather than individual answers to each phrase given.

Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a passage taken from a newspaper article "Impact of Criminal Aliens" written by Tony Best. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) *Undocumented immigrants and immigrants who commit crimes*
- (b) *It gives the idea of something happening unexpectedly or without ceremony or that it comes as a shock.*
- (c) *It means one is refusing to deal with the problem of the effects on the Caribbean of the deportation of immigrants who commit crimes.*

- (d) *It evokes or encourages one to have sympathy or empathy for the position of the United States.*
- (e) *It suggests that “friends” is not to be taken at face value, that it has another meaning; it is an example of sarcasm or irony.*
- (f) *An example is “choirboys are not being shipped to the region”.*
- (g) *Many of the deportees left the region as underage children and were sent back to the Caribbean as hardened adult criminals.*
- (h) *He is suggesting that all parties concerned should sit down and work out a reasonable policy.*

Performance on Question 3 was below that on Question 2. As is usually the case, answers, such as (a), (g) and (h), which are explicitly stated in the passage were answered satisfactorily by most candidates. As was the case in Question 2, the phrase *What is the effect of ...* in (b) posed a great problem for the vast majority of the candidates, added to the fact that the word *jolted* seemed to be unfamiliar to many of them. The same was the case in (d) where, in addition to the word *effect*, many candidates could not get beyond using the word *understand* to explain *understandably*. In the case of (c), candidates had to know the meaning of the saying and then apply it to the passage. This double task was beyond most of the weaker candidates. It was mostly the weaker candidates who had problems with (e) and ((f).

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to grasp implied meanings and not just explicit meaning, to make summary assessments and to express these accurately. Teachers should bear in mind that questions which require judgements and assessments will always occur on the examination paper, in Question 2 and Question 3, with the balance across the two questions differing from year to year.

The incidence of particular question types and ways of phrasing questions (e.g. *What effect does ...*) will vary according to the selections the examiners make to ensure that the full syllabus is covered. Teachers should therefore familiarise themselves with all sections of the syllabus or peruse papers over the years to make sure that they provide practice for students in all the question types specified in the syllabus as well as the various ways of phrasing questions.

Teachers should dissuade students from quoting whole sentences and even paragraphs in answer to a simple question. Unusually long answers immediately cause the examiners to think that the candidate does not really know the answer. In any case, any answer which provides two or more alternatives in the hope that the examiner will select the correct one will automatically be awarded zero marks.

SECTION THREE (Expression)

Questions 4, 5 & 6

Question 4 required that candidates write a story based on a picture in which a girl appeared to be reading a book to a boy. Question 5 asked candidates to write a story which included the sentences *The door was closed and the cobwebs in front of it suggested it had not been opened for a long time. Moor turned the key and pushed open the door.* Question 6 (the descriptive essay) required candidates to describe the places along the route of a hike and the ways in which the weather affected the hike.

Question 4 produced a variety of responses with some weaker candidates resorting to a description of the picture rather than concentrating on telling a story. However, most candidates were able to integrate the picture quite well into their story and many candidates were able to produce interesting stories.

Question 5 proved to be the most attractive question for most candidates since they could easily make a story from the scenario presented. Though some responses to this question had the stimulus quotation inserted without satisfactory integration into the plot, in most cases it was reasonably well done.

In the case of Question 6, there was continuing improvement over previous years, indicating that candidates were better prepared to write a descriptive essay. It was also the case that the way in which the question was phrased allowed for more narrative into which candidates could fit their description. This year was the first time that performance on Question 6 exactly matched performance on Questions 4 and 5.

Suggestions for teachers and students

Teachers should continue to use pictures from varied sources, especially those dealing with current topics and themes in newspapers, to help stimulate and guide writing. This helps to make classroom writing interesting and should help students to focus on the use of details to create character, emotion and atmosphere. The creation of humour in writing is something that students might enjoy doing in their writing classes – how to tell a joke, how to write a joke, how to hold back the punch line are part of story-writing that might interest even reluctant writers.

Over the years, candidates have used the story lines in films they have seen as the basis for their short stories. However, even though originality in story line is not an absolute requirement, candidates should not get into the habit of slavishly copying other people's material. It may result in the copied parts of stories being discredited.

In relation to integrating the given quotation into the story, teachers are advised to work more on logical development of plot, integration of story elements, along with the other story writing elements. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short story writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading. In preparing students for narrative writing, teachers should have students focus on sequence of events, verb tenses and adverbs and conjunctions of time.

For descriptive writing, students can be encouraged to imagine themselves using a camera and describing what they see through the lens as they move the camera gradually from left to right to take in the whole scene. **Students need to get accustomed to the concepts 'spatial', 'temporal', and 'sensory', and to understand how these approaches bring order and meaning to their work. Critical reflection on their own writing may also be achieved through the analysis of / comparison with a range of excellent to poor examples of description.** While it is necessary for teachers to get students accustomed to description by practising descriptive phrases and sentences with striking adjectives and adverbs, students should be wary about memorising flowery phrases and sticking them, willy-nilly, into descriptive essays. In order to prepare students for descriptive writing, teachers have to focus specifically on vocabulary enrichment. One way is by providing students with a list of adjectives, one of nouns and another of adverbs, and getting students to combine them in a relevant way as they describe specific scenes. Teachers need to make these lists cover all the senses – sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste.

SECTION FOUR (Expression)

Questions 7 & 8

Question 7 asked candidates to write an essay giving their views on the statement *Watching television, rather than reading, is the best way for children to broaden their knowledge*. Question 8 asked candidates to present an argument either supporting or opposing the view that the government is wasting too much money buying school textbooks because the children are not reading them and that more money should be spent on computer equipment, which children prefer.

Candidates did not demonstrate any significant difference in preference for the one or the other question. Performance in this section this year was significantly better than last year probably because the topics were very familiar and meaningful to most candidates. There was little difference in performance on the two questions.

The good responses to Question 8 addressed both the matter of children's preference and the matter of the government investing money in the one or the other. The good responses to Question 7 addressed the advantages and disadvantages of both television and reading.

Suggestions for teachers and students

In responding to arguments, whether in real life or in examination essays, it is necessary to address all aspects of the argument that are put forward; not answering a specific aspect suggests that you have a problem with that specific aspect. In any case, answers to arguments in examination essays have to be comprehensive since marks are assigned to the different parts of a question. In other words, if you omit part of a question, you automatically lose marks assigned to it.

While this section of the paper often gives topics which are of immediate interest to teenagers, students also need to keep abreast of topics of regional as well as wider or international interest. It is not always that topics close to the immediate and current experience of teenagers will be given in this section.

Teachers need to continue to give repeated practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2010

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Paper 01, the multiple-choice paper, accounts for most of the Understanding component of the examination overall and Paper 02, the free response paper, accounts for all of the Expression component as well as part of the Understanding Component (all of Section 2 and part of Section 1).

The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:

	PAPER 01	PAPER 02	TOTAL
Understanding	60* = 46 ⁺	40* = 30 ⁺	76 ⁺ = 40%
Expression	–	90* = 114 ⁺	114 ⁺ = 60%
TOTAL	46⁺	114⁺	190⁺ = 100%
* raw score			
+ weighted score			

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in January 2010 and in the two previous years is as follows:

2008	2009	2010
47.8	59.3	54.9

The overall means for the examination (out of a total of 190) for the years 2008, 2009, 2010 are as follows:

2008	2009	2010
82.23	88.19	86.04

Average performance over the last three years on the multiple-choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

2008	2009	2010
26.41	27.31	24.44

Average performance (2008–2010) in the component sections of Paper 02 is given below:

Section	2008	2009	2010
<i>Section A</i> Summary Skills	11.51	14.15	11.13 (30)
<i>Section B</i> Comprehension	6.82	8.60	10.11 (30)
<i>Section C</i> Story Writing	14.25	13.29	14.52 (35)
Description	12.21	10.24	13.70 (35)
<i>Section D</i> Argument	13.52	13.55	13.77 (35)

While candidates are encouraged to communicate in order to develop the facility to process and articulate ideas, there is a need for them to differentiate between the spoken language and that which is written, and to appreciate that Standard English has an international currency. CXC English A is an English Language examination and candidates are required, above all, to demonstrate competence in, and control of the English Language.

Preparation for the examination must be a gradual process of developing skills, both receptive (comprehension) and productive (expression), in the English language. In the examination, these skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks, not only full stops and commas, but also colons and semi-colons, as well as other conventions of writing, such as inverted commas, capitalization, abbreviations, the writing of numbers, whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure, and paragraphing. Critical reading and thinking skills need also to be integral parts of the regular class sessions, because without these skills the tasks of summary writing, comprehension, argument or discussion are not easily managed.

Teachers should capitalize on the current interests of the candidates and use topical regional and international issues to help them appreciate the value of effective language use, and to help them to build personal banks of ideas. It is important to remember that very few candidates are natural speakers of Standard English and therefore every learning opportunity should be used.

Managing the examination is an area for which candidates need to be prepared. Candidates should be given strategies for interpreting and responding to tasks; for preparing simple outlines to guide their construction of responses; and for effectively editing their work. They need well rehearsed procedures for tackling each question. Candidates should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure of identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy, and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. It is only through repeated practice that each individual student will come to some understanding of the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under examination conditions. The perception that the English Language examination is not an activity for which the candidate needs to prepare should be seriously rejected.

There are also some basic examination presentation strategies that candidates need to be reminded of: it is important to write so the work may be read; care should be taken in deleting and adding information. The use of liquid paper should be discouraged in favour of neat crossing out, since candidates frequently forget to insert new material in places where the liquid paper was used. Correct question numbering and page numbering help ensure that efforts are not misunderstood.

The tasks in the examination are directly related, in most cases, to real-life skills. Employers and the general public regard performance in English Language examinations as a measure of one's ability to perform in the world of work. It should also be remembered that the sort of English required in an examination is different from what is normally spoken in every-day life. Preparation for the English examination is just as important as it is for any other subject

DETAILED COMMENTS

Section A - Understanding and Expression

Question 1

Most candidates showed some evidence of overall understanding of the passage to be summarized, grasped the concept that 'infertile soil' was responsible for the food crisis and in most cases demonstrated the ability to pull out two points from it. Several good scripts exhibited good language use. Too many candidates, however, still do not know what is required in summary writing. A large number of candidates experienced expression problems; hence, communication of their ideas was ambiguous or even contradictory. In addition, there was often a lack of cohesion.

- There were very few superior scripts, and candidates evidently experienced several problems getting beyond initial understanding of the passage: though they understood the general drift of the passage, they clearly had difficulty with the details, and the way those details developed and interacted with the main point and thrust of the writing.
- The habit of lifting and regurgitating chunks from the passage, without analysing the content, continues to be a problem. Teachers need to focus more on the need for interpretation and re-expression of the *meaning* of what is read — not just changing of words (interpreting rather than translation).
- Exceeding the word limit is still a problem. More practice is needed in the strategies of achieving economy in writing, in selection of points, and in achieving focus.
- Organization is another major problem since many candidates show a lack of ability to link points and ideas logically. Many candidates are limited to the chronology in the original.

Following are three summaries of the passage which give some idea of different approaches to presenting the critical information.

Sample Summary #1

Various factors contribute to the world's food crisis. These include pests and diseases, flood and drought, poor farming practices, the decreasing amount of cultivable cropland, and, most importantly, the increasingly poor quality of soil. Successful attempts have been made to improve seed quality but this has limited effect where the soil is poor. Producing better types of plants increased food for a

short while but failed because of soil. The world food crisis is usually seen as a result of bad marketing practices, but other things like water, diseases and soil must not be taken for granted, as is usually the case. Attention has been given to improving agricultural practices, but very little is done to improve the soil.

(120 words)

Sample Summary #2

Seeds are improving but food production is falling because soils are deteriorating and people are going hungry. According to scientists better varieties resulted in the 'green evolution'. Many years ago, improved plant varieties resulted in the 'green evolution'. This led to the belief that the crisis was over. The hope was short-lived as fertile soil, a critical factor, was lacking. The present food crisis, intensified by natural disasters and diseases, could have been averted with the promotion of fertilizers in places like Africa. Although they practice modern agricultural techniques, governments and charities are not interested in funding projects to improve the quality of soil.

(105 words)

Sample Summary #3

Although the quality of seeds is improving, soil is getting worse and there is currently a food crisis. Soil improvement is critical to solving this crisis.

While it is true that the crisis is viewed in economic terms, a combination of environmental conditions also contributes to creating the desperate food situation. The chief problem is that fertile soil is needed to capitalize on the high quality seeds and plants developed through modern scientific methods. Research in soil improvement has been neglected because it does not capture the interest of governments and charities. They fail to realize that even the best quality seeds cannot flourish without good soil. Soil health is needed to avert a worse food crisis.

(117 words)

Suggestions for Teachers and Candidates

Competence in the techniques of summary is required: a grasp of the thesis; identification of the main points; logical organization in which the correct relationships are grasped and expressed, the ability to express the material in one's own words, with an appropriate vocabulary; and completion within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced wholesale by the candidate, this is interpreted as incompetence.

Summarizing is a real-life skill (used, for example, by news reporters and policemen) and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates. In the case of business candidates who may be told that an executive summary preserves the words of the full document, this is not the case in English — candidates must be able to show that they can use words that condense the ideas of the original, and words that can link sentences together smoothly so that the summary reads like a document in itself and not like a chopped-up version of another one.

The examiners first determine whether the word limit has been exceeded. Words beyond the word limit are not considered. Consideration is next given to whether the candidate has understood and can clearly identify the main points in the passage and award marks accordingly. The examiners then assess whether the candidate has put those points together in an intelligible and logical manner using his/her own words and award marks accordingly. When candidates exceed the word limit, the marks may be reduced by as many as twenty per cent; when candidates use only the words in the original passage, the marks are automatically reduced by 33 per cent.

Care must be taken to preserve the meaning of the original, and to avoid the inclusion of extraneous material, personal opinion and commentary. In real life, such distortion would be seen as being unethical, and it could lead to wrong, unfair and disastrous decisions.

Section B - Understanding

Questions 2 and 3

Generally, candidates found the questions in this section within their reach, but there were many instances of candidates aiming to succeed by including everything in the section of the passage to which the question directs them, when in fact they are required to be specific. There were varied weaknesses in answers, most exhibiting vagueness, and problems with expression.

Suggestions for Teachers and Candidates

Answers indicate a need for teachers to help students to develop accuracy and control, for example by

- engaging students in much practice in interpreting and arriving at meaning and evidence
- involving students in practice to develop the habit of focusing and discriminating
- involving students in activities that develop their vocabulary so as to produce answers that are clear and concise
- engaging students in recognizing the difference between literal and metaphorical language.

The questions in this section are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. Candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Answers should be to the point. These questions **never** require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer. It is the candidate's responsibility to indicate clearly what the answer is; it is not the examiner's responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidate.

This section requires candidates to respond to different levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. Candidates also need to do as each question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often an indication that the student does not know exactly what the answer is.

Section C - Expression

Questions 4, 5 and 6

Performance in Section III was generally consistent with past years. There were a few superior scripts and also a few incompetent ones. Most of these came from Question 6 (description), as candidates

continue to ignore the requirement to describe, or to describe the scene and/or period that the question asks for.

Of the three choices given in this section, the most popular was no. 5, the word prompt, while the least popular was no. 4, the picture stimulus.

Question 4

Question 4 required candidates to write a story based on a picture of a little girl hugging a boy. Both children were smiling. Many candidates were prompted to write expository pieces in response to this stimulus.

Question 5

This stimulus was very popular with candidates. It required them to write a story beginning with the sentences ‘He slammed the door behind him. He knew it would be for the last time.’ Performance was generally fair.

Question 6

Many responses suggested that candidates had not studied the instructions, and, as happened in earlier examinations, they wrote mainly narrative, with some description, from the start of the assignment, rather than focus on the specific time/place elements for description.

Suggestions for Teachers and Candidates

Candidates are advised that they should read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required, but these stories should not be memorised and reproduced. In addition candidates should not disregard the word limit set; the longer the story, the greater the chance of grammatical and other errors occurring. Although the question papers state word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better candidates tend to write stories that fall within or not too far outside the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak.

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterization, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, and good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. Candidates should try to improve their own techniques of story writing, including the effective use of dialogue and the contrast between characters, by studying good stories written by Caribbean and other authors.

Candidates should use language that they can control. At times they use words and structures with which they are not really familiar. The result is that what they write is often verbose, stilted, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help candidates feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Candidates continue to be unable to differentiate between exposition and description, or to create a piece in which the narrative overwhelms the descriptive. Although responses to this question have improved over the last three years, there are still too many candidates who are writing a story and not paying attention to the instructions given.

- Description must be clearly constructed and developed. (The different components must be detailed, then linked appropriately to create areas of focus; the relevant details must be logically and effectively sequenced; and then the different areas of focus and facets must be linked appropriately [e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail]).
- The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the descriptive elements.
- Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself.
- Any change in perspective (e.g. visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create moods, tones, atmosphere and setting.
- Candidates should be encouraged to improve their facility with adjectives and adverbs.

Section D - Argument

Questions 7 and 8

The performance in this section was similar to that of earlier examinations but some areas of concern continue to be noted.

Question 7

This question required candidates to argue for or against the choice of local food. This was not a popular choice. While the subject was very topical candidates seemed not prepared to present arguments and comment on local foods. Arguments were often undeveloped, lacking illustrative details and comparison.

Question 8

This was by far the more popular and the better done question. It required candidates to give their views on the banning of sexual and violent songs from radio and television. It was topical and candidates were able to take a balanced approach to responding. They advanced counter arguments to show other areas of blame for behaviour beside sexual and violent songs.

Suggestions for Teachers and Candidates

Candidates need to note that skills of argument require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, backed up by suitable examples. Providing information without using good argumentative techniques is a weakness; so is the reverse. Candidates should pay attention to ‘tone’ and ‘audience’ and not indiscriminately use the language of debating in every argument they present. Candidates can learn different styles of argument by studying letters to the editor and editorials in newspapers as well as short, interesting articles in popular magazines or in the magazine section of newspapers.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully and make sure they understand key words. They should then select their points, choose examples that support their points, and be consistent and clear in their presentation. Some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiners' view or the socially acceptable view.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2010

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

GENERAL COMMENTS

The number of candidates writing the examination this year was approximately 100,000.

Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, accounted for most of the Understanding component of the examination overall, and Paper 02, the free response paper, accounted for all of the Expression as well as part of the Understanding component (part of Question 1 and all of Questions 2 and 3).

The distribution of marks for the two profiles, Expression and Understanding, across the two papers is as follows:

	PAPER 01 Multiple Choice	PAPER 02 Essay	TOTAL
Understanding	60* = 46 ⁺	40* = 30 ⁺	76 ⁺ = 40%
Expression	–	90* = 114 ⁺	114 ⁺ = 60%
TOTAL	46⁺	144⁺	190⁺ = 100%
* raw score + weighted score			

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in the two papers this year, and the three previous years is as follows:

2007	2008	2009	2010
49.01	(RoR*) 41.86 (T&T*) 49.56	56.44	66.45

* Rest of Region

* Trinidad and Tobago

The performance mean for the examination (out of a total of 190⁺) for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 is as follows:

2007	2008	2009	2010
77.94	(RoR) 74.74 (T&T) 78.58	81.82	85.33

Average performance (2007-2010) on the multiple choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

2007	2008	2009	2010
23.44	(RoR) 26.24 (T&T) 26.98	27.92	26.25

Average performance (2007–2010) in the component sections of Paper 02 is given below.

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Section A	10.04 (30)	10.42 (30) (RoR)	10.69 (30)	14.57 (30)
Summary Skills		8.78 (30) (T&T)		
Section B	15.45 (29)	8.84 (30) (RoR)	11.13 (30)	9.07 (30)
Comprehension		12.98 (30) (T&T)		
Section C				
Story Writing	13.62 (35)	13.29 (35) (RoR)	13.27 (35)	13.67 (35)
Description		14.25 (35) (T&T)		
	10.63 (35)	11.23 (35) (RoR)	13.30 (35)	11.42 (35)
		13.82 (35) (T&T)		
Section D	13.74 (35)	12.78 (35) (RoR)	14.44 (35)	13.28 (35)
Argument		13.13 (35) (T&T)		

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was satisfactory, with approximately 72 per cent of candidates achieving acceptable grades. Paper 01 assessed understanding of meaning conveyed through word choice, grammar and punctuation as well as meaning constructed from reading literature and opinions expressed in various forms. Candidates performed best on items requiring understanding of literary discourse, but were weakest on understanding informative discourse, grammar and mechanics.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Summary

The summary expected from candidates writing the CSEC English A examination is one demanding the skills used in every-day situations where what is said or what is written may need to be put into a concise form. The summary should reflect the general depth and intention of the original while giving all of the necessary information in candidates' own words. There are various approaches to writing summary and teachers need to expose students to these. One may simply follow the organization of the original, moving chronologically through the points. Summary may also begin with the conclusion and then show the line of reasoning and facts. The important requirement is that the correct relationships between the points must be maintained, so that the meaning is unchanged and clear. Additionally, while it is not necessary to capture every detail, it is important that vital information is not ignored. A good vocabulary is an asset that should be cultivated, since a summary must be rendered in one's own words.

The responses to the summary question continue to suggest that many candidates are not being taught the skills of summary writing. There is persistent wholesale or partial lifting. In a large number of instances where the main points are grasped, the summaries fail because not enough attention is given to organization and meaning. Large numbers of candidates continue to have problems comprehending the passages set. This is directly related to the lack of comprehension skills generally. Poor vocabulary, poor understanding

of grammar and punctuation, weak grasp of connotative language, and weak reasoning are among the elements contributing to misinterpretation. Section A tests two elements: understanding and expression, hence the importance of comprehension skills. Candidates must not see ‘comprehension’ as a textbook activity, but as an essential part of daily life.

Often the skill of paraphrasing is confused with summarizing — paraphrasing will generally increase, rather than reduce the length, so that in such cases many of the main points come outside of the word limit.

Question 1

The summary passage on cassava proved to be generally manageable, based on a topic of which most candidates have some knowledge. There was a general improvement in candidates’ performance in writing the summary, with more candidates demonstrating those skills needed to show competence. However, the general weaknesses continued, with such responses reflecting the same problems that have been identified in the past: lack of understanding of the passage, the use of extraneous information, use of the language of the text, and overall weakness in the use of language. This year, like other years, there were many instances where candidates wrote letters and stories about cassava preparation and use in their own homes. Not only did they misunderstand or ignore the instructions, but they indicated a serious inability to address what was asked, without permitting what was known to interfere. In instances where it was obvious that candidates were attempting to write in their own words, vocabulary deficiency was a problem.

Section B: Comprehension

In Section B, there are two kinds of texts, representing the literary and the expository genres. The questions require precise answers rather than the general or vague. Candidates should pay close attention to every word that is used in the textual piece (prose, poetry, drama) and recognize the various levels of meaning. Of importance too, is the fact that questions are asked in various ways. Teachers need to ensure that in preparing students, they use the taxonomy to help them to become familiar with types of question words and meaning. In response to each question, candidates are expected to answer precisely what they are asked. These questions **never** require paragraph-long answers. Responding to a question which requires a specific answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer. It is the candidates’ responsibility to indicate clearly what the answer is; it is not the examiner’s responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidate.

Questions 2 and 3

Most candidates performed fairly well on this section, with Question 2 being the one with which candidates were more comfortable. Question 3 appeared to be more demanding.

Questions that candidates found most challenging were 2(d), 3(c), 3(f), 3(g), and 3(h). All these questions required making judgements rather than lifting answers from the passage. Question 2(d) required the candidates not to simply list the occupations, or choose one, but to decide on the main occupation; Question 3(c) required them to decide on not why ‘gut’ feeling has to be developed, but why it has to be ‘*deliberately* developed’; 3(f) presented problems to candidates who simply lifted from the passage; 3(g) was a test of ability to derive the meaning of an unfamiliar word from its context; 3(h) required the ability to arrive at overall meaning and the writer’s intention in a passage.

Section C: Story Writing

It is recognized that candidates seem to read less than before, with each year-group reading less than the one before it. One reality is that the adult world supplies the student world with film, visual stories which reduce the need to read for pleasure or entertainment, and sometimes even for knowledge — there is no need to imagine, since the visual preempts this activity. However, the movie concretizes a story: there is character, setting, theme, conflict, climax; there are details, moods and tones. The movie gives opportunity for critique: what worked, why it did, where the situation was unrealistic, where and how could things have been improved? What would a sequel contain: what other perspectives are possible? What would you write

if you wanted to convey the beauty, emotion or some other abstract aspect to someone who did not see the movie? Are the spoken words alone enough to help someone experience the power of the movie? This suggests that while we continue to persuade our candidates into reading, we need to accept their differences and make more use of their world to stimulate their minds and efforts. Different types of stimuli are provided in the examination for story writing — the more visual student is helped by a picture stimulus, but this kind of stimulus is not designed to exclude anyone.

Candidates need to be encouraged to evaluate their own stories using a given set of criteria. The categories used in marking the examination are public. They are ‘incompetent’ including ranges 1 and 2, ‘competent’ including ranges 3 and 4, and ‘superior’, ranges 5 and 6. Teachers should help students to apply these categories in assessing their own efforts in the attempt to improve their skills.

A negative practice clearly evidenced by candidates’ stories is that they prepare a story and are determined to write this story regardless of the stimuli given, or they tack the stimulus on to the final paragraph in the hope that it may be absorbed. In both instances, their responses are clearly incompetent, and assessed in this range.

Questions 4 and 5

By far the more popular and better done was Question 5, but Question 4 was also attempted by many candidates. Overall, candidates continue to be poor to moderate in this section. The vast majority fell into the ‘competent’ group, mainly at the lower end of the mark scheme. There were only occasional exceptionally good scripts. The responses generally indicate weaknesses in story-writing techniques, as well as significant weaknesses in fundamental language competencies.

Section C – Descriptive Writing

Comments made on Question 6 in previous years bear repeating here: description must be clearly constructed and developed, having the different components linked appropriately. Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different areas of focus must be linked appropriately (e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be related to the purely descriptive elements. The choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself: any change in perspective (time, perspective, mood, tone) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words (nouns, verbs, concrete adjectives, adverbs) to create setting and atmosphere. In short, the object should be to enable the audience to see and to vicariously experience what is being described.

Question 6

Question 6 continues to be the least popular in Section C. Where it was attempted, too much narrative was included in the response. Among the weak responses, the descriptions were merely a listing of details, with little sense of the spatial or the other elements that would make the description meaningful.

It is clear that the question is not yet achieving, to a significant degree, the purpose for which it was introduced — to provide an option to the story-writing questions. Only the exceptional candidates appear to perform well on this question, which suggests that the writing of description is not being given enough attention in classrooms.

Section D – Argument

This section tests candidates’ expression skills: how they organize thoughts for maximum effect, moving smoothly from one idea to another; how to express those views clearly and succinctly; how to use supporting elements; the techniques of audience appeal; the skill of reasoning and the ability to recognize and separate opinion from fact are among the skills assessed. Topics will be related to current social issues and elements

which appeal to or fall within the experience of the student, but the skills of reasoning, whether in arguing for, against, or in giving one's reasoned views should be acquired by using as wide a range of stimuli as possible. Teachers need to continue to give repeated practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

Question 7

This question presented challenges with interpretation. 'Obedience' was sometimes defined culturally as '[having] manners', and a variety of other positives such as 'trustworthiness' and 'submissiveness'. The examination is a test of candidates' ability to use Standard English as an international currency. While the foregoing kind of answer is not completely 'wrong', is it at best only a partial satisfaction of the appropriate task.

Question 8

The topic, 'Sexual and violent songs' produced scripts that never lacked content; candidates who attempted this question had much to write, so they did well in Area 1, but many experienced problems with Area 2.

The topic 'Caribbean doctors' produced fairly good responses and some of the arguments were very good. Candidates made many interesting points and showed good language control.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers should:

- Help candidates to see the relevance of the various areas of study to the immediate and future quality of their lives.
- Teach for and encourage transfer of knowledge and skills.
- Encourage candidates to see and respect the differences in the language varieties they speak and hear.
- Help candidates to understand the need, on the one hand, for Standard English mastery as their international currency, and on the other, the value of their own dialect in identifying with the local and regional space.
- Facilitate and encourage reading by using various strategies: teach English Language through English Literature or other study texts.
- Not teach for the examination but teach strategies for tackling the examination — the skill of outlining to improve organization and succinctness; the allocation of time; how to make corrections; the importance of correct numbering and how to interpret questions are some examples.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2011

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination in January 2011 followed the same format as in previous years. Paper 01 — the multiple-choice paper — tested the Understanding profile, and Paper 02 — the free response paper — tested both the Understanding and Expression profiles.

Performance remained stable in January 2011. Fifty-four per cent of candidates achieved Grades I–III. This was consistent with overall performance in January 2010 when the percentage of candidates who achieved this level stood at 55 per cent. The percentage of candidates at the Grade I level increased to 9.13 in 2011 from 7.08 in 2010, and 7.7 in 2009. There was significant improvement in the performance on Profile I — Understanding, and a more modest improvement on Profile II — Expression.

Most students produced scripts that fell within the levels of suggesting or demonstrating competence. There were only a few superior scripts at one end, and also a few incompetent scripts at the other. This seems to indicate a need for teaching to focus more on improving the quality of students' general understanding and writing skills.

This target can be achieved through careful reading and critical thinking that leads to the synthesis of ideas, and more exposure to a wide range of topics that allows for garnering ideas and information for further use. The goal should be to widen the students' experiences with good models.

Equal focus must be placed on both *what* is written and *how* it is written. The latter goes beyond the mechanics of writing in terms of correct use of grammar to also include greater focus on choice of words, tone and perspective or writer's stance.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was good, with approximately 79 per cent of candidates achieving Grades I and II. The mean on this paper was 30.57 out of a weighted total of 46. Paper 01 assessed understanding of meaning conveyed through word choice, grammar and punctuation as well as meaning constructed from reading literature, informational text and opinions expressed in various forms. Candidates performed best on items requiring understanding of literary discourse. Retrieving explicitly stated information and ideas, and making straight forward inferences were well done.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Summary

Question 1

This question requires candidates to understand a piece of writing and reproduce its meaning concisely and clearly. Competent performance demonstrates both these abilities. Weak responses indicate usually major problems with understanding the passage, and with the ability to express meaning in the candidate's own words (synthesis). Many candidates try to succeed by lifting chunks or 'cutting and pasting' them together in ways that indicate attempts to hide the fact that they are reproducing the words of the passage. Teaching should concentrate on helping students to grasp and reproduce meaning. Exercises in equivalent sentences are useful, and can be extended beyond one sentence to a paragraph, and further. Practice in comprehension that involves interpretation (not just re-wording) — executed both orally and in writing, is likely to be also very useful.

Summarizing involves two major processes: *information gathering* (reading, identifying and interpreting what is relevant) and *information giving* (synthesizing, organizing and writing). Teaching must move beyond 'identifying points' to include understanding how the text is organized. Focusing on text organizational patterns such as cause and effect, problems and solution, before and after, and similar developmental strategies can lead students to greater comprehension and synthesis of information before they begin to write.

The summary question is awarded a total of 30 marks, evenly distributed among three areas:

- Understanding (Content)
- Organization
- Expression

The text in January consisted of information with which most candidates would be familiar, and their answers generally indicated that they understood the contents. It is in this area — understanding — that candidates continue to score well. Generally the instruction to write in continuous prose is observed. However, two problems persist. One of these is the practice of lifting the language of the text, apart from the permitted use of technical expressions. It now seems to be the norm to ignore the instruction to express the meaning *as far as possible in your own words*. The second is the continued ignoring of the prescribed length by a high percentage of candidates, despite repeated warnings that marks will be lost. Any points coming after the

word limit of 120 words are not rewarded. In fact, the need to go over the limit suggests that candidates are not as capable as they might be in organizing their thoughts, so they can also expect a lower mark under *Organization*. Satisfactory answers to this question

- identified the theme/subject, and the thesis or general thrust of the discussion
- located the specific issue and the reasons for focusing on this issue
- identified the causes of the problem (general and specific)
- examined specific areas by definition, recognition of causes and effects
- described the outlook for the future and the reasons for those views.

Recommendations for Teachers

- While students **MUST** use their own words, “in your own words” does not require avoidance of key words of the passage. The *technical jargon* (scientific terms, specialized vocabulary) of some passages cannot be avoided when students are writing summaries.
- Students need to undertake extensive practice in organizing their answers, using transition words to help the reader with understanding and readability and using simple, correct language.
- Students should be reminded that to reuse the words of the passage entirely (whether as a whole chunk or by joining phrases from all over) attracts no marks — as the student has not presented any of his/her own words for assessment. Staying within the word limit is another area for practice.
- Engage students in more close-reading exercises — paying closer attention to writer's intention.
- The internal structure of the passage should be emphasized and organizational patterns reinforced so that students understand the importance of cohesion and coherence.
- Emphasize the teaching of paragraph cohesion and the use of appropriate transitions and connectives.
- Build vocabulary and spelling skills to help with comprehension.

- Students should be taught the critical elements for superior organization and language: transitional phrases and the value to achieving economy; using appropriate transitions; avoiding arbitrary use.

Section B: Comprehension

Questions 2 and 3

Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the requirements of Questions (a) to (d) which largely required recalling information explicitly stated in the passages. It was evident that most respondents had a good understanding of what the extracts were about and therefore could give correct responses to the questions that did not test higher-order skills involving evaluating or synthesizing information. Evaluating content, language and textual elements proved difficult in some instances.

The individual parts that proved challenging for Question 3 were (e), (f), (g) and (h). While candidates understood the nature of the questions, they struggled to analyse and synthesize the information and to link it to the writers' overall meaning. Question (h) in particular proved most difficult for candidates. This required them to draw a conclusion from the last three sentences of the passage.

Recommendations for Teachers

- The teaching of comprehension can be usefully combined with the teaching of summary writing as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.
- Students should be helped to be more focused on interpretation, more discriminating in their answers; more concerned with answering what is asked, not what is usually asked.
- As with Section A, much practice is advised in reading, listening, and reproducing meaning; in interpreting meaning at different levels; and in paying attention to accuracy.
- Practice in vocabulary building that involves not lists of words, but discerning meaning in context, is advised; practice in producing and responding to varied plausible responses helps students to 'see' how writing may be interpreted, but there should also be insistence on accuracy in cases where some answers are not plausible responses to a stimulus or not supported by the passage.

- Developing sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important, so that students rise above the level of seeing comprehension as guesswork or ‘anything goes’.

Section C: Story Writing and Descriptive Essay

Question 4

The picture stimulus was well interpreted by candidates. It evoked various scenes and events involving the character in the picture. The facial expression was often interpreted as grief, pain, loss or some suffering that the character experienced.

Question 5

The stimulus on which candidates were to base their story was “Kenia considered the plan she had made. She looked around sadly, then nodded. It was the best decision”. Most responses were pre-occupied with rape/sex and the abuse of teenagers by family members. The tales often lost sight of the stimulus, which was not effectively used. Candidates had difficulty integrating the stimulus into their narratives, so that most often it was 'tacked on' at the end.

Question 6

Candidates were required to describe the scenes and atmosphere in a stadium based on the stimulus “The huge crowd rose to its feet as the athletes entered the stadium”. Candidates were able to relate to the activities and events in a stadium. Most were often able to (though not in great detail) describe the ‘atmosphere’ and ‘scenes’, and very often successfully appealed to the readers' senses.

Generally, the question continues to pose challenges for candidates who have not mastered the writing of a descriptive essay. Their responses fall into the realm of the narrative which is the genre of writing tested in Questions 4 and 5. There were some instances of misinterpretation of the 'time frame' of incidents/events/scenes. In some instances, there was no focus on the athletes.

Recommendations for Teachers

- While there were some highly competent and superior scripts in response to Question 6, most scripts continue to be unsatisfactory mostly because students ignore the rubric.
- Students need to be taught how to write a descriptive essay, and to recognize (not simply told or shown) differences between it and a story. One way in which this can be done is by an

immersion strategy involving reading and writing descriptive essays, and similar immersion in stories, some of which will involve description, but are not simply descriptive essays.

- A descriptive essay allows for creativity in the same way the story does. Candidates may impose their own interpretation (so long as it is valid), and create their own scenes based on valid interpretation of the subject. Within the scene they can create different elements or aspects.
- Teachers are advised to treat the writing of description as a writing experience into which they put in as much preparation as they do for story writing — and encourage every student to write a number of descriptive essays until they know how to do them. This is more advisable than the practice of preparing students for stories only, thus closing an option that they might well have found interesting and suited to their interests and abilities.
- A danger in teaching ‘story’ only is that the stimulus set in the exam may not appeal strongly to a particular student and so may only evoke a mediocre response. Full exposure and teaching give the students a fair chance to do well.

Section D: Persuasive Writing

More candidates did Question 7 which required them to give their views on the need for special institutions for bullies, than Question 8 which required an argument for or against the testing of school students for HIV, with or without their parents’ consent.

Candidates were familiar with the subject of ‘bullying’ in schools. Candidates spent most of the time dealing with bullying — the behaviour, the causes and the effects and sharing anecdotes from personal experiences. The focus should have been whether there should be an institution for those given to bullying.

Candidates responded well to Question 8 whether they were supporting or opposing the view. The words ‘with or without consent’ used in the question posed a challenge for some candidates. Many candidates did not establish a clear position in their line of argument.

Suggestions for Teachers in Addressing Weaknesses

- Strategies such as listening to and presenting arguments followed by peer critiquing of arguments are usually useful.

- The writing and presentation of papers and speeches are also useful, as are debates, advice corners, improvised situations such as talk-shows, and other means of promoting thoughtful speech and writing.

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2011

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance this year was fair and compares favourably with the previous two years. The percentage of candidates who achieved Grades I–III was 67 compared with 66 in 2010 and 56 in 2009. The overall mean was 88 compared with 85 in 2010 and 82 in 2009. Generally, the incidence of students being wholly unprepared for the examination was small, so that answers suggesting or demonstrating incompetence were fewer. When the examination is taken as a whole, there is some improvement, but individual questions reveal fluctuations in the quality of performance.

While candidates seem to be taught the aspects of the syllabus which are examined, some candidates do not demonstrate the quality of skills that produce excellent responses. Most responses fall into the category of being adequate. There is strong evidence that questions/stimuli are not read carefully and not fully thought through. This results in many misinterpretations and inadequate responses.

The following examples are indicative of this. Section D this year included a stimulus that required students to *express their views* on the issue of banning the *import* of fruits and vegetables, in order to support local agriculture. Attention was drawn to a response which replaced the word *import* with *export*, used the word repeatedly and with confidence throughout the essay, and so missed the issue entirely. Equally concerning was the inclination of some candidates, in responding to Question 5 in Section C, to choose one of the indeterminate objects in the background of the picture and to make the story revolve around that, rather than around anything that was foregrounded.

There are still instances of candidates answering more than one question. Not only is this a poor examination strategy, since it takes time away from other questions, but it suggests that candidates do not take care to read or study the instructions.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 — Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was fairly good. The mean mark on this paper was 30 out of 46 compared with 26 in 2010 and 28 in 2009. Candidates generally performed well on items of word choice, grammar and mechanics and on comprehension passages based on informative, literary and persuasive discourse. Items presenting difficulty were those requiring evaluation of the effectiveness of language devices such as irony, innuendo and symbolism as well as evaluating appropriate use of code and style in relation to the author's intention.

Paper 02 — Free Response

Section A: Summary

Question 1

This question required candidates to demonstrate both understanding and expression skills. The material is usually drawn from informative discourse or exposition (essays, reports, scientific discussions, analyses). The skills of selection and concise expression are targeted. Included in the

syllabus is the following advice: *Summaries require economy of language, the careful selection of the relevant main ideas, and the preservation of the intention of the original.*

While most candidates managed to select the appropriate information for their answers, of that group, only a small minority showed mastery of the skill of writing clearly and concisely, *in their own words*. Fewer candidates still, were able to maintain the correct relationships while reorganizing their points for brevity. They clung steadfastly to both the pattern and the language of the original, a strategy that often worked against conciseness. Most candidates continued to lift the points entirely. Often, connectives were not used so cohesion was lost. There were extreme cases where candidates' concept of summary was to simply copy the first 120 words of the passage.

The mean for the summary this year was 14 out of 30 compared with 15 in 2010 and 11 in 2009. The passage this year appears to have been well within candidates' reach, and they scored reasonably well in the content area. Following the original organization slavishly, led to answers that exceeded the limit and so candidates lost marks. Failure to use their own language also earned low marks. Those candidates who performed in the range 9 –18 selected relevant details but generally did not maintain the original focus.

A close look at the syllabus section *Notes and Suggested Activities* (specifically pages 6 –12) will help both teacher and student to identify and hone summary skills.

Section B: Comprehension

Section B is designed to test understanding, using two short passages, one literary and one expository. The skills tested are outlined in the syllabus under Understanding (a), (b) and (c) (pages 2–3). Weaker candidates responded well mainly to the first three of the ten objectives under (b) – recognizing facts stated explicitly, extracting specific and implied information.

Question 2

The literary passage dealt with a children's activity, hide-and-seek. The mean mark on this question was 7 out of 15. Part (a) asked simply for the name of the game. Examiners recognized that the game was called differently in the various countries, and these names were accepted. Part (c), which required deducing meaning, was frequently incorrectly answered as candidates were unable to go beyond the literal and repeated the answer for the previous question. The parts most answered incorrectly or omitted were (e), (f), (g) and (i). In (g), it was not recognized that a conflict must involve at least two elements. Similarly candidates failed to capture two sides of the oxymoron in (i). Questions relating to appropriateness of tone, connotative meaning and writer's craft were not well answered.

Question 3

The mean mark for this question was also 7 out of 15.

The problem parts were (f) where there was an inability to draw the inference, and (h) where again there was an inability to grasp and explain the oxymoron. It was noted that fewer candidates attempted to lift segments of the passage and tried to answer every question; there were fewer instances of no response.

Candidates continue to ignore the use of the term phrase, and give instead full sentences or even paragraphs, and so lose marks. This prompts the reiteration of the need to teach students to study the requirements of individual questions.

Section C: Story Writing

This year, Question 4 was the most popular. Question 6 was the least popular in this section. The stories demonstrated generally that competence in writing standard English is weak.

Question 4

This question used a picture of an elderly man playing a guitar as a stimulus. Candidates seemed generally comfortable with the picture stimulus. It prompted stories with good characterization and emotional involvement. Story lines tended to be similar, but those scoring the higher marks managed to create conflict or relationships with grandchildren, and tended to use symbolism. Reflection and flash back techniques were also attempted. The mean mark was 13 out of 35.

Question 5

This question was better handled. It was based on the stimulus *A cold hand grasped his wrist as he slumped to the ground.* Many candidates made unconvincing use of the stimulus often tacking it on to the end or barely including it in the story. The mean mark was 15 out of 35.

Question 6

This question was a challenge largely because candidates seemed unfamiliar with the word *pedestrian*. The question was based on the stimulus *The streets were filled with pedestrians in anticipation of their new leader.* Another challenge was also the need to describe mood and atmosphere, so that a significant number of answers scored between 10 and 13 marks. This year saw some resurgence of the tendency towards narration rather than description. At the same time, those candidates who understood the requirements wrote very good pieces. The mean mark for this question was 12 out of 35.

Section D: Argument

Questions 7 and 8

Both of these questions should have been quite suitable given the demands of the syllabus. The content required to respond to them should have been sufficiently within candidates' experience. Question 7 required candidates to write an essay giving their views on the topic *The government should ban the importation of all fruits and vegetables in support of local production.* Question 8 required an argument supporting or opposing the view that *Hungry students cannot learn. Free lunch should be provided for all secondary school students.*

Each question was structured in such a way that there were two parts to be linked to produce an acceptable response. This presented a major difficulty for large numbers of candidates who failed to create necessary links between the two parts; for example, candidates might argue *hungry students cannot learn* OR *free lunch should be provided*.

Some of the responses were quite long – in several cases two or three pages, well over the word limit. In addition, many candidates had ideas but did not have the language skills necessary to

articulate those ideas well. The mean mark for Questions 7 and 8 were 16 and 14 out of 35, respectively.

Recommendations for Teachers

- It is clear that hundreds of students across the Caribbean have not mastered the use of Standard English. There continues to be interference from dialects and patois used throughout the region; to these have been added the slangs originating from dancehall music and the North American ghettos and the abbreviations familiar to users of the messaging media of modern technology. For students who almost abhor reading, some methods must be found to encourage correct use of the language.
- Teachers need to continue to pay attention to having students use their own words when summarizing and to employ transitional words and phrases in order to develop their responses into a coherent whole. Oral and written exercises should be used to introduce these words into the active vocabulary of students. Practice in construction shifts and equivalent sentences would be useful.
- The teaching of comprehension can be combined with the teaching of summary as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.
- Students should be helped to focus on interpretation; much practice in listening, reading and reproducing meaning and in attention to accuracy is necessary. Sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important.
- Students need to develop a firm grasp of language structure through regular reading of good literature. This includes attention to paragraphing, grammar, spelling, diction and other conventions of writing.
- Students should be given ample practice in recognizing and using the elements of story-writing and descriptive writing.
- Greater use should be made of literature to teach writing—immersion into how stories work.
- Strategies should be engaged to provide individual help to students so that personal needs can be addressed.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2012

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in the January examination was moderate. Most candidates produced competent scripts. Very few superior scripts were in evidence, and, at the other end, there was no startling number of incompetent scripts. What the examination results suggest, particularly through the questions which call for reading and understanding, is that most candidates' reading is superficial. As a result, candidates miss what is being asked when they need to study and respond to questions. Research has established that poor reading and comprehension skills lead to poor writing skills. There is much need for teaching to focus more on improving the quality of students' general understanding and writing skills.

This target can be achieved through encouraging discussion, interactive reading where students are taught how to question what they read and to let themselves feel free to interpret or reinterpret the texts, more exposure to a wide range of topics and styles of writing, that allows the garnering of ideas and information for further use — in short, seek to widen the students' experiences with good models. Equal focus must be placed on what is written and how it is written. All of this is even more crucial since in our technologically advanced environment and instant solutions, our students are encouraged to be very visual. There is no need, or time, to imagine; they are accustomed to being given the interpretations.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was fairly good. Seventy-six per cent of candidates achieved scores at the level of Grades I-III. The mean score for the paper was 26 out of a weighted total of 46. Candidates performed fairly well on Questions 1–20 which assessed understanding of meaning conveyed through grammar and mechanics. Questions 21–28 assessed understanding of literary text, sampled by a poem and candidates showed good understanding of the details of the poem, as well as the tone of the poet. Performance on the narrative passage was also good while on the expository passage, performance was fair. Candidates were generally able to recognize cause and effect, identify main ideas and draw conclusions. The weakest performance was noted on Questions 43–60 which assessed understanding of persuasive text. Candidates were unable in instances to distinguish fact from opinion and to identify language devices used by the writer.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Summary

Question 1

This question requires candidates to understand a piece of writing and reproduce its meaning concisely and clearly. Competent performance demonstrates both these abilities. Weak scripts usually indicate major problems with understanding of the passage, and with ability to express meaning in the candidate's own words (synthesis). The summary question is awarded total marks of 30, evenly distributed under three headings: *Understanding* (Content), *Organization*, and *Expression*. Generally, candidates did not show any great difficulty in responding to this question, particularly in understanding the content. However, weak responses indicated a lack of the basic skills of summary writing — *using one's own words without changing the meaning of the passage*. 'Lifting', as the examiners term the partial or wholesale use of words of the passage, is therefore common. This is a major difficulty, and one which causes candidates to lose considerable marks under *Expression*. Some candidates attempt to use their own words, but are seriously handicapped by poor vocabulary.

Particular effort needs to be taken to teach strategies for organization. Most candidates choose to follow the order of the original text, and this often prevents them from achieving a shorter piece of writing. It is most important that students be taught to recognize the relationship and the links between the main ideas in the passage, so that they are not tied to copying the movement of the passage.

Candidates continue to ignore word limits, provide irrelevant details, unnecessary examples, and present information that was not provided in the passage. A major tendency is to write in short paragraphs. It is necessary to remind candidates that the summary has no single topic sentence, and should really be a paragraph which pulls together the essence of several paragraphs. There is a rich section on the kind of activities that can foster the necessary summary skills included in the English A syllabus.

The passage set for January 2012 dealt with our dependence on fossil fuel, oil. The summary expected should have included:

- The disadvantages of dependency on oil
- The advantages offered by renewable energy
- The challenges to be faced if renewable energy sources are to be successfully used.

Below are examples of summaries that could illustrate what was expected of candidates.

Sample Summary No. 1

The high price of oil has caused us to look for alternative sources of energy, which can be produced at a lower cost and are now environmentally friendly. Using renewable energy sources, which are resources that never run out, offers many advantages. They are usually indigenous to a country and so reduce the need for foreign exchange, do not pollute the environment, have a multitude of applications and can be accessed anywhere. However, the cost of implementing the use of renewable energy is very high. To successfully develop its production and use, large investments are needed. There must be policies that provide incentives, such as reducing import duties and selling excess electricity.

Sample Summary No. 2

The world is dependent on oil which is a non-renewable resource. We suffer because oil producing countries often raise the price, and our fuel costs also rise. In addition, oil production is not environmentally friendly. Developing renewable energy offers advantages. Since it comes in several forms, a variety of ways of producing it is possible, even in remote places. It costs less than oil, is more environmentally friendly and saves foreign exchange as there is no need to import. Developing renewable energy, however, is difficult. It demands much capital investment. Policies that help by creating incentives to invest, produce and use renewable energy, are also needed.

Section B: Comprehension

Questions 2 and 3

There were two types of passages used in this section — the literary and the expository. What was seen was a marked difference in the performance of candidates on Question 2 and 3. The inclusion of literary questions and the interpretation of the writer's style in Question 3 proved to be difficult for many candidates.

Candidates' Performance on Question 2

The passage was taken from *Harriet's Daughter*, a former English B text. It addressed the narrator's mixed feelings towards her father who, in her opinion, is disdainful of his Black heritage. Fifteen marks were allocated to a total of eight questions on the passage, one question being subdivided into two parts. The language of the passage was appropriate for this academic level.

Candidates were able to identify the occupation (a) and views (b) (i) of the narrator's father and were also able to recognize irony (c) and sarcasm (f). Questions which required candidates to identify and understand attitude (b) (ii) and feelings (g) were not well answered. Similarly, although they were able to correctly select an expression showing sarcasm, candidates were unable to use the context of the passage to arrive at the meaning of the sarcastic phrase "*he's so concerned about being coloured...*"

It was commendable that most candidates attempted even those questions (e), (g) (h) which apparently were challenging to them. Teachers should continue to encourage such efforts. With regard to developing higher level skills of comprehension, regular class and group discussions on appropriate passages will help students not only to identify, but to understand and articulate attitudes, feelings and tone.

Candidates' Performance on Question 3

Generally, candidates appeared to understand the passage, but they struggled to analyse and synthesize the responses and linked them to the writers' overall meaning. The mean on this question was 6 out of 15 marks. Weaker candidates had difficulty on Parts (c), (e), (f) (g). In Part (c), although the answer appeared clearly in the second line of paragraph two, candidates tended to use peripheral information. The term 'bedrock' in Part (f) should have been understood from the context in the passage, but proved to be a hurdle for many; and question (g) saw many candidates either misinterpreting the question, or attempting to answer by lifting the entire statement containing the words used in the statement.

Recommendations for Teachers

Here last January's comments bear reiteration, *the teaching of comprehension can be usefully combined with the teaching of summary writing as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.* Summary writing goes another step, but understanding is the primary stage. It is suggested that students be helped to be more focused on interpretation; to be more discriminating in their answers; and to recognize what is asked, not what is usually asked. Benefits can be had from practice in vocabulary building that involves not lists of words, but discerning meaning in context; practice in producing and responding to varied plausible responses helps students to "see" how writing may be interpreted. There should also be insistence on accuracy in cases where some answers are not plausible responses to a stimulus or supported by the passage. Developing sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important, so that students rise above the level of seeing comprehension as guesswork or 'anything goes'.

Section C: Story Writing and Descriptive Essay

There was a noticeable increase in the number of candidates who wrote on topics that were not given on the examination paper. Although some responses demonstrated competence in English, the candidates failed to score because they did not use the stimulus. Most scripts fell within the range of *suggesting competence* to low levels of *demonstrating competence*.

Question 4

The mean on this question was 12 out of a total of 35 marks. The picture stimulus was not well interpreted. In some instances candidates did not focus their writing sufficiently on the foreground of the picture to develop their stories.

Question 5

This question required a response to the following stimulus: “Martine and Sam huddled in the scanty shelter, looked back at what was left of their house and wondered what to do next.” Write a story which includes these words. While their language was competent, many candidates failed to answer the question. The mean on the question was 14 out of 35 marks.

Question 6

Generally, this question continues to pose challenges for candidates who have not mastered the writing of a descriptive essay. As in the past, most responses continue to use narrative as the vehicle for description. However, techniques such as moving in an orderly fashion over the scene, of widening or narrowing the view, are being used more than before, which is an encouraging feature. More work needs to be done on encouraging students to let characters contemplate, internalize, and reflect on the scenes suggested, so as to include feelings and reactions in the response to the task. The mean on the question was 13 out of 35 marks.

Section D: Persuasive Writing

The topics were within candidates’ scope of knowledge. Nevertheless, both topics were not fully argued and explored from an informed position. Too few ‘tools of argument’ were employed. Weak responses indicated a lack of a clear position on the topics.

Question 7

Candidates were required to write an essay supporting the views of either of two speakers based on whether homework was a waste of time or a rewarding activity and necessary for success in life. This question was the more widely chosen of the two options. The mean was 13 out of 35 marks. In many instances, candidates merely stressed the idea that homework is good practice while largely ignoring the part of the question that asked about its relationship to success in life. There were a few candidates who disagreed, but were unable to give valid or meaningful reasons for their disagreement.

Question 8

Candidates were required to give their views on whether it should be mandatory for all secondary school students to participate in extra-curricular activities as a requirement for graduation. There were varied interpretations of ‘extra-curricular’. Some candidates did not appear to fully understand the meaning of the expression. As was the case with Question 7, the last part of the question was largely ignored. Some candidates dealt with why it is good to participate in extracurricular activities, but did not make the connection with its requirement for graduation. The mean on the question was 14 out of 35 marks.

Suggestions for Teachers in Addressing Weaknesses

Strategies such as listening to and presenting arguments followed by peer critiquing of arguments are usually useful. Writing and presentation of papers and speeches are also useful, as are debates, advice corners, improvised situations such as talk shows, and other means of promoting thoughtful speech and writing.

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE[®] EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2012

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

GENERAL COMMENTS

General performance this year declined when compared with the 2011 results. The percentage of candidates who achieved Grades I–III was 48 compared with 67 in 2011 and 66 in 2010. The overall mean was 77 compared with 88 in 2011, and 85 in 2010. The incidence of candidates being apparently wholly unprepared for the examination was higher than that of May/June 2011. Answers suggesting or demonstrating incompetence were higher in specific sections.

Generally, candidates appeared to have been taught the various aspects of the syllabus, but were unable to demonstrate the quality of skills that produce excellent responses. Most responses continue to fall into the category of being adequate. There remains strong indication that questions are not read carefully and not fully thought through, resulting in misinterpretation and inadequate responses.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 — Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was satisfactory. Candidates generally continue to perform well on items of word choice, grammar and mechanics and on comprehension passages based on informative and persuasive discourse, and less well on literary items. Items presenting difficulty were those requiring recognition and evaluation of language devices such as irony and symbolism, as well as evaluating the use of connotative language and the choice of style in relation to the author's intention. The mean on this paper was 55 per cent compared to 64 per cent in 2011 and 57 per cent in 2010.

Paper 02 — Free Response

Section A: Summary

Question 1

This question required candidates to demonstrate skills in understanding, organization and expression. The material is usually drawn from informative discourse or exposition (essays, reports, scientific discussions, analyses) suitable to the secondary school age-group. The skills of selection and concise expression are targeted. The specific objectives are detailed in the syllabus under Understanding (a) and (b) and Expression (a), (b), (c). Included in the syllabus is the following advice: *Summaries require economy of language, the careful selection of the relevant main ideas, and the preservation of the intention of the original* (page 11).

The passage selected for May/June 2012 was considered to be well within the reading abilities of candidates. It was taken from a magazine article and required that candidate summarize a person's reflection on a very topical matter. The content focused on the nature of modern living, its negative consequences, and possible ways to avoid such consequences. The content of the passage was perceived to be familiar to candidates at this level, but many of them distorted the meaning of the passage or gave their own views on the topic. Only the very competent candidates managed to capture all the points made.

Weakness in selecting the crucial elements was exacerbated by lack of vocabulary when candidates attempted to use their own language. The age-old error of 'lifting' persists, and judging from the prevalence and persistence of this problem, it appears strongly that students are being *taught* to lift. This report draws attention to *plagiarism*, and stresses how vital it is for candidates to stay clear of the practice. A significant contributor to the candidates' difficulty is the apparent belief that the topic sentence of a paragraph must always come at the start of the paragraph. This belief is *wrong* and following it causes candidates to focus on minor features. As in the past, few candidates were able to maintain the correct relationships while reorganizing their points for brevity. They continued to cling steadfastly to both the pattern and the language of the original, a strategy that will work against conciseness. Candidates can be helped to learn how to.

- differentiate between topic and supporting sentences
- recognize the relationship between main points (cause and effect, solutions, alternatives)
- distinguish between explanations, illustrations, etc. and the main point
- determine when explanation is vital to good summary
- test their summaries for over-generalization.

The nature of summary (of the length required from candidates in the examination) is such that it eliminates all topic sentences, combining the information into a general thought (thesis). The candidate should therefore produce a single coherent paragraph. A close look at the syllabus section, *Notes and Suggested Activities* (specifically pages 6–12), will help both teacher and student to identify and hone summary skills. Strong support is also given in the new Nelson Thornes CXC English A Study Guide.

Section B: Comprehension

Section B is designed to test understanding, using two short passages, one literary and one expository. The skills tested are outlined in the syllabus under Understanding (a), (b) and (c) (pages 2–3). Each passage has a different focus: in the expository type of passage the objectives are outlined in (a) and (b); in the other – literary discourse – the greater number of questions satisfy Understanding (c). The results for Question 2 strongly suggest that reading and analysing writing of a literary nature needs to be given more attention. Pages 12–14 of the syllabus should be invaluable. Where questions require information obvious in the text, candidates gain marks, but fail to read between the lines, understand inference, purpose, techniques, and connotative language. These are areas which need to be stressed, as in the ‘real-life’ situation, the ability to penetrate the meaning of the written or spoken word is vital. Candidates with a weakness in responding to this kind of passage also find the Summary question very challenging. The mean on this question was 11 out of 30 marks.

Question 2

The selection for this question was a brief extract from a novel by Rosa Guy. The questions set followed the specific objectives of Understanding (c). This aspect of the syllabus is detailed on page 3 of the syllabus, with explanations and examples starting on page 12 (Notes and suggested activities). Questions asked for supporting quotations, recognition of atmosphere, inference to be drawn from a sequence of behaviours, and evidence. This question was poorly answered. Candidates scored marks on questions where the answers were obvious (Questions (a) and (g)). Questions that required an interpretation and the recognition of writer’s intent posed difficulties. Students should be encouraged to satisfy the requirements of questions — for example, “quote the sentence...” saw responses which quoted a few words.

Question 3

The content of this extract dealt with retirement savings: the relevance of financial literacy and the instituting of plans. This information was also within the experience and interest of the candidates. It lent itself well to factual questions, but also included questions requiring higher order skills — deduction and inferencing. The performance on this question was significantly better than on Question 2. Here again, questions that required candidates to draw inferences were challenging: for example, (f) required candidates to deduce the point that was being made; (h) tested candidates’ understanding of the message in the last sentence, and to find the sentence near the start which gave the opposite view. Candidates experienced difficulty in providing precise answers. Many candidates showed an inability to differentiate between contextual meanings and literal meanings, treating both in the same ways, as in the case of ‘roadblocks’ in Question (e). As in Question 2, there is the tendency by many candidates to cite several sentences to answer a question when a word or phrase is required. In Question (g), for example, many candidates gave unnecessary or contradictory information. The mean on this question was 8 out of 15 marks.

Section C: Story Writing

Of the three questions in this section, most candidates attempted Question 5. Question 6 was the least popular choice. Some excellent responses were generated from all topics. However, most responses were quite mundane. The use of Standard English still proves to be a challenge for too many candidates, with obvious interference from the creoles and dialects used in the region. Many stories were poor in using the elements of story writing. Students must be advised that use of the stimulus is a **requirement**. They must also be encouraged to take careful note of the rubric.

Question 4

This question used a picture of a young man, sitting under a tree, with a laptop computer on his lap as a stimulus. Around him is an array of books, some of them being study texts for CXC. Candidates seemed generally comfortable with the picture stimulus, but it did not give rise to any out-of-the-ordinary responses. Story lines tended to be similar and generally predictable. Unfortunately, some candidates failed to carry out the designated task and instead produced essays on ideas like the value of computers/technology in education. For candidates who have not learnt to discriminate among the different genres, the picture still proved to be a problem. The mean on this question was 13 out of 35 marks.

Question 5

Question 5 used as stimulus, the idea of a storm and the urgent need to warn people who were seen as being special. Very good responses came from candidates who used ‘storm’ metaphorically. This approach allowed creativity and freshness. While most candidates attempted this question, it proved challenging for the following reasons: many candidates seemed confused by the tense and first person narration of the stimulus. These could not transition smoothly into their stories, so the beginning was used almost as a topic. There were many instances of confusion created by changes in point of view. Too often, there was little connection between the beginning and the content of the story. The mean on this question was 14 out of 35 marks.

Question 6

Descriptive writing is a challenge for a large number of candidates. Most often, too few descriptive details are employed and too many responses are mainly narrative with some description. Candidates should be encouraged to help the audience to ‘see’ the situation through the details they give. Most candidates who attempted this question still needed the framework of a narrative in which the description was incorporated. This is an acceptable approach to the question, since writing ‘pure’ description can be quite challenging. Problems arose when candidates simply told stories with no attempt to describe. Yet, there were a few candidates who demonstrated competent descriptive writing techniques and produced interesting and lively writing, as the question “was it real or science fiction?” triggered a wide variety of ideas.

Section D: Argument

Questions 7 and 8

The topics were well within the knowledge of candidates, and some very good work emerged. Nevertheless, as has been seen in the past, too many responses lacked adequate and well reasoned arguments/points and the requisite and appropriate argumentative devices to convince or persuade their audience. Question 8 was the more popular, but better responses were written to Question 7.

Question 7 required candidates to write an essay supporting the views of either of the following speakers:

Speaker A: The government should cut subjects like Music and Visual Arts from the curriculum to save money in these hard economic times.

Speaker B: No way! I think the government should find other ways to solve economic problems!

In general, candidates tended to go off-track in Question 7. The more competent candidates made the link between solving the economic crisis without removing the subjects from the curriculum. Many candidates completely disregarded the economic factor and dealt only with the value of the Arts in education.

These answers were reasonably good. Weaker essays dealt with education generally, or with what governments should do generally. The mean on this question was 14 out of 35 marks.

Question 8 required a strong argument supporting or opposing the moot — “Education is the only avenue for success in today’s world”. There was much rambling and narration of anecdotes, rather than a focus on arguing the point. More careful reading and attention to the thrust of the topic “Education is the only avenue...” was needed. The mean on this question was 13 out of 35 marks.

Recommendations for Teachers

- The quality of answers in Argument suggests that time management is an issue for many candidates. The main evidence of this is the extended length of answers for Section C, followed by short, unplanned and therefore poor quality arguments. Students would benefit from some coaching in how to manage their time.
- The problem in Section C is partly caused by unawareness of the elements of short story, and of effective ways to use the strategies that will develop the stories. Students need experience in editing to get rid of details which do not help the story. For example, students will give a long list of friends who attended a party when those friends have nothing to do with the outcome; or they will spend time describing a morning when they need to focus on the night the event took place.

The points following have been made before, but bear repeating in this report since they persist.

- It is clear that large numbers of students across the Caribbean have not mastered the use of Standard English. There continues to be interference from dialects and patois used throughout the region; to these have been added the slangs originating from dancehall music and the North American ghettos and the abbreviations familiar to users of the messaging media of modern technology. For students who almost abhor reading, some methods must be found to encourage correct use of the language.
- Teachers need to continue to pay attention to having students use their own words when summarizing and to employ transitional words and phrases in order to develop their responses into a coherent whole. Oral and written exercises should be used to introduce these words into the active vocabulary of students. Practice in construction shifts and equivalent sentences would be useful.
- The teaching of comprehension can be combined with the teaching of summary as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.
- Students should be helped to focus on interpretation; much practice in listening, reading and reproducing meaning and attention to accuracy is necessary. Sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important.
- Students need to develop a firm grasp of language structure through exposure — if necessary, in class – to the reading of good literature. This includes focusing their attention to paragraphing, grammar, spelling, diction and other conventions of writing.
- Students should be given ample practice in recognizing and using the elements of story writing and descriptive writing.
- Greater use should be made of literature to teach writing — immersion into how stories work.
- Strategies should be engaged to provide individual help to students so that individual needs can be addressed.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2013

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, performance was moderate. There was a marked absence of superior scripts at one end, and also only a few incompetent scripts at the other. There was noticeable improvement in the Comprehension profile, but the Expression profile remained only fair, with only two per cent of candidates scoring Grade I on this profile. Candidates are encouraged to do more critical reading and discussion. As suggested last year, opportunities for more in-class reading and discussion should be created and geared to studying *how* writers say things and *why*. Such activities, through the use of a good model, provide candidates with an opportunity to widen their experiences.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple-Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was fairly good. Approximately 80 per cent of the candidates received Grades I–III. Good performance was evidenced on Questions 1–20 which assessed grammar and mechanics of writing. Performance on the questions set on the literary passages was markedly better than on those set on the expository and persuasive texts.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Writing Reports and Summaries

This section requires candidates to understand a piece of writing and to reproduce its meaning concisely and clearly. Competent performance demonstrates both these abilities. Weak scripts usually indicate major problems with understanding of the passage, and with ability to express meaning in the candidate's own words (synthesis). Too many candidates try to get by with lifting chunks of text, 'cutting and pasting' them together, and adding an occasional word or phrase. The latter is a poor attempt to hide the fact that they are reproducing the words of the passage. We advise that teaching should concentrate on helping students to grasp and reproduce meaning. Learning activities should include:

- exercises in equivalent sentences — this can be extended beyond one sentence to a paragraph.
- practice in comprehension that involves interpretation of meaning (not just rewording) executed both orally and in writing.

The following is extracted from the January 2012 report and repeated here because it is crucial:

*Summary teaching involves two major processes: information gathering (reading, identifying, choosing and interpreting what is relevant) and information giving (synthesizing, organizing and writing). Teaching must move beyond 'identifying points' to include in summary to understanding how the text is written. Focusing on text organizational patterns such as cause and effect, problem and solution, before and after and similar developmental strategies, can lead students to greater comprehension and synthesis of information **before** they begin to write.*

Question 1

This summary question is awarded total marks of 30, evenly distributed under three headings:

- Understanding (Content)
- Organization
- Expression

Answers suggested that the text was well understood. The contents dealt with the appearance or reality of physical fitness. It noted that one could be deceived into seeing muscular structure as fitness, when in reality, many muscular persons were using anabolic steroids. These persons had the benefit of looks, but the passage told of the dangers of steroid use, and challenged persons to be sensible in their choices.

In the area of *Understanding*, students continue to score well, but there are persistent problems with *Expression* and *Organization*. The language of the text (apart from the permitted use of technical expressions) is, most often, lifted, so that candidates score low marks. It seems to be the norm to ignore the instruction *use your own words as far as possible*. Candidates still continue to ignore the prescribed length for the summary, despite repeated warnings that marks will be lost, although answers showed some improvement. The need to go over the limit suggests that candidates are not as capable as they might be, in organizing their thoughts, so they can expect a lower mark under *Organization*. Most candidates appear to have been encouraged to use the order of ideas given in the text. Only a few, usually those in the superior range, show enough understanding to group statements according to relationship, and so produce succinct and accurate summaries.

Satisfactory answers to this question

- recognized the deception of appearing fit
- recognized the willingness to take shortcuts to appear fit
- pointed out the dangers: physical, psychological and social
- cautioned those who would like to be fit to make intelligent choices.

If candidates are to better develop their skills, they need:

- extensive practice in organizing their answers, using transition words to help themselves and the reader with understanding
- to practise vocabulary exercises which help them to use simple, correct language
- reminders that reusing the words of the passage entirely (whether in its entirety, selected chunks or by joining phrases from all over) attracts no marks — as they would not have presented any language of their own for assessment
- engagement in more close-reading exercises, paying attention to recognizing tone/attitude and the writer's intention
- to engage in exercises in which analysing the internal structure of passages is emphasized
- instruction in how paragraph cohesion is achieved, and in the use of appropriate transitional and connective expressions.

Section B: Understanding

Question 2

This question, which is worth 15 marks, was a poem. Candidates responded fairly well to the questions set on the poem. This is a departure from what is generally experienced when a poem is presented. The individual parts of the question that proved challenging or problematic for Question 2 were (d), (e) and (f).

Part (d) required an understanding of language use – purpose and style. Part (e) asked for reaction, and candidates failed to distinguish between feeling and action/reaction.

In Part (f) both expressions that represented contrast were needed to demonstrate that contrast, and many candidates were not able to indicate both.

Question 3

This question was an expository piece discussing treatment of and reaction to global warming. Given that the passage dealt with an issue which should be familiar to candidates, the responses were disappointing. The average mark out of 15 was 5. Many candidates could not respond appropriately to the expressions: *political football* and *fiddled with*. The strong suggestion is that although they can recognize metaphorical language from the diction (mechanically) they are not able to penetrate the meaning of the expression and its value in the text. Responses also suggested that candidates are unable to read questions correctly — they ignore some words, misinterpret others, or simply do not understand what the question is asking. This indicates that apart from reading and discussing various texts, candidates need to be given practice in interpretation, and in recognizing key words that would reduce the chance of irrelevancies.

The teaching of comprehension can be usefully combined with the teaching of summary writing as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning. Summary writing goes another step but understanding is the first stage. It is suggested that students be helped to be more focused on interpretation, more concerned with answering what is *actually* asked, rather than what is usually asked. As with Section A, much practice is advised in reading, listening, and reproducing meaning; in interpreting meaning at different levels; and in paying attention to accuracy. Developing sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important, so that candidates rise above the level of seeing comprehension as guesswork. It is strongly recommended that teachers return to and apply Bloom's (revised) Taxonomy, (for example), in developing questions.

Section C: Writing Stories and Descriptive Essays

Following the now familiar pattern, there were three stimuli: Question 4, the picture; Question 5, the narrative prompt; Question 6, a descriptive essay responding to a specific setting. Question 5 was the most popular question, with twice as many candidates as those responding to Question 4, and three times as many as those choosing Question 6.

Questions 4–5

These questions are marked out of 35. The majority of the stories fell into range 3, with averages ranging between 14 and 15 marks.

In Question 4, most candidates were able to use the stimulus satisfactorily, although the stories were not particularly strong. The stimulus to the narrative, Question 5, was also reasonably incorporated, although some candidates did little in constructing character, or meaningfully using the strategies of storytelling.

Question 6

In general, this question was not well done as candidates had a poor grasp of the requirements, and failed to interpret the stimulus appropriately. Answers continue to be highly narrative. The majority of candidates do not grasp the need for descriptive details to create focus and are very weak in organizing movement of description. They demonstrate a lack of use of descriptive words and ability to create images, so visualization and interest are missing, and candidates resort to narrative.

Section D: Argumentative Writing

Question 7

This question invited candidates to support or oppose the view that *As long as government is paying for my education, it can tell me what to study*. There were far-ranging interpretations, including: that the government could tell the candidate what specifically to study for the examination; the pros and cons of government-sponsored education; the right to freedom of choice. The question was the more popular choice, but the answers were generally poorly handled.

Question 8

This question asked candidates to express their views on the statement that *A single Caribbean team should represent the region in all international sporting competitions*. This statement lent itself to fewer interpretations. Examiners felt that candidates were unsure of the meaning of the term *region*.

Recommendations

- **Planning:** The rubrics which introduce each section of the examination paper invite candidates to plan their longer responses. This was often interpreted as ‘write the essay, then copy it’. This double-writing affects time negatively, and many answers showed the hurry to complete. Some candidates also failed to cross out the unwanted answer. The preparation for the examination should include the skill of outlining, so the candidate can make maximum use of the time.
- **Language Use:** The quality of language generally, but particularly in the questions which demand longer continuous answers (Questions 1, 4/5/6; 7/8) raises some concern: shifting tenses, lack of discrimination in past tenses, lack of subject and verb agreement, basic punctuation and spelling errors are all persistent problems. Very often, rereading reduces the number and type of errors, and students should be taught *how*, and encouraged to reread critically.
- Examiners advise that much more effort should be put into helping candidates to improve their stock of adjectives and adverbs, and to provide opportunities for studying and emulating good descriptive pieces.
- Most candidates are exposed to the visual through television. This can be used constructively to help develop the skill of descriptive writing. Candidates may be invited to role-play, to be the camera or camera person. They should become familiar with the concepts of foreground, middle distance and background; with the techniques of panning and focusing; and helped to distinguish between concrete and abstract words and phrases.

- It was observed that some candidates seemed to have been prepared to write their argumentative essays along specific lines with particular techniques. Experienced examiners caution that while some students do benefit from such a strategy, teachers should use it with caution, as there is the risk that competent and even superior students will be forced into a mould which affects their expression and development negatively. It is highly preferable to teach them how to reason, and provide them with a variety of ways to open, develop, and close their arguments.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE[®] EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2013

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance overall this year was fair. Approximately 58 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I to III. This was an increase over 2012 when the percentage of candidates who achieved this level was 47. Performance on the Expression profile continues to be only moderate with only four per cent of candidates achieved Grade I on this profile. Students must be engaged in the myriad of ways in which language is used.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was fairly good. The trend of good performance on the items assessing vocabulary, and grammar was again evident. Performance in comprehension questions based on literary, informative and persuasive passages was fair. Items which caused difficulty included those relating to recognizing and assessing the use of devices, recognizing mood, tone and style and distinguishing between the author's attitude and attitudes of characters

Paper 02 – Free Responses

SECTION A

Question 1

Analysis of this section has frequently appealed to teachers and students to pay more attention to it. The responses for July marking 2013 demonstrate some improvement, and suggest that the entreaties have been recognised.

The passage to be summarised was an article entitled ‘Water’ adapted from *Global Environment Outlook for Youth in the Caribbean – A Vision for Change!* The passage highlighted the current situation in which the world is in imminent danger of water shortage, partly because water is taken for granted in some places while the supply is abused in others. The world does in fact does have sufficient water for all, but modern management measures must be employed to ensure continued world supply. The passage also points out the importance of water supply to economic prosperity, and indeed to the well being of human society.

This section was allotted 30 marks distributed evenly in 3 areas under Profiles 1 and 2.

PROFILE 1	PROFILE 2	
<i>Content</i> (understanding)	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Language</i>
10 MARKS	10 MARKS	10 MARKS

Content

- There was improvement with regard to meeting the word limit and attempting the question.
- The vast majority of candidates understood well that the passage was about water supply. They also picked up on the inadequacy of current conservation strategies and the need to ensure that water would be available for future generations. Despite their understanding of these key issues, some candidates lost marks in Area 1 because they were unable to express said issues accurately and coherently with respect to the original passage. E.g. in the statement:

“At the global scale there is enough water to provide water security for socioeconomic, technical and institutional aspect of water use”

Students seemed to have recognised and understood the point but repeated the words “*At the...security*”, and then copied the last part: “*for socioeconomic ... water use*” out of context because they did not grasp the correct relationship.

The following are some of the distortions noted:

- the scarcity of water was seen as a present reality but not as a future crisis, so in many cases there was no reference to the looming water crisis
- water shortage was misinterpreted and referred to as water storage
- ‘forecast’ (para 2) was aligned to weather reports.
- attempts to meet the word limit by using telegraphic language resulting in incoherent responses.

Superior responses demonstrated excellence in reproducing the critical elements of the original passage in the candidate’s own words, most often in flawless or near flawless language. In a few instances responses indicated a superior understanding of content but some weakness in language. Responses assessed as suggesting or demonstrating incompetence included one or more of the following:

- The introduction of extraneous material based on prior knowledge, both technical and casual.
- Misinformation prompted by imperfect understanding of details. E.g. “While a political commitment is not simple, we must demand it.” This was entirely out of context and based on two sentences in the original: “*The best initiatives are those that make a political commitment to consider water as an integral part of sustainable human development...*”; “*There is no quick fix or simple solution when it comes to safeguarding and managing a resource that is in as much demand as water.*”
- Incomplete ideas.

Organization

The passages used for examination purposes are paragraphed. They follow the principles of paragraphing: a topic sentence and a number of supporting sentences. In writing summary, students are taught to recognise the topic sentence in each paragraph, and to use the meanings generated from them to create a generalized piece of writing. This suggests that the length of the piece they submit will not allow the use of paragraphs. This is a concept grasped and demonstrated by the superior student, and the understanding of the generalization principle is important for all students if they are to improve their skills in summary.

Superior responses were easily recognizable due to the smooth transition from one thought to the other and the demonstrated ability of the candidate to re-arrange the original passage into a coherent whole while maintaining its perspective, purpose, tone, as well as sense of audience without losing content.

Responses at a low level of competence follow the paragraphing of the original slavishly. They do not recognise the relationship between points that do not follow each other in the original. They generally show a passive understanding of some sentences and phrases in the extract and reproduce these verbatim. Examples of this in the paper under review include:

- At the global scale, there is enough water to provide “water security” for all...
- The scarcity of water is a very relative concept...
- A basket of factors including socioeconomic, technical and institutional aspects of water use...
- Sustainable human development...
- Inequitable distribution of water...
- Our managerial capacity has to be upgraded...

Included below are the salient points of the passage, and one of the sample summaries used to standardize the marking.

- *Water is vital to all aspects of life and human activity. It is often taken for granted and its value is overlooked.*
- *Water scarcity means different things in different places but everywhere it relates to a country's economic and social activities and to people's attitudes to water.*
- *World shortage is not actual because there is really enough water for all, but the threat is caused by careless attitudes, outdated management of resources, and waste. The impact is that a very large portion of the world will face real scarcity by 2025.*
- *Attention must be given to the problem in order to ensure that future generations have water and that the needs of the poor are addressed.*
- *The solution will come from a change in our attitude to water use, the appropriate valuing of water, and the employment of updated management strategies.*

Sample summary:

People today seldom think of water shortage; however, it is predicted that by 2025 this could be a reality for billions. The crisis will not result from real water scarcity, but from poor management and attitudes. Addressing the problem means considering all factors related to water use. Water is critical to each country's economic and cultural well being, and ideal practices must focus on sustainable human development and the reduction of poverty. If water is to be distributed equitably we have to recognise its value and the need to conserve for the future. The answer will not be found easily, and requires that management practices be updated to meet modern requirements.

(111 words)

Advice to Teachers

Judging from the relatively few instances of 'no response' to Section A, students are more willing to attempt summary writing. However, they continue to be hindered in their efforts by inadequate vocabulary which affects both comprehension and summary production. There is also low/no use of

connectives resulting in summaries that read more like lists of bulleted items than continuous prose. Generally speaking, however, there has been improvement in candidates' ability to meet the demands of this section. Following are some suggestions to keep the improvement going:

- Introduce summary writing early – some students need to start in the first year of secondary school, particularly if their reading levels are not up to required standard.
- Constantly reinforce vocabulary and effective punctuation.
- Give students practice in writing within a specified word limit.
- Provide students with activities aimed at understanding and using appropriate connectives.
- Provide students with activities aimed at mastering interpretation and construction shift.
- Encourage students to use their own word; discourage lifting from original passages.

SECTION B

In keeping with the specifications of the syllabus and the design of the Specimen Paper, poetry can be used on Paper 2, and in Paper 1. Analysis of the results in this year's examinations indicated that the two stimuli used created a good balance.

Question 2

In this section candidates were able to benefit from the allocation of marks for partial answers. The allocation of marks allowed candidates to score 1 point on questions with a full score of 2 marks. On the other hand, candidates lost marks when they failed to be specific as required, or put answers which required the examiner to select the correct response.

The poem “Carrion Crows” was within the candidates’ experience. They clearly understood what the poem was about. Candidates were aware that there were negative and positive aspects about the behavior of the crows themselves, but not all were able to make these distinctions between the crows’ attitude, the poet’s attitude, and the poet’s craft. It was evident that a few candidates found Questions (d) and (g) challenging because they lacked the vocabulary to describe what they knew. These questions required understanding of the terms “effect” and “attitude”. On the other hand, the answers to (a) (b) and (c) which required explicitly stated information, were generally correct. Some candidates seemed unsure of what to identify specifically as alliteration and metaphor, and quoted the entire line in which the device was used: " And I have seen them perched on paling post" as opposed to "perched on paling post".

Question 3

There were a few “No Responses” for individual parts of this question, possibly because of poor time management, and also because questions demanded interpretation and deduction. Question (h), “what action concerning the environment would be recommended to the government of Socrato based on the information in the last paragraph”, was one such question. Most candidates listed recommendations that were based on what the passage stated as problems: for example some recommended that over fishing and excess road building should stop. The weaker candidates made recommendations about environmental issues that the passage/paragraph did not address. The better candidates, it seems, were either in command of effective comprehension strategies, and were able to make recommendations with more far-reaching effects on the environment such as “Be careful about development which disturbs and destroys the natural environment”.

Advice to Teachers

- It is recommended that teachers pay closer attention to writer's techniques, attitudes and purpose, and to commenting on the effectiveness of devices used.

- Candidates still need practice in quoting relevant and specific phrases and identifying key words.
- Candidates require more help in determining what specific questions ask, so that their responses may be specific.

SECTION C

Question 4

Although the story based on the picture is not usually very popular with candidates, this year it was the one which most candidates attempted. Perhaps this was because most candidates would have been familiar with the scenario, even if only vicariously. Perhaps because of this familiarity, many candidates did not seem to have worked very hard to produce interesting responses. Most were therefore simple, very similar, predictable narratives which lacked creativity.

Question 5

Of the two questions set for story-writing this proved the more challenging. Many candidates experienced difficulty incorporating the sentences into their answers. Skilled candidates responded to the stimulus in effective, interesting ways. This does not suggest that the question was too difficult: candidates writing this examination should be able to cope competently with a question like this. Unfortunately this stimulus was seen by many as an opportunity to produce television-styled violence instead of effective characterization and meaningful conflict.

Question 6

This question required a descriptive essay based on the stimulus “It was all done; all the groups were sure that nothing more could be added. Emotions were mixed as we quietly studied that large room. Describe the scenes and reactions you saw.”

Although more candidates have a clearer understanding of the requirements of a descriptive essay than previously, the number of responses remains in the minority. The problems persist:

- Most candidates who attempted the question were unable to differentiate between a descriptive essay and a story. Even when there was description, it was bound to particular characters or locations in the narrative.
- There was again misinterpretation of the question so many responses were weak or irrelevant. Many candidates did not see or did not understand “*It was all done;*” or could not figure out how it was important to the response.

There is concern about the significant amount of interference from local creoles/dialects on the Standard English of large numbers of candidates writing this exam. Examples of this interference were again seen in areas such as the non-marking of past tenses, weak spelling, and the use of pronouns which have no antecedents.

Other problems with the mechanics of the language continue to be evident; for example;

- punctuation, especially in run-on sentences - perhaps this problem is indicative of a more serious issue: lack of understanding of sentence structure.
- non-use of paragraphs - many candidates write pages of the story in one long unbroken block.

Advice to Teachers

- There is a pressing need to deal with the issues of (1) relevance, (2) singularity of event, and to a lesser extent (3) point of view, so that candidates may better meet the requirements of length and focus in their stories.
- Candidates are asked in this section to use Standard English to respond to a **particular stimulus**. Candidates need to be encouraged to be self critical where relevance is concerned. Weak candidates and those with a low level of competence tend to write pages of script before getting to the point of the response. The importance of ‘point of view’ and the need to control it must be emphasized so that clarity of the plot is maintained.

SECTION D

Questions 7 & 8

Overall, there were improvements in the use of language -grammar and mechanics in particular, in comparison to previous years. With regard to time management, this year it seems that more candidates answered the questions. There were fewer incidents of "No Response". Despite the shortcomings of some candidates who answered the questions in letter format or in the narrative form, it was clear that most candidates understood the concept of persuasive writing and used devices and transitions as needed.

The questions to which candidates responded are below.

Question 7

“Government should offer free health care for everyone residing in a country, nationals and non-nationals alike.”

Write an essay EITHER supporting OR opposing this view.

Question 8

“School principals should consult with the student body on ALL matters affecting the lives of the students.”

Write an essay giving your views on this statement.

Question 7

- Some candidates misinterpreted the term ‘non-national’, and either ignored or did not understand the word 'residing' - which should have given them the hint as to what "non-national ' meant.
- Some candidates did not define the key terms from the chosen stimulus, while other had incorrect definitions.
- Little or no supporting evidence was given for the perspectives being given in the essay.
- Many students agreed that health care should be free but did not present clear arguments that demonstrated the benefits of such a venture.
- A few candidates interpreted the word "country" to mean a rural area, rather than their home territory.

Question 8

- Many candidates misinterpreted the term "student body" to mean the Students' Council or the students' physical bodies.
- The word "consult" created some ambiguity which resulted in various interpretations . Common among these interpretations, was the notion that "consult" referred to the principal's role as counselor.
- The expression ‘all matters' was not handled effectively.

- The points posited by candidates were generally not well developed. There was an absence of supporting details or appropriate rhetorical devices. Some candidates merely listed the issues without any attempt to argue how consultation would address these issues.
- Most of the issues identified were home related such as divorce, violence and abuse.

Advice to Teachers

- There continues to be significant concern that too many candidates have sentence construction challenges: sentence splices; hanging sentences; fragments; and run-on sentences. Many used the vernacular of their countries.
- Instruction may benefit from the use of more class discussions in which students are challenge to say WHY they hold their perspectives.
- Opportunity to critique written arguments from well-known persons or good Internet sources should go some way in encouraging better understanding and production of argument.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

HEADQUARTERS

ENGLISH A

PROFILE CUT-OFFS

[WEIGHTED]

JANUARY 2013

PROFILE 01 (MAX = 76)	GRADES	SCORE	PROFILE 02 (MAX = 114)	GRADES	SCORE
	I	52 (68%)		I	71 (65%)
	II	44 (58%)		II	60 (53%)
	III	35 (46%)		III	51 (45%)
	IV	27(36%)		IV	39 (34%)
	V	13 (17%)		V	17 (15%)
	VI	<13		VI	<17

COMPOSITE CUT-OFFS

[WEIGHTED]

GRADES	COMPOSITE CUT-OFF
I	123 (65%)
II	104 (55%)
III	86 (45%)
IV	66 (35%)
V	30 (16%)
VI	<16

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

HEADQUARTERS

ENGLISH A

QUESTION CUT-OFFS BY PROFILE

PAPER 02

JANUARY 2013

Question	PROFILE 1						PROFILE 2					
	GRADES						GRADES					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1.	7	6	5	4	2	<2	13	11	9	7	3	<3
2.	11	9	7	6	3	<3	NOT APPLICABLE					
3.	11	9	7	6	3	<3	NOT APPLICABLE					
4.	NOT APPLICABLE						22	18	15	12	5	<5
5.							22	18	15	12	5	<5
6.							22	18	15	12	5	<5
7.							22	18	15	12	5	<5
8.							22	18	15	12	5	<5

PAPER CUT-OFFS

[RAW]

	GRADES	SCORE		GRADES	SCORE
	PAPER 01 (60)	I		39 (65%)	PAPER 02 (130)
II		34 (56.6%)	II	47 (36.1%)	
III		29 (48.3%)	III	38 (29.2%)	
IV		23 (38.3%)	IV	31 (23.84%)	
V		20 (33.3%)	V	11 (8.4%)	
VI		<20	VI	<11	

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

HEADQUARTERS

ENGLISH A

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

PAPER 01 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY

JANUARY 2013

Question Number	Objective	Cognitive Level	Question Number	Objective	Cognitive Level
1.	UA	Application	31.	UC	Comprehension
2.	UA	Application	32.	UC	Comprehension
3.	UA	Application	33.	UC	Comprehension
4.	UA	Application	34.	UC	Comprehension
5.	UA	Application	35.	UC	Comprehension
6.	UA	Application	36.	UC	Comprehension
7.	UA	Application	37.	UC	Comprehension
8.	UA	Application	38.	UC	Comprehension
9.	UA	Application	39.	UC	Comprehension
10.	UA	Application	40.	UD	Comprehension
11.	UA	Application	41.	UD	Comprehension
12.	UA	Application	42.	UD	Comprehension
13.	UA	Application	43.	UD	Comprehension
14.	UA	Application	44.	UD	Comprehension
15.	UA	Application	45.	UD	Comprehension
16.	UA	Application	46.	UB	Comprehension
17.	UA	Application	47.	UB	Comprehension
18.	UA	Application	48.	UB	Comprehension
19.	UA	Application	49.	UB	Comprehension
20.	UA	Application	50.	UB	Comprehension
21.	UC	Comprehension	51.	UB	Comprehension
22.	UC	Comprehension	52.	UB	Comprehension
23.	UC	Comprehension	53.	UB	Comprehension
24.	UC	Comprehension	54.	UB	Comprehension
25.	UC	Comprehension	55.	UD	Comprehension
26.	UC	Comprehension	56.	UD	Comprehension
27.	UC	Comprehension	57.	UD	Comprehension
28.	UC	Comprehension	58.	UD	Comprehension
29.	UC	Comprehension	59.	UD	Comprehension
30.	UC	Comprehension	60.	UD	Comprehension
60 questions – 1 mark each Profile assessed – Understanding Total UA – 20 Total UB – 9 Total UC – 19 Total UD – 12			Total 40 – Comprehension 20 – Application		

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

HEADQUARTERS

ENGLISH A

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

PAPER 02 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY

JANUARY 2013

Question Number	Profile and Marks Awarded	Syllabus Objective	Cognitive Level
1.	Understanding – 10 marks Expression – 20 marks	UB	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis
2. (a)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(b)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(c)	Understanding – 1 mark	UC	Application
(d)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(e)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(f)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(g)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Application
(h)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
(i)	Understanding – 2 marks	UC	Comprehension
3. (a)	Understanding – 1 mark	UB	Comprehension
(b)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(c)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(d)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(e)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(f)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(g)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
(h)	Understanding – 2 marks	UB	Comprehension
4.	Expression – 35 marks	UC	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis
5.	Expression – 35 marks	UC	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis
6.	Expression – 35 marks	UC	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis
7.	Expression – 35 marks	UD	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis
8.	Expression – 35 marks	UD	Comprehension/Application/Synthesis

Understanding – 40 marks

Expression 195 marks (Total expression marks candidates can achieve on this paper is 90)

Cognitive Levels

Comprehension – 15

Application – 2

Comprehension/Application/Synthesis – 5

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2014

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in January 2014 compared favourably with the results in earlier years. As has come to be the norm, there was neither an outstanding improvement, nor significant decline, but the results continued to be skewed towards the lower grades. The incidence of candidates being wholly unprepared for the examination was again relatively small, yet most responses tended to fall into the category of being ‘adequate’. Teachers are urged to make use of the various guidelines and aids to learning being developed by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), to help students be more comfortable with both language and literature, and to improve language through the skills acquired in studying literature. One resource is the syllabus document, in which there is a large section which helps with interpreting the syllabus objectives and requirements, and suggests a variety of activities which can help in developing the appropriate skills.

Taken as a whole, there is some improvement in the performance, but individual questions as expected, show fluctuations in quality. Candidates seem to lack strategies to help them use their time and skills to the best advantage under examination conditions. At the start of each question there are instructions and cautions to which examination candidates need to be encouraged to give thoughtful and careful attention. The following advice was among several pieces offered to instructors in 2009, and is still very relevant today:

Students should come to the examination with a well-rehearsed procedure for tackling each question...they should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure for identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each student, based on the student’s ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under examination conditions.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was good. Approximately 84 per cent of candidates received Grades I–III. Exercises on word choice, sentence completion and equivalent sentences were well done. The area in which greatest weakness was evident was usage where candidates experienced difficulty recognizing sentences which contained clichés, misused metaphors or redundancies, and sentences that were incorrect grammatically.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Writing Reports and Summaries

This section of the paper — summary — tests skills which people generally use daily in summing up responses to life’s experiences. It is an academic activity therefore which has practical value, and

students might respond better to the challenges of summary if teachers remember to teach for the transfer of skills. Discussions with persons approaching tertiary level academic pursuits, and with many in the work sector, indicate that there is a strong tendency to confuse the strategies — paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing.

There are also observations that while secondary level students are required to research and produce scholarly evidence, the manner of presentation accepted is very often sheer plagiarism. The plagiarized presentation delivers the impression that the student is low in understanding. For this reason teachers are encouraged to explore with the students the Skills and Abilities to be Assessed as presented in the syllabus document: Understanding (a) and (b) (i) to (x), and (d) (i) and (ii); Expression (a) and (b).

Question 1

Among the comments which examiners and assistant examiners made on the passage and task were:

- The instructions given to the question clearly indicated what was expected of candidates.
- Candidates seemed able to relate well to the passage as the issues addressed were within their experience.
- The level of vocabulary in the passage was not unduly challenging.
- The length was suitable to the time frame allowed.

Comments made on the candidates' responses included the following:

Strengths

- General understanding of the passage
- The ability to identify key points
- Organization of material

Weaknesses

- Using transitional devices
- Creating accuracy because of some inability to interpret or express relationships
- Far too much lifting of phrases and sentences rather than using their own words
- General expression

The points expected in the summary were:

- The 1990s widespread encouragement of lower income persons to enter university has led to disappointment and frustration.
- Governments cannot maintain the costs.
- Students entering university have unrealistic hopes and expectations from the degrees.
- Students entering university require remedial help.
- Falling standards have resulted from lower level entry requirements.
- When universities seek higher fees students are frustrated.

- There are too many graduates in areas which are not vital to national development.
- Jobs formerly held by those without degrees are now claimed by the high numbers of graduates, thus causing employment and job dislocation.

Section B: Understanding

Questions 2 and 3

The passages in this section followed the established pattern: one literary piece, one expository piece. Examiners were happy with the length and degree of complexity/simplicity in both passages. The first passage was an extract from *God Bless the Child*, published in *Essence*, September 2006. The issue dealt with homelessness and the impact on children.

The examiners' overall assessment was that most candidates attempted all questions, and interpreted them satisfactorily. The major problems came from questions that required skills of literary analysis. Such questions included:

- Why does the writer use the expression...?
- List two ways in which the family was affected by the mother's decision.
- What is the narrator's attitude to the situation described in the passage?

The expository passage was less well handled. Its subject was Yoga in the Caribbean. Though the language was well within their reach, it was observed that some candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the term *Yoga*. Most of the candidates' difficulties arose from inadequate vocabulary, and a weak response to the written expression, that is, weakness in analysing the written word.

The questions offering most challenges were (b) and (c), which asked for recognition of contrast; (e), in which the word "complementary" appeared to be unfamiliar (it was frequently interpreted as meaning 'free'); and (f), which required an appreciation of connotation and denotation, indicating that there is still some inability to distinguish between literal and figurative language.

Teachers and students are again referred to the Skills and Abilities to be Assessed section of the syllabus and encouraged to pay attention to Understanding (c) — grasp insights from reading literature.

Other persistent problems are the failure to use quotation marks when asked to *quote*, and the use of full sentences when asked for *phrases*. This becomes a problem when the sentence used contains ideas that are opposed to the answer required.

Section C: Writing Stories and Descriptive Essays

For the January examination, candidates were given more details in the instruction to encourage them to be conscious of their task. This seems generally to have brought good results. Problems continue, however, in the ability to distinguish between narrative and description.

Question 4

It was noted that candidates were better able to respond to the picture stimulus. Though there were responses which were expository, these were fewer — an improvement over the past.

Question 5

For the most part, responses were satisfactory. Candidates in instances were able to use the stimulus to develop interesting story lines and characters. Stories were generally effectively organized. The areas of weakness were in most instances weak language structure and mechanics.

Question 6

This question continues to produce answers that make heavy use of narration rather than description, but there has been improvement in the number and quality of the descriptions.

Section D: Argumentative Writing

Question 7

As with Section C, examiners felt that the expanded rubric worked to the candidates' advantage. Several approaches to the dialogue seemed possible, but candidates successfully responded to a selection of aspects given in the stimulus. Valid points were made and correct arguments and strategies employed.

Question 8

This was the more popular choice of stimulus. Again, there was scope for several interpretations or reactions, as there was some scope for addressing some social issues. Responses suggested that candidates identified with the topic.

Weaker scripts demonstrated:

- Inability to develop points rationally
- Poor organization
- Limited vocabulary
- Weak sentence structure
- Misuse/overuse of the rhetorical question
- Inadequate linking of points/paragraphs

Assistance with this part of the syllabus is found in the document, under the heading Expression. The section with suggested activities, in particular Expression (c) and (d) contains many suggestions.

Recommendations

- *Planning:* The rubrics which introduce each section of the examination paper invite candidates to plan their longer responses. This was often interpreted as 'write the essay, then copy it'. This double-writing affects time negatively, and many answers showed the hurry to complete. Some candidates also failed to cross out the unwanted answer. The preparation for the examination should include the skill of outlining, so the candidate can make maximum use of the time.
- *Language Use:* The quality of language generally, but particularly in the questions which demand longer continuous answers (Questions 1, 4/5/6; 7/8) raises some concern: shifting tenses, lack of discrimination in past tenses, lack of subject and verb agreement, basic punctuation and spelling errors are all persistent problems. Very often, rereading reduces the number and type of errors, and students should be taught *how*, and encouraged to reread critically.
- Examiners advise that much more effort should be put into helping candidates to improve their stock of adjectives and adverbs, and to providing opportunities for studying and emulating good descriptive pieces.
- Most candidates are exposed to the visual through television. This can be used constructively to help develop the skill of descriptive writing. Candidates may be invited to role-play, to be the camera or camera person. They should become familiar with the concepts of foreground, middle distance and background; with the techniques of panning and focusing; and helped to distinguish between concrete and abstract words and phrases.
- It was observed that some candidates seemed to have been prepared to write their argumentative essays along specific lines with particular techniques. Experienced examiners caution that while some students do benefit from such a strategy, teachers should use it with caution, as there is the risk that competent and even superior students will be forced into a mould which affects their expression and development negatively. It is highly preferable to teach them how to reason, and provide them with a variety of ways to open, develop, and close their arguments.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2014

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in English A remained moderate in the May/June 2014 examination sitting. Fifty-nine per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I to III, consistent with overall performance in May/June 2013 when 58 per cent of the candidates achieved similar grades. There was a moderate improvement in performance on Paper 01, which assesses Profile 1, Understanding, and a small improvement on Paper 02 which also assesses Understanding but focuses primarily on Profile 2, Expression.

However, performance on Paper 02 continues to be below the expected standard. The questions in the three sections on this paper generally elicited only moderate levels of performance. General weakness was observed in many candidates' inability to organize ideas and to use grammatical English in expressing these ideas.

The instructions to Sections A, B, and C have been expanded in order to help the candidates maximize responses and scoring opportunities. There is some evidence that the candidates' attention has been drawn to this feature, but more encouragement is necessary to ensure greater compliance with these instructions. Too many candidates lapsed into the vernacular in answering Questions 2 and 3, and in responses to Section C.

Apart from the grammar, vocabulary and expression issues, poor handwriting and spelling stand in the way of obtaining the best marks.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple-Choice

Generally performance on Paper 01 was good, with approximately 82 per cent of candidates achieving the three top grades. The areas of particularly weak performance on this paper were the questions set on the expository extract.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Writing Reports and Summaries

Question 1

Candidates were instructed to read an article about the moon and its perceived effects on various aspects of life and activity on Earth, and then write a summary not exceeding 120 words. While the article captured the attention through a popular connection between the moon and insanity, that was not its focus. The article established through examples, that some ideas about the moon's influence leaned towards the scientific, others towards popular folk tales and beliefs, and that research and investigation continue.

Candidates' responses were generally in the moderate to lower levels of competence. While many were able to recognize and express the moon's importance to life, its suspected link to insanity and other negative behaviours, many were deceived by their own knowledge of the myths, folklore and old wives' tales which are associated with the moon and focused incorrectly on these areas. Answers strongly suggested weakness in understanding the passage, and an inability to analyse the ideas expressed in it. This meant that such candidates were, in turn, unable to express those ideas cogently and in their own words. Answers showed significant weakness in making appropriate links between ideas, resulting in inappropriate strategies, ranging from repetition and/or extensive 'lifting', to the extreme of simply copying the passage until the word limit had been reached.

A major hindrance to successful summary is lack of vocabulary, and poor expression. The CXC English A syllabus strongly suggests and seeks to foster a working relationship between literature and language. This gives students the benefit of experiencing, first hand, language in effective use. Use of good literature does not seek to force students to study literature per se, but exposes them to the quality of vocabulary and syntax that create good expression.

The following italicized section is taken from the scheme used for marking the summary in each English A examination, and should be kept in mind as part of the teaching:

Content

The answer will be judged for its adequacy with respect to the following criteria within the set word limit.

- *Selection and accuracy of details (and their original linkages) and their completeness.*
- *Clarity and faithfulness in respect of purpose/intent, and appropriateness of message and tone.*
- *Attention to perspective/point-of-view and consistency of focus.*

Organisation of Content

- *Arrangement presented through sequencing, selection of cohesive ties, achievement of economy.*
- *Arrangement of information in a coherent structure and sense of audience.*

Points to be noted in the answer:

The moon is believed to have a variety of effects on all forms of life, but the extent to what is fact and what is fiction is still unclear. People are still inclined to mix scientific thought with myth. The facts are:

- The moon has a strong gravitational pull on large masses of water on earth.
- The human body is 70 per cent water, but it is too small to be affected by the moon.
- The moon's phases affect the reproductive cycles of humans and marine life.

The beliefs are:

- Madness, arson and violent crimes increase with the full moon.
- More babies are born with the full moon.

There is a suggestion that human behaviours are affected by beliefs, and research shows some correlation between change of behaviour and the changes of the moon.

Sample Summary:

Sample 1

Several aspects of our lives, and events on a planet, have long been associated with the moon and its phases. Some of these things are built on scientific fact, others on folk beliefs. Researchers have investigated some of the beliefs, but results are inconclusive. One accepted feature is that the moon affects reproduction among females and some sea creatures. There is the belief that our bodies which are 70% water, are affected by the moon, but since such effects are only shown on large bodies of water, the belief is questionable. The moon's connection to madness is also questionable. One lecturer in psychology suggests that our beliefs shape our lives and that we change our behaviour according to the things we believe. (110 words)

Sample 2

It has been long believed that the moon affect many forms of life in some way. Some effects have been accepted by scientists such as the moon's influence on the movement of large bodies of water and the reproductive cycles of women and some types of shellfish. There is the belief that there is a correlation between the moon's phases and negative changes in human brain activity and actions. Anecdotes suggesting a rise in the number of babies being born at a particular time of the month and an increase in violent crimes have been linked to the moon's cycle. Although the results of research into these areas have been inconclusive, the moon continues to fascinate us. (119 words)

Sample 3

People have long been led by evidence or story, to believe that the moon influences our lives. For instance, scientists accept the moon's influence on reproduction among marine life, and its effect on the human female's menstrual cycle. It is also known that the moon's gravity affects water on Earth, but that water must be in very large quantities, so effects on the human body are rejected. Some people link insanity, higher birth rate, and periodic peaks in violent crime with the full moon. Scientists are investigating because of the many stories of lunar effects, true or imagined generally there is some acceptance of a connection between the full moon and behaviour changes, but conclusions are still mixed. (118 words)

Superior responses reproduced the critical elements of the original passage in the candidate's own words, most often in flawless or near flawless language. In a few instances, responses indicated a superior understanding of content but some weakness in language.

Responses assessed as suggesting or demonstrating incompetence included one or more of the following:

- The introduction of extraneous material based on prior knowledge.
- Misinformation prompted by inadequate understanding of details.
- Incomplete ideas.
- A listing of ideas with no recognition of the relationship between points.

Recommendations for Teaching

Comprehension skills (primarily) and summary writing skills need to be reinforced. Students should:

- be exposed to a wide range of expository passages and be guided in analysing text structures and modes of development
- receive more practice in expressing what they read in their own words
- be given exercises using transitional words
- be exposed to good summaries which they are encouraged to critically examine for content, technique and length
- be encouraged to participate in oral exercises in recounting versus summarizing (using topical issues, events and popular shows) which will grasp their attention, stimulate understanding, and demonstrate the goals of summary
- exposed to sessions of functional vocabulary

As understanding and summary exercises done in the classroom demonstrate mastery, attention should then be given to completing tasks within a given time frame. Penalizing the use of the language of the passage will drive home the value of using one's own words.

Teachers are also encouraged to make use of the Internet, and to encourage students themselves to explore this avenue. It will alert them to the value of the skill, and break the tedium of the classroom. What the students learn, they can themselves introduce or teach to their peers. Several URL's will be evident through a Google search, many of them produced by teachers.

Section B: Understanding

Section B continues to offer the candidates two short pieces of writing for study and comprehension: one piece expository, the other literary. These questions assess candidates' preparedness to interact with various kinds of writing in their adult life, including their ability to recognize fact and fiction, and to appreciate the wealth of meaning conveyed by good writing. It seems, however, that the students are not challenged during their preparation for the examination, to recognize the different kinds of writing; their purposes, audiences, and styles, and therefore to expect a difference in the kinds of questions attached to each type of writing.

According to the syllabus, candidates are expected to consider and appreciate the various techniques used and their effects; to recognize and understand literal and figurative language; to be able to quote accurately; to know the differences between 'phrase', 'sentence', 'word' and 'expression'; to find the direct statement and the inference. Unfortunately, the evidence is that most candidates are able only to respond adequately to the straightforward, information-gathering kind of question.

Question 2

This question consisted of an extract from *Harvey River: Memoir of My Mother and Her Island*. The term 'memoir' should have alerted candidates that this is more artistic than factual. It makes use of figurative language from the first sentence, "Hard Life was an ill-mannered visitor ..." and uses expressions like "oily-mouthed feasts", for instance. Individual sub-questions asked candidates to recognize the words and phrases which created particular meaning and many candidates did not demonstrate the ability to do so. Many also failed to respond well to questions which asked for purpose, effect, feeling, description of character, or recognition of irony.

Question 3

This question presented a discussion on the effects of fast food. The passage is written in a matter-of-fact style, provides definitions, offers evidence through statistics and cites authority and is more in keeping with the kind of passage that candidates seem to like. Candidates appeared to have understood the content, but had severe difficulty in expressing meaning. One of the problems noted was a carry-over from Section A: a question which enquires interpretation cannot be effectively answered by simply lifting a sentence and presenting it as the answer. Based on this particular passage, candidates were required to recognize attitude, explain phrases, identify intention, recognize implications and give reasons. All of these proved to be very challenging tasks. Very noticeable again was the problem caused by poor vocabulary and, it is strongly suspected, by lack of exposure to extended, high-quality writing on various topics. Challenging words in this extract included "epidemic" and "unnecessarily".

Recommendations for Teaching

- Make use of high-quality magazine articles which provide writing that is modern, and factual without being pedantic and 'highbrow'.
- Teach students how to structure answers. For instance, when a question asks "What is the writer's purpose, the answer must include the infinitive: "To..."
- Recognize that figurative language is not restricted to literary texts.
- Use the CXC literature texts as part of the language instruction.
- Find ways to introduce vocabulary exercises. For example, the Toastmasters Club has a practice of introducing, explaining, and encouraging correct use of a new word each meeting. This may be adopted as a daily classroom activity.

Section C: Writing Stories and Descriptive Essays

Question 4

Again in this examination sitting, the story based on the picture was the one which most candidates attempted. Unlike last year, this year's stories were the best done of the choices. Generally candidates managed to successfully incorporate the stimulus into their responses. Answers ranged from simple stories of a haunted house to some attempts at metaphor and personification.

Question 5

This was the second choice of the narratives, and was more challenging. Though the idea of music and a party attracted candidates' attention, their answers were less successful and less imaginative. Answers were less sure as some candidates could not determine whether to focus on the mistake, or the hesitation. Only a few combined the two successfully. Many spent the time describing a situation leading up to the decision or mistake, and were ineffective in structuring satisfactory endings, often petering out into simple, predictable and anti-climactic outcomes.

Question 6

The stimulus given in this year's paper read: "When the fishermen finally reached the shore, what greeted them was nothing that they could have described." The focus of this stimulus was the shore. There is room in this stimulus for the candidate to spend some time **describing** what was experienced before reaching the shore, in order to emphasize the unimaginable nature of the actual beach, **which must also be described** (i.e.: visual detail given). In fact, the wording made the beach scene the area of greater importance, but candidates did not seem to recognize this. In addition, what was seen (described) on the beach could have been negative or positive, as the candidate chose. The problem is that the candidates **need to be taught how to analyse, then encouraged to use the analytical skills** to interpret what is said **or** not said, required **or** not required, in a stimulus; and through the analysis to find the focus. Otherwise they could (and did) misapply their time and energy.

Among the problems noted this year were:

- Low level of ability to differentiate between a descriptive essay and a story. In fact, the number and quality of responses to this option indicated a regression from the standard achieved in the past two years.
- Fewer candidates showed an understanding of the requirements of a descriptive essay. They failed to see the accumulation of details in order to give a picture, and settled, instead, for vague generalizations.
- The organization was weak, so that many candidates were unable to master the spatial aspect: moving left to right, top to bottom, panning, etc.)
- Rather than say what could be seen, and involve the audience in seeing the details so they might react on a personal level, candidates told the audience what to feel (e.g.: ... *it was warm and sunny* ... instead of ... *people were dressed in as little as was allowed, short shorts, sleeveless shirts, old ladies carried umbrellas...*)
- Candidates were trapped in the concept of time and event (in the narrative '... and then, and then ...')

Recommendations for Teaching

- Our students, born and raised in a visual age, may have reached a point where they no longer see what is around them. In addition, they are blasted almost continually with loud and demanding sound. There are many practical reasons for learning to ‘see’ and describe.
- This suggestion invites the teacher to conduct brief but enjoyable training sessions:
 - Provide students with only the sounds, then ask them to supply the visual, first orally, then in writing. Use a radio play, or a song, for instance.
 - Have students, working in small groups, blindfold each other and then experience something.
 - Present students with jumbled details, then have them arrange the material logically, and account for their choices.
- A writer may make use of multiple strategies to develop a piece of writing, and students need (i) to recognize these techniques and (ii) to understand how to identify the piece according to the predominant purpose and style. For example, an argumentative essay may use some definition or narrative to help in making a point clear. Narratives very often use description, in order to establish ‘setting’ in time and place. Students must be encouraged to see the differences when a piece of writing is dedicated to story, OR to description.
- Teachers are encouraged to use literature (the texts set for English B, for instance) to help students to recognize and create different kinds of writing.

Section D: Argumentative Writing

The questions were appropriate for the age level of the candidates, and examiners generally thought they were apt choices as they allowed candidates the opportunity to express their reasoned views and arguments on topical issues, bearing in mind that candidates range from those of middle to upper high school age to those who are at the age of adult maturity.

Question 7

Responses to Question 7 suggested that it offered candidates a manageable challenge in terms of ideas for or against (i) the claim that homeless people are a nuisance, and (ii) that the homeless should be forced into government-provided housing. Candidates had many ideas, but the challenge lay in their ability or inability to:

- recognize the aspects of the discussion
- organize their thoughts effectively to cover all aspects of the discussion
- organize their ideas for the best strategic impact (move from stronger to weaker or from weaker to stronger points)
- link their ideas and achieve cohesion
- muster syntax and vocabulary well enough to express themselves clearly.

Less able candidates understood the concept of ‘nuisance’, but then devoted the entire essay to establishing that nuisance element, abruptly attaching the ‘forced into ...housing’ as a conclusion. In many instances candidates failed to support their claims, and relied instead on repetition of opinions.

Question 8

Question 8 required that candidates recognize the nature and purpose of rules generally, and of school rules in particular. It also required that they have some understanding of freedom generally, and a consciousness of how personal freedom fits into the broader issue. The problem of inadequate vocabulary negatively

affected understanding and responses to the prompt. Particular areas included the meanings of ‘violate’ and ‘personal freedom’. Violate was often interpreted as ‘annoy’. Many candidates took the statement personally or very narrowly, and related incidents of personal affront or negative reactions by schoolmates, rather than explore the concept of violate. Most often the focus was on specific rules in specific schools.

Recommendations for Teaching

- In responding to arguments, whether in real life or in examination essays, it is necessary to address all aspects of the argument that are put forward; not answering a specific aspect suggests that the candidate has a problem with that specific aspect. In any case, answers to arguments in examination essays have to be comprehensive since marks are assigned to the different parts of a question. In other words, if the candidate omits part of a question, he/she automatically loses the marks assigned to it.
- While this section of the paper often gives topics which are of immediate interest to teenagers, candidates also need to keep abreast of topics of regional as well as wider or international interests.
- It was observed that some candidates seemed to have prepared to write their argumentative essay along specific lines with particular techniques. Experienced examiners caution that while some students do benefit from such a strategy, teachers should use it with caution, as there is the risk that competent and even superior candidates will be forced into a mould which affects their expression and development negatively. It is highly preferable to teach them how to reason, and provide them with a variety of ways to open, develop, and close their arguments.
- Teachers need to continue to give repeated practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relations, as in cause and effect, contrast and concession. Words and phrases such as ‘however’, ‘although’, ‘consequently’, ‘by contrast’ and ‘accordingly’ should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2015

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in English A in January 2015 was fair. This was reflected by an increase in the percentage of candidates achieving acceptable grades. Approximately 56 per cent of candidates achieved Grades I–III, an improvement on January 2014 when the percentage of candidates who achieved this level of performance was approximately 52 per cent. The percentage of candidates who achieved Grade I increased from approximately seven per cent in 2014 to eight per cent in 2015.

Improved performance was evidenced on Profile 2, Expression. While overall there was an improvement in the quality of responses on questions on Paper 02, candidates continue to experience difficulty on the Expression profile.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was very fair with a mean score of 57 per cent. Nineteen per cent of the candidates achieved Grade I on this paper while 80 per cent of candidates achieved acceptable grades, I–III. Candidates were generally able to recognize facts stated explicitly and to extract specific and implied information. Items based on word and sentence meaning were generally well done. Items requiring recognition of errors in usage, inappropriate grammar or vocabulary in sentences were also generally well done. In the comprehension items weakness was noted in some candidates' ability to evaluate the effectiveness of language devices used and the appropriateness of different forms and structures used to achieve the author's intention. This was especially evident in Items 21–30, which were based on a poem. Items 23–26 and 29 assessed candidates' knowledge of metaphor, tone, mood and connotative meaning. Items 40–47 assessed candidates' ability to obtain information accurately from informational text. Candidates were expected to understand the writer's intention, make comparisons and sequence information.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Summary

Question 1

In Section A candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to understand the written text, organize information and express the ideas clearly. To reiterate the message of past reports, the material is usually drawn from informative discourse or exposition (essays, reports, scientific discussions, analyses) suitable to the secondary school age group. The skills of selection and concise expression are targeted and specific aims are detailed in the syllabus under Understanding (a) and (b) and Expression (a), (b), (c). Included in the syllabus is the following advice: *Summaries require economy of language, the careful selection of the relevant main ideas, and the preservation of the intention of the original.*

The passage selected for January 2015 instructed candidates to read an article entitled 'Our History, Our Future' and write a summary of it not exceeding 120 words. Candidates' responses were generally below average. The mean on this question was 12 out of 30. Some candidates' answers suggested that they understood that man's past mistakes are being repeated and that these could be avoided but they copied the words/sentences which expressed such. The majority was unable to say how to avoid the mistakes without using the words from the passage. In fact, most candidates

began and completed their summaries using the same vocabulary presented in the passage. Many candidates actually wrote ‘summaries’ with six paragraphs (the same number as the original). This method of summarizing (slavishly following the structure of the original) prevented them from making appropriate links between ideas and resulted in repetition/extensive ‘lifting’. Many candidates also rewrote the examples and the quotation with a few ending their summary with the latter. There were also instances where candidates simply copied the passage until the word limit had been reached.

Apart from the language weakness, candidates demonstrated weakness in selecting the crucial elements and were hampered by a lack of vocabulary. Other persistent problems come from the assumption that the first sentence in a paragraph must be the topic sentence.

The points which should have been included are:

- History is full of valuable information, not only about events and dates, but also about behaviours and the consequences of those behaviours.
- People usually learn about history but do not learn from it, so they make the same mistakes of earlier generations.
- In order to learn from history, the reader must go beyond superficial study, must analyse and so learn from the earlier mistakes and best practices.
- Good research skills applied to history can lead to the discovery of effective strategies to be used in business and social development.
- Since history records human and cultural attitudes and behaviours, individual and national expectations, societies’ strengths and weaknesses, a study of it shows how to avoid conflict in a variety of contexts.

Sample Summary 1

History provides considerable information about dates and events, but also stores knowledge and examples which we, as individuals and leaders, can use in our daily personal and business lives. To get the benefit from history, we need to approach it inquiringly and analytically. We are then able to recognize, understand and appreciate character, patterns of behaviour, cultural peculiarities, social conditions and needs and responses. We also have a chance to understand more of the interpersonal and intrapersonal factors relating to managing people, our businesses, and our lives. When we fail to study history appreciatively we miss the warnings, repeat the experiments and bad practices, and get the same disastrous results as our predecessors did.

114 words

Sample Summary 2

History books contain useful knowledge of events, situations and human interactions. If we really want to reap the benefits of this knowledge, we need to use an analytical approach to the study of history. We will find that it gives us blueprints and advice on how to alleviate a wide range of negative human activity. We can avoid global and personal conflicts while we improve our business practices and our social and cultural interaction, both locally and globally. In short, the application of history’s lessons can be of great benefit to man’s progress. Instead, we learn only the contents of history and continue to make the same mistakes our ancestors did, so that history repeats itself.

116 words

Sample Summary 3

History contains a wealth of information relating to dates and events. In addition, not only are examples of human behaviours and actions recorded, but also the results of such; yet man has the tendency to simply learn history without using the analytical approach to it that would enable him to learn from it. As a result, the patterns that history has created are often unnoticed. By failing to make use of the positive insights provided, the mistakes of previous generations are repeated. The application of the analytical approach produces guidance for human interaction. Through it we avoid cultural and social conflicts. The result should be an improvement in human relations in all spheres.

113 words

Recommendations

Comprehension skills need to be reinforced and students should

- be exposed to a wide range of expository passages and be guided in analysing text structures and modes of development
- receive more practice in expressing what they read in their own words
- be given exercises using transitional words
- be encouraged to complete classroom exercises within the specific timeframe and word limit. Students should also be penalized for ‘lifting’.

Notes and Suggested Activities (specifically pages 6 –12) of the syllabus, will help both teacher and student to identify and hone summary skills. Strong support is also given in the new Nelson Thorne’s *CXC English A Study Guide*.

Section B: Understanding

Questions 2 and 3

These questions are designed to test understanding, using two short passages, one literary and one expository. The skills tested are outlined in the syllabus under Understanding (a), (b) and (c) (pages 2–3). Each passage has a different focus: in the expository type of passage the objectives are outlined in (a) and (b); in the literary, the greater number of questions satisfy Understanding (c). The results for Question 2 strongly suggest that reading and analysing writing of a literary nature needs to be given more attention. Pages 12–14 of the syllabus should be invaluable. Where questions require information obvious in the text, candidates gain marks, but fail to read between the lines, understand inference, purpose, techniques, and connotative language.

Question 2

The performance of candidates on this comprehension question indicated a wide range of abilities in comprehension, with scores ranging from 1 to 15. The mean on the question was 7 out of 15. While many candidates were able to correctly quote the phrase required in Part (a) (ii), there was the tendency to quote the entire sentence given in line 5, clearly indicating that candidates have not mastered the skill of ‘quoting a phrase.’

The passage set was an extract from the (Caribbean) novel *The Leopard* by Victor Reid. It is a reflective piece in which, through the night, the protagonist experiences a rainstorm and compares its destructiveness with the behaviours of a woman. In contrast, as morning comes and the storm is ended, he uses the metaphor of a fun-filled golden ball rising and breaking over the land.

Many candidates were able to identify the impact of the storm on the environment as requested in Part (c) (i). They were also able to accurately identify the words or phrases which conveyed this idea.

From the response of candidates, the most challenging question was Part (d). For this question, candidates were required to identify the difference in mood between paragraphs 1 and 3. Many could not use the terminology expected: *dreary/dull*; *bright/hopeful*. In some cases, instead of identifying the mood of the paragraphs, candidates reverted to identifying the mood of the writer.

Part (e) required candidates to quote pieces of evidence that suggested different times of the day. Some candidates were able to accurately quote the evidence, but others experienced difficulty producing answers that focused on the same time of the day, for example, morning.

Another challenging question was Part (f) (ii) where candidates were asked to identify another phrase in the passage which conveyed the same idea as “beyond the limits of the land”. Many got this incorrect. In other cases the question was not even attempted, suggesting generally a discomfort with metaphorical language.

The performance of candidates on the question indicates the need for some level of integration: using literature in the language classroom. It is evident that when candidates are asked to identify terms that are all too familiar in literature classrooms, those without that experience perform poorly.

Question 3

This passage examined the advantages and disadvantages of the increasing use of information technology in industry and commerce. It also looked at the impact on social and community life. It argued that in spite of the benefits, people and communities are vital and efforts must be made to maintain the connections between people. While Parts (a) and (c) which assessed the ability to retrieve information explicitly stated were answered correctly by the majority of candidates, Parts (b), (d) and (f) were not well done as many candidates did not seem to interpret these questions correctly. The term ‘remote access’ used in Part (b) did not seem to be understood by some candidates while the writer’s ‘attitude’ was also not deduced by many candidates in answering Part (d). The ‘effect’ the writer wanted to achieve by using the word ‘yet’ in Part (e) was another question not well answered. Part (f) required an inference which was not made in many instances, while Part (h) required candidates to draw a conclusion. The mean on this question was 8 out of 15.

Section C: Story Writing

Of the three questions in this section, most candidates attempted Question 5. Question 6 was the least popular. A few very good responses were generated from all topics, but most responses were quite mundane. The use of Standard English continues to be a challenge for too many candidates, with obvious interference from the dialects used in the region. Many stories were poor in using the elements of story writing. Candidates must be encouraged to take note of the rubric especially as it applies to the way the stimulus is to be used, and to the length of responses.

Question 4

This question used a picture of a clearly malnourished dog about to be captured by a group of ‘dog-catchers’. The picture focused on the animal and the devices used to catch it. Only the legs and arms of the catchers were visible. The stimulus offered candidates an opportunity to fully display

the elements of short story writing and many candidates did a fair job of developing a story line and some attempts at characterization were quite good. The stimulus was used to present stories from several perspectives, for example, the dog, the dog-catcher or an animal lover. In many instances the conflict situation was clearly developed and a resolution established. The language component, although quite good in instances, revealed many areas of concern. The mean on this question was 12 out of 35.

Question 5

The stimulus for Question 5 introduced a male, sitting on a bus between two persons who said they were his parents, and feeling that ‘something just did not feel right’. The candidates could have chosen any age group for the protagonist. A story which included internal conflict/reflection/suspense, and even comedy, was possible. Responses ranged from demonstrating incompetence to suggesting superiority although there were very few at the upper level. Candidates used the stimulus to varying degrees of effectiveness with most responses falling in the ‘suggesting competence’ range. Some candidates seemed to have difficulty linking the second part of the stimulus ‘something just did not feel right’ with the first part ‘two persons who said they were his parents’. The mean on this question was 17 out of 35.

Question 6

Descriptive writing continues to be a challenge for a large number of candidates. Pieces which focus on narration with only incidental description still form a major part of the submissions. Candidates should be encouraged to **show** the situation to the audience through the details they give. Much work needs to be done in helping students to use structure and sequence to produce a good description. Candidates may be further encouraged and motivated if they are helped to see that the ability to describe is a vital aspect of our lives, part of our mechanism for self-protection. Observation, attention to details, and logical movement are relevant skills to be developed. The mean on this question was 15 out of 35.

Section D: Argument

Candidates were comfortable with these topics, and some very good work emerged. Still too many responses lacked adequate and well-reasoned arguments/points and the requisite and appropriate argumentative devices to convince or persuade their audience.

Question 7

This topic was within the range of candidates’ experience so they were able to generate clear points for their responses. They were able to elaborate on these points thus providing the needed support for the topic. In addition to presenting sound arguments, many candidates were able to acknowledge and refute the counterarguments in a logical and mature way. For example, candidates argued that some of the benefits of the school setting include developing conflict resolution skills and team building while at the same time enabling individuals to develop a sense of independence. These responses showed that there was some awareness of the genre of writing that they were asked to address.

Some candidates demonstrated the ability to organize an essay vis-à-vis introduction, body and conclusion. This was probably facilitated by the extra page provided in the candidate booklet. There was evidence of prewriting activity such as brainstorming, outlining and the use of cluster webs — approaches that facilitate essay writing.

Unfortunately, too many weak aspects of grammar and poor spelling were evident. Some weaknesses were subject and verb agreement, pronoun usage, past tenses and weak sentence structures. Strategies need to be developed to help students to value their dialects while appreciating the need to use the standard variety of English. The mean on this question was 16 out of 35.

Question 8

This question required candidates to give their views on the statement “No matter how old you are, as long as you live with your parents or guardians, you should obey the rules they set in the home”.

The question required three areas to be addressed, age, living at home and rules. Many candidates failed to address all aspects of the topic and repeated the same points throughout. In instances, their writing lacked clarity. Weak responses ignored punctuation, lacked logical sequence and used transitional words and phrases inappropriately. The mean on this question was 15 out of 35.

Recommendations for Teachers

- The quality of answers in Argument suggests that time management is an issue for many students. Students would benefit from some coaching in how to manage their time.
- Students need experience in (1) planning stories and (2) editing to get rid details which do not help the story. For example, students will give a long list of friends who attended a party when those friends have nothing to do with the outcome; or they will spend time describing a morning when they need to focus on the night the event took place.

The points following have been made before, but bear repeating in this report since they persist.

- It is clear that significant numbers of students have not mastered the use of Standard English. For students who almost abhor reading, some methods must be found to encourage correct use of the language. More frequent exercises in writing, including taking dictation (of short stories) will help provide greater comfort with standard English.
- Teachers need to continue to pay attention to having students use their own words when summarizing and to employ transitional words and phrases in order to develop their responses into a coherent whole. Oral and written exercises should be used to improve the active vocabulary of students. For the more competent students, practice in construction shifts and equivalent sentences would be useful.
- The teaching of comprehension can be combined with the teaching of summary as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.
- Students should be helped to focus on interpretation; much practice in listening, reading and reproducing meaning and in attention to accuracy is necessary. Sensitivity to how words and sentences work in the language is important.
- Students need to develop a firm grasp of language structure through exposure — if necessary, in class — to the reading of good literature. This includes focusing their attention to paragraphing, grammar, spelling, diction and other conventions of writing.
- Students should be given ample practice in recognizing and using the elements of story writing and descriptive writing. Television watching is still a favourite pastime and can be a teaching–learning tool.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2015

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The results of the May/June 2015 English A examination revealed fair overall performance. Approximately 59 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III as was also the case in 2014.

Performance on Paper 01 which assesses understanding declined over that in 2014, but this was compensated for by performance on Paper 02 where there was an increase in the percentage of candidates achieving acceptable grades. Paper 02 which assesses predominately expression showed some improvement with approximately 54 per cent of candidates achieving Grades I–III compared with 47 per cent in 2014. All questions in the four sections on this paper produced fair levels of performance. A general weakness was observed, however, in many candidates' inability to organize ideas and to use grammatical English in communicating these ideas.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was fair, with approximately 64 per cent of candidates achieving the three top grades. Good performance was noted on the literary comprehension passage and the graphic representation, but there was some weakness in responses to questions on the poem and the expository text. The questions on grammatical conventions were fairly well done.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Writing Reports and Summaries

Question 1 on Paper 02 was an extract from a magazine article on the Caribbean creative arts festival, CARIFESTA. It informed that the region has much pride in its rich cultural diversity and that the festival was an opportunity to showcase both artists and arts; that the festival is as effective, though it works differently, as cricket in uniting the peoples; that organizers had visions of various positive outcomes for the festival, some of which have been realized, despite difficult economic times and natural challenges; and that it had been hoped that the festival would be staged at regular intervals in different parts of the region.

It seems now to be the norm for candidates, in doing Question 1, to settle for copying long phrases and sentences from the text. It is also noted that they are unable/unwilling to study the given text and to separate the *main points* from the supporting or illustrative statements. This latter issue is closely connected with the erroneous perception that the first sentence in a paragraph is the topic sentence. Very few candidates demonstrate the skill of recognizing thought patterns and relationships, and being able therefore to start their summary from any point. Concerning this particular passage, it seems as if the candidates did not understand the passage and so simply lifted verbatim a line from each paragraph without even using any connectives. Following are some of the weaknesses noted in answers to Question 1.

- Many of the candidates wrote what seemed to be a summary of each paragraph and set them out as such. This resulted in repetition and, in some cases, a lack of connection of ideas.
- Some candidates got carried away with the idea of a ‘festival’ and did not focus on Carifesta specifically.
- Words/phrases such as *originally intended* seemed to have been ignored, misunderstood or overlooked.
- Link words/connectives were rarely used, and many of those were used inappropriately, leading to the opposite of what was stated in the passage.
- There was a high level of ‘tense-ignorance’, with candidates confusing the timeframe in terms of what was to happen and what did happen.
- Candidates simply copied the passage until the word limit was reached, or copied the whole passage leaving out a word/sentence.

Following are the main points from the passage, and one sample summary.

- Caribbean lifestyle is influenced by a variety of histories and cultures.
- Carifesta was visualized as an opportunity to focus on the artistic, creative and cultural diversity in a single place.
- Carifesta is just as effective as cricket in uniting the people but for different reasons.
- It was hoped that the region’s artists who migrated would be inspired by the cultural richness to return.
- Carifesta is mounted in different countries at intervals but the original plan was to hold it every two years.
- The intervals of Carifesta vary as the region has to cope with economic, physical and other challenges.

Sample Summary

Caribbean people share a common history and enjoy close proximity but they are culturally diverse. The cultural festival, Carifesta, unites them as much as cricket does but differently. The goal of the festival is to showcase Caribbean and South American culture and creativity. It was conceived of to highlight the multicultural heritage of the region, to create an environment for the development of the arts. It also hopes to encourage the return of migrant artists. While the intention was to make Carifesta a biennial event, this has not materialized because of economic, environmental and other problems. Nevertheless, the festival has been held several times and has become a major regional and international event. (114 words)

Responses assessed as suggesting or demonstrating **incompetence** included one or more of the following:

- The introduction of extraneous material based on prior knowledge
- Misinformation prompted by inadequate understanding of details
- Incomplete ideas
- A listing of ideas with no recognition of the relationship between them

Recommendations for Teaching

Teachers and students need to avail themselves of the help offered in the Study Guide (*English A for CXC: A Caribbean Examinations Council Study Guide*).

- Comprehension skills need to be reinforced and students should be exposed to a wide range of expository passages and should be guided in analysing text structures and modes of development.
- Students should have more practice in expressing what they read in their own words. Exercises in which summary comes from listening would be a tremendous help in (1) focusing and in trying to grasp the idea, and (2) forcing students to use their own words since the original is not available for copying.
- Students should be given more exercises using transitional words.
- Students should be given more exercises in using cause and effect reasoning, comparison and contrast, and all of the other strategies of developing exposition.

Practice in timed exercises would help students to finish and read over their work, and to respect the word limits set.

Section B: Understanding

These questions assessed candidates' preparedness to interact with various kinds of writing, their ability to recognize and differentiate between fact and opinion, and to appreciate the wealth of meaning conveyed by vocabulary, tone, juxtaposition and the other tools of good writing. Responses continue to suggest that the students are not challenged during their preparation for the examination, to recognize the different kinds of writing — their purposes, audiences and styles — and therefore they are not prepared for a difference in the kinds of questions attached to each type of writing. In short, while they manage the factual, they lack the skill and knowledge to allow them to handle literary passages.

Question 2

The passage for this question was a literary piece dealing with the struggle of a youth who seemed to be suffering from a variety of things: low self-esteem, intense shyness and nervousness to the point of nausea. Most candidates attempted to respond to the questions on this passage, and though scores ranged from 0 to 15, the majority did not earn 15 marks.

Question 3

The second passage was an expository piece considering what should be the roles of education in a changing age and society. It recognized the value of technology and academic success but demanded more of education in personal and social development, and in preparing students to find a place in the society while being able to improve that society, by their contributions. In general this comprehension exercise was better done than the first.

The following observations cover both comprehension exercises (Questions 2 and 3).

- Questions requiring literal interpretations were handled more effectively than those requiring higher order skills.
- Questions requiring the identification of specific words or phrases often elicited answers that showed candidates did not know how far to go, so many gave whole sentences.
- Candidates do not recognize the difference between *attitude to* and *feelings about*.
- Questions requiring inferencing were poorly answered

Recommendations for Teaching

- The responses to this section suggest the need for teachers to dwell more on questions that require students to identify an individual's feelings about **and** attitudes to situations, as being different things, each requiring a particular frame for the answer.
- Students need to be reminded that when a question requires that they provide a phrase or expression, they are not expected to simply reproduce an entire sentence or paragraph, even though the required phrase/expression is contained in the sentence/paragraph.

Section C: Writing Stories and Descriptive Essays

Overall, performance on these questions revealed that strong responses were those in which candidates interpreted and handled the topics well, and were fluent and creative in their expression. Many an interesting description or story was negatively affected by ongoing flaws in grammar, organization, vocabulary, and the mechanics of writing. More students need to develop not just knowledge of the language form but a *feel* for it, its power and nuances — which we continue to think come from teaching that promotes reading and writing as the focus and the very life of the language arts classroom at all levels.

Question 4

This question required candidates to write a story based on a photograph which showed one hand of a person on a steering wheel of a vehicle, the other holding a cellular phone. As some candidates recognized, stories do not need to be slavishly 'about' the picture (The question instructions stated *based on the picture*); they could be suggested by or derived from the picture; but there were not many highly creative, imaginative attempts — whether in interpretation or in storytelling.

This question attracted a fairly wide range of answers but most revolved around the dangers of texting while driving — demonstrated in narratives that ended with accidents, and most of which moralised at the end.

Interestingly, this is the only one of the three topics on which candidates (albeit not many) seemed to have felt that they could write an expository essay instead of a story. But there were also a few imaginative interpretations that took the reader away from the typical driving + texting = accidents. On the whole, stories on this topic were competent, embodying characteristics of story writing but tending to be linear, less engaged in character development and emotional experience, therefore showing competence but not superiority.

Question 5

The stimulus here was: *As I stepped through the front door, something felt different. The usual smell of dinner was absent and I knew something had changed.* This stimulus, produced more varied interpretations and responses than did Question 4. There were better efforts at characterization, atmosphere, suspense and the occasional use of reflection, as well as some strong endings.

Question 6

This question was based on the description stimulus: *The sounds, sights and smells of the festival filled the air. It was to be a new experience for me. Describe what you saw and your thoughts and feelings.* This year most of the answers were interesting, truly descriptive essays. Candidates clearly took advantage of the freedom allowed in the wording of the question to capture the spirit as well as the features of the festival environment, and did not limit themselves to describing aspects of staging and dreary stage performances typically associated with ‘festivals’. The question was a fairly popular choice and was not swamped in narrative.

Responses to this question interestingly, also remind us (classroom teachers and examiners) that interpretation is not universal and that assessment has to keep focus on its objectives — the purpose of the assessment. Responses to this question indicated that there are different kinds of festivals in the experiences of candidates — some simply saw festival as an event at school (like a fair) or a celebration of sorts, or (as in Jamaica) a kind of fried product eaten with ‘jerk chicken’ or ‘fry fish’ at Hellshire Bay and elsewhere. Fortunately, the question asked candidates to describe not the festival itself but the experience — what you saw and your thoughts and feelings. Teachers who have been guiding students in applying the approach *show not tell/show me; don’t tell me* would have felt satisfaction at some of the essays produced in answer to this question.

Recommendations for Teaching

Teachers must

- build more reading and writing into classroom activity
- expose students to good expression by having them listen to good pieces of writing
- help students to study and comment on what is appealing in written texts.

The above suggestions can be coalesced into one single piece of advice — In the classroom, ensure a sound relationship between literature and language as two parts of one subject.

Section D: Argumentative Writing

Question 7

This question, which dealt with the effect of peer pressure on the individual, was the more popular of the two questions in this section. Most candidates did not appear to have difficulty with understanding this question. There were various aspects to the question, not all of which were

always recognized or responded to. Responses could have dealt with, for instance, the issue of being tired of hearing about peer pressure, or the nature of peer pressure, or the concept of being one's own person. Candidates were probably able to identify with this question better since it was within their experience. Many selected influences such as drug use, violence and theft, and sexual involvement as their examples. Many candidates wrote of the role of parents in preparing youngsters to resist, or defending the youngsters from the effects of peer pressure. Some of the better answers acknowledged the unavoidability of peer pressure, and highlighted it as being present in many forms, and still others pointed out that peer pressure is not necessarily bad.

Question 8

This question presented a greater challenge for several candidates. It was apparent that many of those who chose to respond to this stimulus did not themselves have meaningful knowledge of the nature or role of business education. A great many answers dealt with school leavers' ability to open their own businesses on leaving school. While some were able to list the contents of the Business Education programme, these aspects were not developed in order to show the benefits. Answers reaching the 'competent' range were those showing an understanding of techniques in arguing, rather than being strong in the content of the argument.

Candidates had many ideas in instances, but the challenge lay in their ability or inability to

- recognize the aspects of the discussion
- organize their thoughts effectively to cover all aspects of the discussion
- organize their ideas for the best strategic impact (move from stronger to weaker or from weaker to stronger points)
- link their ideas and achieve cohesion
- master syntax and vocabulary well enough to express themselves clearly.

Recommendations for Teaching

- In responding to arguments, whether in real life or in examination essays, it is necessary to address all aspects of the argument that are put forward; not answering a specific aspect suggests that the student has a problem with that specific aspect. In any case, answers to arguments in examination essays have to be comprehensive since marks are assigned to the different parts of a question. In other words, if the student omits part of a question, he/she automatically loses the marks assigned to it.
- While this section of the paper often gives topics which are of immediate interest to teenagers, students also need to keep abreast of topics of regional and international significance.
- It was observed that some students seemed to have prepared to write their argumentative essay along specific lines with particular techniques. Experienced examiners advise that while some students do benefit from such a strategy, teachers should use it with caution, as there is the risk that competent and even superior candidates will be forced into a mould which affects their expression and development negatively. It is highly preferable to teach students how to reason, and to provide them with a variety of ways to open, develop, and close their arguments.
- Give repeated practice in logical development of argument, especially in the proper use of conjunctions and adverbs which express logical relationships, as in cause and effect, contrast

and comparison. Words and phrases such as *however*, *although*, *consequently*, *in contrast* and *accordingly* should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2016

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in English A was moderate in the January 2016 examination. Sixty-two per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I to III, an improvement in overall performance when compared with January 2015 when 55 per cent of the candidates achieved similar grades. Across the two years, there was similar performance on Profile 1 which assesses Understanding, but there was a small improvement on Profile 2 which assesses Expression. The overall mean on the examination was 48 per cent with a mean on Paper 01 of 53 per cent and on Paper 02 of 46 per cent.

Performance on Paper 01 was very fair while performance on Paper 02 continues to be moderate. Some improvement was however noted in the percentage of candidates who achieved Grades I to III on Paper 02, approximately 51 per cent, this year compared to 40 per cent in 2015. Although the questions in the three sections on this paper generally elicited moderate levels of performance, continuing weakness was observed in some candidates' ability to organize ideas and to use grammatical English in expressing these ideas.

The incidence of candidates being wholly unprepared for the examination was again relatively small, yet most responses tended to fall into the category of being 'adequate'. Teachers are urged to make use of the various guidelines and aids to learning being developed by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), to help students to become more comfortable with both language and literature, and to improve language through the skills acquired in studying literature. One resource is the syllabus document, in which there is a large section which helps with interpreting the syllabus objectives and requirements, and suggests a variety of activities which can help in developing the appropriate skills.

The following advice offered before remains very relevant:

Students should come to the examination with a well-rehearsed procedure for tackling each question they should have deeply ingrained in them the procedure for identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy and producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each student, based on the students' ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under examination conditions.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on Paper 01 was good. Approximately 70 per cent of candidates received Grades I–III. Exercises on word choice, sentence completion and equivalent sentences were well done. The area in which greatest weakness was evident was usage, where candidates experienced difficulty recognizing sentences which contained clichés, misused metaphors or redundancies, and sentences that were incorrect grammatically. The mean on this paper was 25 out of 46 or 53 per cent.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section A: Summary

The type of summary expected from candidates writing the CSEC English A examination is a general-purpose summary, demanding the skill used in everyday situations, where what is said or what is written may need to be put into a concise form. Candidates' work should reflect the general depth and intention of the original while giving all of the necessary information in the producer's own words. Among the skills and knowledge candidates are expected to bring to the exercise are

- a good vocabulary
- the ability to use syntax and grammar effectively to communicate meaning
- the ability to recognize and separate the main point and necessary reasoning from examples, embellishments and repetition.

There are various approaches to writing summary, and teachers need to expose students to these. One approach is simply to follow the organization of the original, using the same chronology. Another is to begin with the conclusion and then show the line of reasoning and facts. The important thing is that the correct relationships between the points must be maintained so that the meaning is unchanged and clear. While it is not always necessary to capture each and every detail, nothing vital should be ignored. A reasonably good vocabulary is an asset that should be cultivated, since a summary must be put into one's own words.

Summary answers continue to indicate that most candidates are not paying attention to the skills. There is persistent lifting of the language, wholesale or partial. There is a major tendency to selectively remove various words and substitute supposedly suitable synonyms. Very often the substitute is incorrect. There is slavish following of the paragraph sequence, even writing the summary in that paragraph form. Other problems include less than careful reading, the use of extraneous information, and overall weakness in the use of language. Most candidates simply list points, or use the 'joining terms' (for example, 'however', 'on the other hand') in the wrong way or create previously non-existent relationships between points. Large numbers of candidates continue to show poor comprehension skills: poor vocabulary, poor understanding of grammar and punctuation, weak grasp of connotative language, and weak reasoning are among the contributing elements. This results in misinterpretation. Section A tests two elements: understanding, and expression, hence the importance of comprehension skills. Students need encouragement to see 'Comprehension' not as a textbook activity, but as an essential part of daily life.

The weaknesses continued, however, with responses reflecting the same problems that have been identified in the past. However, significantly fewer candidates either simply copied, or wrote their own parallel discussion. Following are the points expected and a sample summary.

- *Consumerism refers to the activity of buying and selling in which we all participate.*
- *Responsible consumerism requires the application of information to decision-making.*
- *Choices have consequences and if we make the choices we must live with the consequences.*
- *Choices are sometimes made using information or conditions set down by others. These early decisions affect what we can now know, and condition how we choose. Choices that may have once been wise may no longer be.*

- *The choice we make becomes part of a network, in which our choices affect others.*
- *Modern technology, with its insistence on immediate response, can negatively affect our ability to make wise choices, so we need to resist, while we explore all the information.*

Sample Summary

Since we buy, sell and use goods and services, we are consumers. In choosing or buying we are expected to use the ability to make responsible decisions. This ability and responsibility allows us to analyse our behavior as consumers. Recognizing that each choice has consequences with which we will need to live, we apply knowledge to help us choose. Sometimes, we are hampered by decisions made by others, which affect what we can know or do. Our ability to choose and to act responsibly is affected by a network of choices. In addition, modern technology which insists on immediate response, can negatively affect our ability to make wise choices, unless we resist, while we explore all the information.

The passage again proved to have been generally manageable with the majority of answers falling into the competence area—either suggesting or demonstrating competence. It is hoped that more candidates would demonstrate competence. There was, overall, a better kind of writing, demonstrating the acquisition of those skills needed to show competence. The mean on this paper was 12 out of 30 or 40 per cent.

Section B: Comprehension

This section maintained two kinds of texts: literary and expository. Candidates were required to

- give specific rather than the general answers.
- pay close attention to every word that is used in the textual piece (prose, poetry, drama)
- recognize levels of meaning.

Responding to questions which require a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract or quoting lines other than those required is a bad strategy which usually results in zero being awarded. The candidate's responsibility is to indicate clearly what the answer is—it is not the examiner's responsibility to select it out of a number of possibilities given by the candidate. It is a matter of concern that candidates do not know how to structure answers that ask for mood, tone and drawing inferences. Generally, performance on Section B was competent. The mean on Question 2 was 5 out of 15 or 33 per cent while for Question 3 it was 8 out of 15 or 53 per cent. Sample correct responses are reproduced below.

Question 2

- (a) *Two examples of sensory appeal made in stanza one: hearing, sight, feeling, touch, movement.*
- (b) *Hearing: unceasing beat/ running children's feet/ silently*
Sight: dark cloud/ filmy veiling/ wraith-like mist
Feeling/Touch: nestled softly/wet breast
Movement: running, skid, nestled
- (c) *Simile:*
Any one of the following: 'like a weird song' / 'like running children's feet' / 'like a strange...'

- (d) *Stanza 1 conveys a mood of gloominess, mystery and coldness, while Stanza 2 suggests warmth, brightness and excitement.*
- (e) *'But, lo'*
- (f) *The device used is a metaphor.*

Question 3

- (a) *Save human lives and protect wildlife*
- (b) *With special attendance only/invited guests only/restricted attendance.*
- (c) *Motive/reason/motivation for the project/the real purpose is hidden /there was another purpose/the real reason was to save lives of people and animals there were other important issues / there is more to it than people are aware of/there is a truth that people are unaware of.*
- (d) *People are sometimes forced to move into unsafe areas/live in the migration path of wildlife/many people were killed by animals*
- (e) *To draw attention to the fact that people more willingly agreed to relocation away from animal migration paths*
- (f) *To show satisfaction that government departments agreed to creating protected wildlife corridors to draw attention to the fact that when something bad happens because of a situation, people are more willing to change.*
- (g) *To show how unlikely it is for the people to survive a conflict with the animals to show partiality to the animals to suggest that the animals have a right to the space hopes that statistics will show the importance of the work of the Wildlife Trust to create the picture that people's lives are in danger and that the animals need their space to make people realize how dangerous or how serious the situation really is to inform of the urgent need for the projects*
- (h) *To shock the audience through scientific argument*

Section C: Story Writing

Questions 4, 5 and 6

A comment on this section coming from several teachers involved in marking is that the stories lent themselves to mature interpretation and less to fantasy. It was also noted that students tended to gravitate towards the morbid, and the approach of moralizing. Both the picture and the word stimuli fit this approach. The picture was often interpreted as fighting against the odds. Generally the responses in this section were competent and interesting. The mean for Question 4 was 16 out of 35 or 45 per cent, for Question 5, 17 out of 35 or 46 per cent; and for Question 6, 51 per cent.

There is still a body of students who need encouragement to write out of their own environment; who still set their stories in lands never visited except in dreams. As a result, stories are weak, with a scarcity of atmosphere, interaction, appropriate characterization, and even conflicts are missing and difficult to achieve. The complaint is that our students do not read, but perhaps instructors can select and read to them from regional writers who achieved the sensible blend of standard English and dialects.

For Question 6 (Description) specifically, the following points remain pertinent:

- Description must be clearly constructed and developed, having the different components linked appropriately.
- Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different areas of focus must be linked appropriately (for example background vs. foreground; main focus vs peripheral detail).
- The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements.
- The choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture.
- Sometimes students need to rely on the narrative framework to be able to describe. In such cases it is necessary for teacher and student to remember that a piece of writing is defined by what is dominant. Students need to recognize this discrimination, which offers scaffolding in their efforts to make description dominant.
- Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself: any change in perspective (time, perspective, mood, tone) must be clearly established. There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words (nouns, verbs, concrete adjectives, adverbs) to create setting and atmosphere. In short, the object should be to enable the audience to see; to vicariously experience what is being described.

Section D: Argument

This section tests the candidates' expression skills: how they organize thoughts for maximum effect, how clearly and succinctly views are expressed, the ability to reason and support their views, the facility in refuting opposing stances and arguments. Better candidates will also have the ability to appeal to the audience, and the ability to recognize and separate opinion from fact. The use of words and phrases such as 'however', 'although', 'consequently', 'by contrast', 'accordingly' should be mastered and used in full sentences rather than meaninglessly or in fragments, as they often are.

Questions 7 and 8

The stimulus for Question 7 read “All parents should be taught how to be good parents; send them back to school to learn parenting skills.” This question stirred no controversial interpretation. Question 8 challenged that “Young people spend too much time indoors surfing the Internet. Let them spend more time in outdoor activities. Ban the Internet.”

Both stimuli produced good responses, with the most thoughtful responses coming in Question 8. Here candidates broke the statement into 3 or 4 aspects and explored these: the health benefits of outdoor activity, the benefits and uses of the Internet, the hazards of being out of doors in today’s violence-prone society; the recognition of the advantages brought by the Internet, and the need to use reason in the context. Question 7 produced less rational answers; in fact, responses here tended towards using the emotional, taking an opportunity to express criticisms, and to enjoy the chance to chastise the adult. Generally, these stimuli evoked good answers. The mean on Question 7 was 14.82 out of 35 or 43 per cent, and on Question 8, 17.56 out of 35 or 51 per cent.

Recommendations

- Much work needs to be done on summary. It is a skill relevant in all assignments; it is essential in research and essay writing; its value can also be recognized in regular human interaction. Recognizing its value should spur teachers on to revisit teaching strategies so that the opportunity for practice is created.
- There is a pressing need to help our students to develop a wide vocabulary.
- More of the teaching of comprehension skills should focus on higher order skills.
- The teaching of comprehension can be usefully combined with the teaching of summary as both require thoughtful reading and understanding of meaning.
- Much practice is advised in reading, listening and reproducing meaning, in interpreting material at different levels and in paying attention to accuracy in expression.
- Strategies such as listening to and presenting arguments followed by peer critiques of arguments are useful.
- Writing and presentation of speeches, debates, advice corners, improvised situations such as talk shows and other means of promoting thoughtful speech are highly recommended.
- Use of the CXC syllabus document is highly encouraged as it contains many ideas for teaching English effectively.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2018

**ENGLISH B
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The English B examination consists of two components — Paper 01 and Paper 02. Paper 01 consists of three compulsory questions, one on each mode of writing — Drama, Poetry and Prose Fiction. These modes of writing are the content profiles that form the basis for candidates' assessment. Each question consists of a number of subparts that require candidates to give approximately five to seven short answers. Twenty marks are allocated for each question, for a total of 60 marks. Paper 01 contributes 36 per cent to the total score for the examination.

Paper 02 consists of 12 optional extended essay questions, arranged in three sections, which correspond to the modes of writing and profiles assessed. Candidates are required to answer one question from each section.

Drama consists of four Type A questions. These are questions that are set on specific texts. Two questions are set on each drama text. Candidates are required to answer one question from this section.

Poetry consists of two Type B questions. These are questions that require candidates to engage in comparisons. Candidates are required to study 20 poems that are specified in the syllabus. For one of the questions, Question 5, the poems to be used are specified by the examiner. However, for the second question, Question 6, candidates choose two appropriate poems from those that they have studied from the prescribed list to answer the question. Candidates are required to answer one question from this section.

Prose Fiction consists of six questions. The four questions set on the novels are Type A questions and the two questions set on the short stories are Type B questions. The short story section is similar to the poetry section, in that one question specifies the short stories to be used and the other requires candidates to choose the appropriate short stories from the prescribed list to answer the question. Candidates are required to answer one question from this section.

Each question in Paper 02 is worth 35 marks, for a total of 105. Paper 02 contributes 64 per cent to the total score for the examination.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Short Answer

Paper 01 assesses the following skills:

- Comprehension
- Awareness of the writer's craft (that is, the ability to say how a writer/poet achieves a given effect)

Candidates are required to demonstrate the following

- Analysis, which here takes the form of reducing a passage to its verbal constituents (for example, imagery, rhythm, tone or mood, sound of words) and the ability to explain how effectively these elements function in the passage.
- Knowledge of dramatic devices such as stage directions and props
- Awareness of the relationship between action and motive
- Awareness of the interaction among characters

The table below shows mean scores for Paper 01 for 2018:

Mean Scores for 2018

Paper 01	2018 Mean (20)
Drama	11.74
Poetry	8.67
Prose Fiction	11.23

Candidates' performance on Drama and Prose Fiction was similar. Performance in Poetry was the lowest.

Question 1: Drama

Part (a) asked candidates to outline the main issue in lines 1–14 of an extract from the play *Square Peg* by Errol Hill. Most candidates were able to identify easily the aspects of the plot in the given line. Acceptable responses needed to include reference to the major characters, Merle, Phyllis, Jim and Henry. Candidates did fairly well on this question.

For Part (b), candidates had to suggest two things the audience learns about Jim and use supporting evidence from the extract. Candidates responded well to this question. Acceptable responses included: *Jim is selfish/inconsiderate*. Evidence: *In the eyes of Merle, in his bid to pursue his artistic aspirations, he squanders job opportunities and appears to have no problem living off his family*.

Part (c) asked candidates to explain the role of Phyllis and use supporting evidence from the extract. Acceptable responses included her role as mediator or peacemaker because she tries to diffuse the tension between Merle and Jim. Candidates responded fairly well to this question.

For Part (d), candidates were to comment on the dramatic significance of the mother. Acceptable responses included: *her offstage presence has dramatic significance as she represents 'the heart' of the family so Merle and Phyllis are concerned about her welfare*. Candidates did not respond well to this part of the question.

Part (e) asked candidates to explain one way the playwright uses stage directions to create tension in the extract. To score full marks candidates needed to identify one stage direction

and explain how it creates tension. Responses were fair. Some candidates explained the function of stage directions in general but failed to zero in on how the stage direction they selected created tension. Acceptable responses included *Jim (dangerously) – His emotional state is at a breaking point and the audience expects an explosion at any minute.*

For Part (f) candidates were asked to comment on Merle's use of sarcasm in lines 26–27. Candidates did not perform well on this question. Acceptable responses included *Merle's education is not at Jim's level so she doesn't understand his poetry so she ridicules him by calling him the 'Poet Laureate of Trinidad.'*

Part (g) asked candidates to suggest a title for the extract. Candidates did not perform well on this part of the question as they tended to either choose a title that did not relate to the extract or when they gave an appropriate title they failed to use supporting evidence from the extract to justify their response.

Question 2: Poetry

For Part (a), most candidates provided a satisfactory description of what is happening in the poem, *There and Now* by Winston Franco.

Part (b) required candidates to identify the speaker's attitude to the man and use evidence from the poem to support their response. Acceptable responses included: *Admiration/respect – The speaker admires the man who is so eager in his youthful days to help that he is willing to donate blood and give up his seat.* Some candidates struggled to correctly identify the speaker's attitude.

Part (c) required candidates to identify what impression of the 'feathery old lady' is created in lines 18–23 and use supporting evidence from the poem. Acceptable responses for the former included: *She is presented as someone who is unable to suppress her racism despite trying to keep a blank look on her face. The speaker notes that her raging hatred is obvious (lines 22–23).* Candidates responded quite well to this question.

For Part (d), candidates had to identify the figurative device used in either lines 22–23 or line 31 and comment on its effectiveness. Candidates satisfactorily identified the simile as the figurative device in line 31 but few attempted to identify the device (oxymoron) in lines 22–23. Acceptable responses included: *(lines 22–23): Simile – the lady's raging hatred and curses are compared with a raised tattoo to emphasize her obvious hatred seen in her attitude to the man; (line 31): Oxymoron – the juxtaposition of 'cool' and 'fire' indicates a coolness and confidence in the man's decision to stand his ground.*

Part (e) required candidates to identify one example of contrast and show how it highlights the major theme in the poem. Candidates experienced difficulty in responding to this part of the question. While many were able to identify the contrast, they struggled to identify an appropriate theme and show how the contrast highlighted it. Acceptable responses included: *The willing/helpful man versus the indifferent one. The contrast reveals the effect the racism has on the psyche and personality of the man.*

Part (f) (i) presented some difficulty to candidates. They were asked to comment on the effectiveness of lines 33–34. Many made little or no connection to lines 33–34 and the image of a confident man. A few were able to state or infer a change in the man’s attitude; however, they were unable to indicate what the change was or how the man changed. Many candidates interpreted the man’s confidence/willingness to challenge those who questioned his conduct as him simply being angry. Acceptable responses included: *‘life’ is repeated in stanza 1 to emphasize the vitality of the man’s youthful enthusiasm to help as well as acknowledging that blood is a vital life source.*

Part (f) (ii) required candidates to comment on the poet’s use of repetition. They experienced great difficulty in attempting to identify correctly examples of repetition in the poem, and those who were able to identify examples of repetition within the poem merely stated that the poet used it to create understanding rather than explaining how it is used. Acceptable responses included: *The image paints a picture of a strong, confident man who knows his worth and will challenge others who disagree with his behaviour.*

Part (g) asked candidates to suggest another title for the poem and justify their responses with textual evidence. Candidates responded well to this part of the question.

Question 3: Prose

For Part (a) (i) and (ii) most candidates were correct in identifying the setting, and examples of repetition in the extract which was taken from *Sula* written by Toni Morrison. Acceptable responses included: *summer – to remind readers of the setting, that is, the time when the story unfolds.* Candidates performed well on this question.

Part (b) required candidates to identify the figurative device in lines 3–4 and comment on its effectiveness. Most candidates could identify and explain the device but experienced difficulty in commenting on its effectiveness. Acceptable responses included: *simile – it emphasizes not only the strong muscular beauty of the boys but it also emphasizes the beauty of the surrounding landscape and reinforces the rare beauty each boy possesses.*

For Part (c), candidates were asked to identify two of Sula’s characteristics and use textual support for their choice. Acceptable responses included: *sensitive and hasty – When Sula heard her mother say that she didn’t like her, she flew up the stairs and didn’t wait for an explanation of what she meant.* Candidates responded well to this part of the question.

Part (d) (i) required candidates to suggest the effect of Hannah’s words. Some candidates could identify the effect and give the appropriate evidence to match, but others had difficulty in identifying the appropriate effect based on information suggested in the passage. Acceptable responses included: *Hannah’s words hurt her daughter – Sula was aware of ‘a sting in her eye.’*

There was evidence that candidates struggled to respond to Part (d) (ii) of the question. They were required to suggest an inference about the mother-daughter relationship and use textual support for it. Acceptable responses included: *The mother-daughter relationship*

is not particularly close since Hannah and Sula don't seem to understand each other very well.

For Part (e), candidates had to explain one function of the use of dialogue in the extract. Not many candidates earned full marks as they could not explain the function of the dialogue. Some of the candidates managed to identify the function of the dialogue; however, they could not explain it and their answers were very vague. Acceptable responses included: *The dialogue between Hannah and her friends as they discuss the problem of child rearing is used to reveal their character traits.*

Part (f) required candidates to suggest what happens next in the story and use textual support to justify their responses. This question called for a personal informed response and candidates responded fairly well.

Recommendations

Candidates performed satisfactorily in literal level questions but, as in previous years, underperformed in parts of the questions which required interpretive, analytical and non-literal responses. While this is the last session for the Paper 01 as a constructed response paper, teachers are still encouraged to continue working with candidates to hone their skills in appreciating and responding to literature, with particular attention to the writer's craft – dramatic, poetic or narrative techniques and their effectiveness – as such skills will only benefit the candidates in responding to the multiple choice questions as well as the essay questions from June 2018. Candidates are required to base their inferences on a careful reading of the evidence in the stimulus material as a whole. Candidates need to be taught the strategies that will assist them in arriving at meaning based on a thoughtful processing of the events described.

Candidates need to become accustomed to the appropriate literary language and use it in their writing and are also expected to understand genre-specific words, terms and concepts such as *mood, effect, suspense* and *attitude*.

While in this paper no marks are specifically awarded for the use of language, teachers are encouraged to offer candidates parallel Standard English constructions to the dialect that some candidates use in their responses to the questions.

More importantly, however, is the need for teachers to confidently build on their obviously successful attempts to have the candidates offer and defend, with evidence from the text, their varied interpretations and emotional responses to the texts they read. This prioritizing of candidates' autonomous thought, bolstered by their obligation to produce the textual evidence for their conclusions is at the heart of the critical and creative thinking that the study of literature is meant to engender.

Paper 02 – Essay Questions

The following are the skills and aptitudes tested in Paper 02 (as outlined on page 22 of the syllabus).

- The ability to respond to West Indian and other literatures in English: novels, short stories, poems and plays; to make rational and sensitive appraisal of value judgments, states of consciousness and other concepts explained in literature, and to relate these to everyday living
- Description, analysis (the ability to break down and select relevant details) and synthesis (the ability to bring together and condense in a new form information drawn from various sections of a text for the purpose of answering a particular question)
- The ability to communicate informed opinions and judgments in well-structured, analytical responses in written form using the vocabulary of literary criticism
- The ability to produce balanced, critical analyses
- The awareness of the writer's craft (the writer as a person who employs various techniques in the shaping of language and the presentation of character and behaviour). This skill is tested throughout the examination and most particularly in Paper 02.
- The ability to recognize and distinguish between moral assumptions contained in a particular text
- A grasp of concepts and values and an understanding of how these are manifested in literature.

The table below shows mean scores for Paper 02 for 2018.

Mean Scores for 2018

Paper 2	2018 Mean (35)
Drama	<i>Julius Caesar</i> Question 1 – 3.45 Question 2 – 12.10
	<i>The Lion and the Jewel</i> Question 3 – 12.23 Question 4 – 12.92
Poetry	Question 5 – 8.48 Question 6 – 12.06
Prose Fiction	<i>Frangipani House</i> Question 7 – 2.27 Question 8 – 12.14
	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> Question 9 – 11.35 Question 10 – 13.00
	<i>A World of Prose for CXC</i> Question 11 – 11.51 Question 12 – 9.88

Drama – *Julius Caesar*

Question 1

This question was attempted by a small number of candidates. It focused on the theme of ambition. Part (a) asked for a description of two instances when either Cassius or Anthony is seen as ambitious. Part (b) required a discussion of the reaction either Cassius or Anthony receives in one of the instances described in Part (a), and Part (c), an examination of one dramatic technique Shakespeare uses to explore the theme of ambition.

Candidates handled Part (a) fairly well but some retold the plot instead of directly answering the question. Part (b) asked for the reaction to the ambition of each character but candidates' responses did not meet the expectations in the mark scheme. Many candidates retold the plot instead of discussing the reaction to their ambition.

While overall candidates' responses were very weak, responses in Part (c) showed evidence of weakness in candidates' knowledge and application of dramatic techniques. This section proved very challenging and candidates provided very limited or no responses. Acceptable responses for a discussion of the dramatic technique should have included some of the following ideas: *Dramatic irony: used to heighten/explore the theme of ambition, showing that even the seemingly 'innocent' have ambitions, either personally or politically.*

Question 2

Of the two Shakespeare questions, Question 2 was more popular, and it was overall the most popular drama question. This question focused on the exploration of the theme of loyalty in the play. Part (a) asked candidates to describe two incidents when either Brutus or Anthony demonstrates loyalty; Part (b) asked for a discussion of why one character is seen as loyal, and Part (c), an examination of one dramatic technique to explore loyalty to portray the theme of love.

Candidates were able to respond to Part (a), but Parts (b) and (c) were not done well. Candidates primarily repeated what was described in Part (a), outlining the action that exemplified loyalty without discussing what makes the character seem loyal. Based on the responses for Part (c), it appeared that candidates were unable to effectively discuss dramatic techniques. Acceptable responses for this part should have included any one of the following: *Contrast is used in the play to highlight the inner and outward expressions of loyalty as seen in the fickle crowd and the betrayal of friends.*

The Lion and the Jewel

Question 3

Question 3 focused on resistance to change. In Part (a), candidates were required to describe two instances in which either the Bale or Lakunle resists change. Part (b) asked candidates to discuss one character's attitude to the change described in (a) while Part (c) asked candidates to examine one dramatic technique used to present conflict in the play.

Responses to Parts (a) and (b) were generally fairly good, but the majority of the candidates had difficulty in answering Part (c). Many candidates were unable to select an appropriate dramatic technique and discuss how it is used in the presentation of conflict.

Acceptable responses to this section should have included: *Mime is used to introduce the important theme of traditional versus modern ways and the conflicts therein. It highlights intrigue, as in the incursion of western civilization and its impact (the incident with Sidi being photographed while she bathed).*

Question 4

This question was the more popular for the text. The portrayal of Sidi as the real jewel of the village was the focus of Question 4. For Part (a) candidates were required to describe two incidents in which Sidi is featured. Part (b) asked candidates to discuss the attitude of either the Bale or Lakunle to Sidi. Part (c) required candidates to examine one dramatic technique to reinforce the idea that Sidi is the jewel.

Parts (a) and (b) were done well but Part (c) appeared to challenge candidates. Part (c) was poorly done by most of the candidates who attempted this question. Many candidates could not select an appropriate dramatic technique used to reinforce Sidi as the jewel. Responses

tended to focus on the characterization of Sidi without a link to the dramatic techniques used. Acceptable responses included: *The title is used dramatically to symbolize Sidi (the jewel) as something sought after, precious and beautiful. The title further enacts/portrays gender relationships in that even though the woman is objectified, she has a certain 'status' since she is fought over, sought after and has value (even if in rather monetary terms as the bride price). Even though the title does reinforce masculine strength (as in the lion who is the Bale), it also reinforces the idea that the woman is priceless.*

Poetry

Question 5

This was the more popular of the two poetry questions. The named poems, 'Le Loupgarou' and 'Ol' Higue' focused on the supernatural. Part (a) required candidates to describe the supernatural experience; Part (b) asked for a discussion of the community's reaction to the supernatural experience, and for Part (c), the task was to discuss one device the poet uses to heighten the impact of supernatural experiences.

Parts (a) and (b) were done fairly well as candidates were familiar with both poems. Part (c) posed a challenge for many candidates, as they were unable to effectively discuss the writer's craft. In many instances, devices were mentioned and examples were provided, but the discussion was vague and lacked textual support, either in the form of examples or a close understanding of the poems.

Acceptable responses to this section could have included: *Irony - Le Loupgarou: It is ironic that Le Brun can transform himself into a werewolf but is not powerful enough to prevent himself from receiving the fatal blow from his watchman. This heightens the sense that he is conquered by his greed instead of becoming more powerful and that he deserved his demise because he sold his soul to the devil. Ol' Higue suggests that while the community appears to be disgusted by her need to hunt for fresh blood, ironically the women need to believe in the ancient superstition of the soucouyant so she is actually serving a purpose. It is also ironic that as long as there are women giving birth, the soucouyant suggests that she has a function in the community.*

Question 6

This was the general question and candidates were required to choose from the prescribed list, two poems that focused on the difference between how things appear and how they really are. Part (a) required candidates to describe the situation in which appearance contrasts with the reality the speaker experiences. Part (b) asked candidates to discuss how the speaker resolves the difference between appearance and reality and, Part (c) asked candidates to discuss one device used to portray the conflict between appearance and reality.

Generally, candidates selected appropriate poems and responded fairly well to Parts (a) and (b). A few candidates chose poems that did not adequately treat with appearance versus

reality and offered weak responses. Part (c), as was the case in previous years, posed a challenge to candidates. Some candidates mentioned but did not discuss the use of the devices.

Acceptable responses to this section could have included: *Dulce et Decorum est - Simile/Imagery – Throughout the poem the poet uses similes to paint a vivid picture of the adverse effects of war (“coughing like hags,” flound’ring like a man in fire or lime” “obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud”). These images are in stark contrast to the image of recruiters encouraging children who are seeking “desperate glory” that dying for one’s country is great.*

Personification – Death is personified as an attractive gentleman (“a beautiful black saga boy” ... “in hot-pink pants with matching waistcoat too”) and at first the speaker falls for the seduction. However, the speaker is able to look past the appearance and understand that in reality, the gentleman caller will be leading her to death.

Prose Fiction

Frangipani House

Question 7

Question 7 was the more popular of the questions set on the text but was not handled as well as Question 8. For Part (a), candidates had to describe two strategies Mama King uses to make her stay at Frangipani House more tolerable. Part (b) asked candidates to discuss the extent of the success of one of the strategies described in (a), and Part (c) required a discussion of one narrative technique the writer uses to influence the reader’s opinion of Mama King.

Part (a) was fairly well handled as most candidates were able to mention Mama King’s reflections or recollections of her past as a strategy for coping with Frangipani House. Part (b) was not done as well for candidates were unable to discuss the extent to which the chosen strategy was successful. Part (c) proved a challenge to most candidates as they struggled to draw adequately from the text to synthesize a response that demonstrated a capacity to draw evidence from the text to examine the techniques the writer uses to make the novel interesting.

Acceptable responses included: *Symbolism / Imagery - The writer uses a variety of symbols in the novel to influence the reader. The physical setting – the house, the ring of frangipani trees, the fence – of the novel symbolizes and emphasizes the confinement Mama King feels. While the setting is attractive to outsiders, only the caregivers and elderly who are there are privy to the restrictions and lack of meaningful activities for the women. They seem to be treated more like inmates than women who deserved to be well treated after their years of contribution to their families and the society in general. These encourage readers to pity Mama King and the other elderly women at the hospice.*

Question 8

Question 8 directed candidates' attention to the theme of escape. Part (a) asked candidates to describe how a resident and a caregiver attempt to escape from their situation, Part (b) required candidates to discuss the consequences of a character's attempt to escape the situation, and Part (c) asked candidates to examine how the writer uses contrast or flashback to explore the theme of escape.

Most candidates handled Part (a) fairly well, many being able to clearly identify how a resident attempted to escape her situation but few were able to identify clearly how a caregiver attempted to escape the situation. Part (b) was somewhat problematic for candidates. It seemed that many felt consequences were only physical and could not speak to the turmoil or trauma faced by the character identified as a result of the attempt to escape. Part (c) was handled poorly by most candidates. A few candidates were able to explain how the contrast or flashback highlighted the contrasting circumstances and made the reader understand more clearly the need to escape. Many merely mentioned that the technique was used, without exploring how it was used to help us understand the characters or the suspense in the novel was established through the use of either technique chosen.

Acceptable responses for this section included: *Contrast - Throughout the novel the writer uses several examples of contrast to explore themes, characters, setting and other aspects of the novel. Frangipani House contrasts with Mama King's House and the wider community. Although people admire the physical beauty of the surroundings with its well-kept lawns and ring of frangipani trees, they are quick to admit that it's a place where people go to die. The well-kept environment also contrasts with the inner sanctum that is stark and fragile. Inside life is regimented, unvarying and unfulfilling. The elderly women, who are treated more like inmates, can only look through the window at the beauty of the yard but in their rooms, there is no beauty, just bars preventing them from escaping.*

Things Fall Apart

Question 9

This question on friendship was the more popular of the two questions on the text. For Part (a), candidates had to describe two male friendships portrayed in the novel. Part (b) asked the candidates to discuss the impact of one of those friendships on a male character. Part (c) required an examination of the writer's use of one technique to present friendship in the novel.

Parts (a) and (b) were fairly well answered. The friendship was discussed well but needed to be more developed. The candidates were able to show what the effect was but many answers lacked quotes, the link between emotions and the analysis of it, for example, where his father was the cause of his failure. However, for Part (c), the need for a well-defined literary device or technique was needed to make the link between it and the theme/friendship. This link was made for the most part but candidates failed to explore this

connection in depth. Discussions were either repeated events of narration or generalized comments with no justification of evidence from the text.

Acceptable responses for this part could have included the following: *Contrasting characters – Oberika and Okonkwo are best friends but they exhibit contrasting character traits. Okonkwo is a man of action but Oberika is a thinker, a philosopher. These contrasting character traits highlight a friendship of persons who are different but equal. Foil – Achebe presents Oberika as a ‘foil’ using him as the figure whose character contrasts so completely with Okonkwo’s, that it highlights Okonkwo’s qualities.*

Question 10

Question 10 was based on the conflict between inflexible will and fate. Part (a) asked candidates to describe one incident which portrays Okonkwo’s “inflexible will” and the other which portrays Okonkwo at the mercy of fate. Part (b) asked candidates to discuss how one of the incidents described in (a) affects Okonkwo. For Part (c), candidates had to examine how the writer uses either irony or symbolism to present the theme of fate.

Candidates who attempted this question did not do as well as those who answered Question 9. For Part (a), the candidates also did not adequately direct their definition of inflexible will or fate properly and so tended to narrate too much about situational occurrences rather than the actual definitions. Many candidates were able to identify the effect on the main character but did not support it well. The discussion repeated points in Part (a) and a few candidates implied the effect through their discussion as part of the overall essay. The majority of the candidates had problems in answering Part (c), as they could not adequately explore how irony or symbolism are linked to the theme of fate.

Acceptable responses for this section could have included: *Irony – Fate is linked to one’s destiny and Okonkwo’s fate is demonstrated through the tragic irony that underscores how a proud, successful, and important man as Okonkwo ends up hanging himself because he does not deal well with change. Another example of Okonkwo’s fate and the irony through which Achebe presents it is that Okonkwo spent his whole life hating anything his father Unoka loved and he tried not to be like him and completely disassociated himself from him in every way, especially when Unoka dies an abominable death and is not even given a grave but is left to die in the Evil Forest. The irony is that Okonkwo, who made himself strong and successful and won many titles (his father had none) is that Okonkwo also ended up suffering an abominable death by suicide and he too ends up despised and without a grave in the Evil Forest.*

Short Story

Question 11

The short story section patterns the poetry section in that Type B questions are asked. Additionally, the short stories to be used are specified in one question, while for the other

question; candidates choose two appropriate short stories from the prescribed list to answer the question posed.

The two short stories specified in Question 11 were 'The Two Grandmothers' and 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam.' This question was more popular for the text and overall the most popular prose question. It focused on the change in the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter. Part (a) required candidates to describe what happens, and Part (b) asked for a discussion of one reason for the change in the relationship between grandmother and daughter. Part (c) asked candidates to examine narrative technique used to present changes in the relationship.

A few candidates successfully handled Part (a) of this question, scoring full marks. However, some candidates ignored the characters' relationship and just described the characters' experiences in the stories. Candidates' choice of characters in answering the questions also affected the mark they scored. Also, candidates lost marks because incident(s) chosen were not fully explored. For Part (b), some candidates attempted to describe what caused the change, even though they were asked to **discuss**. Part (c) was not handled well as the narrative techniques chosen were not substantiated from the story. In addition, too many candidates failed to link and discuss the importance of the technique selected to the change in relationship. Acceptable responses included: *Symbolism – Each grandmother and granddaughter is represented by a symbol so in To Da-duh, the grandmother is represented by the natural world and the granddaughter by the man-made world and as the relationship changes, the meaning of each of these symbols also changes for the characters.*

Dialogue – The granddaughter in The Two Grandmothers pays attention to the speech patterns of each grandmother and grows critical of the language each used but as her relationship with each changes, so too does her diction.

Question 12

In this question, candidates were asked to select any two stories from the prescribed list, which focus on the theme of courage. In Part (a), candidates were asked to describe an incident where courage is demonstrated. Part (b) asked for a discussion of the impact of courage on an individual or community and Part (c) asked candidates to examine the writer's use of one narrative technique used to portray courage.

The candidates who selected this question did not do a good job of answering the question. For Part (a) the instance(s) that many of them described in the stories selected did not show courage. The candidates merely stated what happened in the stories. Some who were able to select the instance where courage was evident did not fully explore the demonstration of courage to be awarded full marks. For Part (b), candidates did not discuss, but merely stated the character or another character's reaction to the courage identified. Part (c) of this question was not successfully handled by candidates. As with Question 11, they did not use textual reference to support their choice of technique.

Acceptable responses included the following: *Symbolism – Symbols remain the most common technique used to portray the conflict and struggle courageous individuals may face. Thus, the ‘ice cream’ is a symbol of the young boy’s struggle to acquire something that he yearns for but the yearning is more than for an ice-cream but for his father’s approval as well. As such, the struggle to attain the ice-cream is also a struggle to attain his father’s love and attention and he has to show courage in the face of this struggle, vulnerable as he is in a world over which he has no control.*

Observations and Recommendations

Many candidates seemed to have been affected by the syllabus change, believing the new syllabus was in effect from January rather than from June. This was evidenced in at least three scripts in which candidates wrote essays explaining they had ‘no knowledge’ of the play *Julius Caesar* having anticipated and having been prepared to answer questions on *The Tempest*. In addition, poems from the new syllabus were used to answer the set and general questions.

Although we commend teachers for their hard work, we are encouraging them to pay more attention to the areas that usually form the Part (c) of the questions: knowledge of literary terms and dramatic techniques; the ability to discuss and comment on the effectiveness of techniques and devices and generally the writer’s craft. We urge teachers/instructors to continue to emphasize and recognize genre-specific terms and to engage candidates in analysing their effectiveness. The following are some suggestions:

- Text selection and text choice ought to be discussed in class as one aspect of preparation for the examination. Sometimes textual choice (as in poems and short stories) limits the depth of the discussion and textual evidence needed for strong arguments.
- Candidates should be reminded that where set poems or stories are identified, as in Questions 5 and 11, they will not be awarded marks for using any others.
- The tendency to narrate continues to weaken the analytical element in essays, regardless of the genre.
- Teachers are also encouraged to continue to teach and reinforce essay-writing skills, and strengthen vocabulary, grammar, paragraphing and sentence construction. They are encouraged to find opportunities to give small writing tasks such as exercises which target introductory paragraphs and finding textual evidence to develop one point (even a paragraph at a time) to assist weaker candidates to develop the required skills.
- Teachers are encouraged to pay attention to concepts such as *dramatic function* and *writer’s craft*. Candidates need to demonstrate that they are aware that the writer deliberately selected words or plotted events for particular effects.

- Even as candidates are encouraged to see other versions of the texts under study, they must be constantly reminded that only the texts, as they appear on the syllabus, are being tested (and not the film version, for instance).
- Candidates should know the skills required when they are asked to *define, discuss, trace, describe, determine, comment on, or show*. Teachers must prepare candidates by dedicating time to closely examining the nature of the response expected by each of these and other key words used in questions.
- While it was clear that candidates were exposed to hearing and/or reading the poems, for instance, teachers are encouraged to take them one step further; they should be empowered to master the language to *describe, explain* and *analyse* with greater clarity those experiences shared and gained through listening and speaking.
- Teachers must remind candidates of the potential of literature. It is not merely a tool or an instrument of the writers' style but is also the 'lived' experience. Literature can help candidates to explore, question, form judgments and reinforce certain values and attitudes. This dimension, this kind of applicability, is what sometimes emerged in superior scripts.

Please note that this examination completes this cycle of texts. The new cycle begins in June 2018.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2018

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2018 May/June examination was the first setting of the revised English syllabus. The introduction of the School-Based Assessment (Paper 031) and the Alternative to School-Based Assessment, Paper 032, are the major differences between the previous and current syllabuses.

The Caribbean Examination Council's May/June CSEC English examination is an integrated examination, testing an integrated syllabus, in which the strategies for teaching and learning language employ the different modes: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and reflection. These modes are central to the augmented syllabus and examination, which now include a School-Based Assessment (SBA) component, and an Alternative to that School-Based Assessment, Paper 032. Loosely interpreted as serious thought or consideration, and synonymous to thought, thinking, consideration, contemplation, study, and deliberation, the skill of reflection is encouraged and rewarded. This syllabus strongly promotes reflection on the following principles:

- Reflection is the tool which helps individuals to clarify their own understanding and enables them to provide themselves and others with satisfying responses.
- Reflection is fundamental if teachers are to help students to reach their full creative potential. The literature of the region is fore-grounded, so as to foster the positive sense of selfhood and Caribbean-ness.

Paper 02, opportunities are particularly created for reflection in Question 1 (the art of summary) Questions 3 and 4 (story writing) and in Question 5 with the construction of point-of view and argument.

The skills and abilities to be developed and assessed in the study of English A are categorized under two profiles: Profile 1, Understanding, and Profile 2, Expression. Understanding is defined as the decoding and interpreting of messages through the analysis of the language structures and devices used in any given context; while expression is defined as the conveying of meaning through the selection of language structures and devices appropriate to each specific context. The profiles dimensions are comprehensively outlined on pages 3–5 of the syllabus.

Paper 01, which contributes 29 per cent to the total examination, assesses Profile 1. Paper 02, which contributes 50 per cent to the total examination, assesses both Profiles 1 (15 per cent) and 2 (45 per cent). Paper 031, the School-Based Assessment, contributes 21 per cent to the total examination and assesses Profile 02.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper consists of 60 compulsory multiple-choice items arranged in two sections. Section 1 consists of 25 *discrete* items. The number of items in this section increased by 5. Section 2 consists of 35 reading comprehension items based on five stimuli as follows: one poem; one literary extract (for example, novel, short story, biography, diary, letter); one expository extract (for example, encyclopaedia extract, report, instructions, newspaper article, texts of speeches, transcript of conversations); one argumentative extract (for example, an advertisement, a speech or a letter to the editor); one visual extract (for example, table, chart, form, diagram, map, cartoon, advertisement).

One mark is allocated to each item. In Section 1, marks are awarded for the ability to understand meaning conveyed through word choice, grammar, syntax, sentence structure, punctuation and paragraphing. In Section 2, marks are awarded for the ability to do the following:

- Obtain information accurately.
- Grasp insights from reading literature.
- Recognize and evaluate opinions expressed in various forms.

The mean mark for this this paper was 36.73. Candidates are encouraged to pay particular attention to reading the stimuli presented to them in the examination, particularly the narrative and expository pieces to ensure a total understanding of the material before responding to the questions. They must also be encouraged to ensure that they refer to the stimulus for each question, especially where the line numbers are used in the questions.

Paper 02 – Extended Response

Section A

Question 1 (Summary)

This question is worth 30 marks. A total of five marks were allocated to Profile 1, Understanding, and 20 marks for Profile 2, Expression. The five Profile 1 marks are earned for the content or points selected for the summary. The 20 marks for Profile 2 are gained as follows: 10 marks for organization of content and 10 marks for language usage/mechanics. The passage chosen for Question 1 dealt with the problem of bullying – some of its causes, effects, and possible solutions. It contained various examples of causes, but candidates either did not recognize the statements as examples, or were unaware of the way examples are treated in summary writing. This focus on details was a major issue in responding to this question, so answers either exceeded the word limit, or omitted pertinent points in favour of the details.

While the issue of bullying and its effects is topical, candidates did not perform well on the question. Candidates, in the new format of the examination, were asked to select five main points from the passage. Each point is allocated one mark for Profile 1. Very few candidates scored full marks in the selection. It seemed also that candidates were coached to use only the points they listed, in the summary. However, to score marks in the superior range of marks candidates had to include additional points, enough to indicate understanding of the text; only a few candidates did this. Most candidates were able to demonstrate competence in the summary writing.

An improvement over previous years was a reduction in the level of lifting of material from the passage, though the number of instances where candidates lifted material is still high enough to cause concern. Performance suggests the need for more practice in paraphrased and reported speech. An exercise which would assist students is the practice of taking the minutes of a meeting. This can be simulated in the classroom and emphasis should be particularly placed on having students focus on the points of the *discussion* and *decisions* made.

Recommendations

- Students would benefit from coaching in reading and interpreting questions. Attention is drawn to a few sentences in the instructions which, judging from the content of candidates' responses, may have been misread:
 - (i) "Write a summary of the article."
 - (ii) "List FIVE main points discussed". Attention should be drawn to the *absence* of the word *the* in this instruction.
 - (iii) "Remember to *include* in your summary paragraph the five points you listed."
- Students should be challenged to recognize the significance of showing personal mastery of Standard English, in an English examination.

The following are the points accepted for the summary. Every effort is made to help the students; therefore, for this passage the points are simplified — there are some points that could be joined, but the complex points were separated to accommodate candidates.

- Bullies and their victims share some characteristics.
- Both bullies and victims suffer from low self-esteem.
- Low self-esteem may result from emotional trauma or physical mistreatment in childhood
- Internalizing or externalizing feelings determines whether a child becomes a bully or a victim.
- Low self-esteem produces the need to compensate, either taking the anger and frustration out on others by bullying, or by accepting the role of victim and accepting punishment from bullies.
- Bullies are angry at themselves because of perceived personal failure or inadequacy in their home life.
- Victims accept being bullied because of perceived personal failure or inadequacy in their home life.

- Bullies seek out apparently weak persons.
- Bullying works because the victim's show of fear satisfies the bully's need to cause fear.
- Confident persons/persons with high self-esteem show no fear to bullies, so reducing their satisfaction and persistence.
- Bullying can be stopped by the target's refusal to be a victim.
- Victims or targets need to learn/need to be taught to use words as a diffusion strategy.
- Diffusion strategies include understanding the power of words and choosing to use words which are less aggressive than those used by the bullies.
- When the victim is able to use words to defeat the bully, the victim's self-esteem improves.

Sample Summary

Bullies often develop their bullying behaviour as a result of unhappiness at home. They are angry with themselves because of perceived personal failure or inadequacy, the result being low self-esteem. Bullies take their anger and frustration out (try to compensate) by terrorizing the apparently weak persons. The bullying works because the bullied person shows fear, so satisfying the bully's need. Bullies and their victims have low self-esteem in common. Victims are those who believe they deserve to be bullied because of some deficiency, and who show fear to the bullies. Since confident persons show no fear to bullies, their satisfaction and persistence are reduced. Bullying can only be stopped by the target's refusal to be a victim; so victims must learn diffusion strategies, and try to recover positive images. (120 words)

Section B

Question 2 (Structured Response)

This question is worth 30 marks. It is used to assess Profiles 1 and 2. Ten marks are allocated for Profile 1 and Profile 2. The five Profile 1 marks are earned for the content or points selected for the response. The 20 marks for Profile 2 are gained as follows: 10 marks for organization of content and 10 marks for language usage/mechanics. This structured response question replaces the passages for comprehension which were previously included as part of the examination for assessment of student outcomes in the last syllabus. The question tested candidates' ability to read a given extract to identify the main points in it. Further, candidates were expected to format a letter highlighting the main points. The teaching recommended would have prepared students to identify the audience, to adopt the appropriate tone and level of formality, to be thorough but succinct, and to use correct Standard English.

Many candidates were able to identify the main points given in the stimulus but were unable to present a letter using the proper structure and format for a letter. In some cases, candidates forgot parts of the letter, for example, salutation, complimentary close or the date. In a few

instances, some candidates produced the format for a memorandum, in other cases they combined elements of a memorandum and a letter. Though the candidates could have chosen any style of letter (for example, the full block, the modified block) they are required to be consistent. The following are some of the errors or weaknesses noted in candidates' responses:

- No sender's address or letterhead, or the inclusion of only a recipient's address.
- While most candidates were able to identify the main points in the stimulus, many included extraneous information, and this affected the accuracy of the information presented.
- Often, candidates lifted complete sentences from the stimulus and this affected the mark awarded for language, since the language used was not the candidates'.
- The letter constituted business correspondence, but some candidates adopted a casual attitude or tone.
- Little attempt was made to present the information in a manner that informed the audience without the need to penetrate the entire document.

There were cases where the quality of the candidates' responses were affected by mechanical problems: spelling, grammar, and punctuation, leading to sentence fragments, run-on sentences and the resulting poor expression were also noted in some examination scripts.

Recommendations

- As part of instruction, teachers need to review letter-writing format, especially formal letters.
- Students should know how to format a *circular* as opposed to a letter being sent to an individual, with emphasis being placed on tone.
- Question 2 requires candidates to produce a document from a given extract or stimulus, and so, emphasis must be placed on using their own words as much as possible, without resorting to lifting sentences from the stimulus.

Section C

Questions 3 and 4 (Short Story)

Candidates are required to do one question from this section. This question is worth 25 marks and it is used to assess Profile 2 only. The following areas are used in the marking of the questions in this section: content and relevance of the short story is awarded ten marks; organization five marks and effective use of language another ten marks. According to the revised syllabus, only two questions were set for the May/June 2018 examinations in this section. Question 3 invited a story based on a picture depicting a male figure seated at a desk/table, with his head supported by his hands. He appears to be studying a collection of bills and other documents. Most candidates saw the picture as an indication of worry over finance. Question 4 offered a worded stimulus: *"They could feel the angry eyes piercing their backs and then the door slammed. They*

made their way towards the waiting car. They were now on their own.” Here answers ranged from the blood-thirsty, through the copying of popular films, to well-crafted original efforts.

Generally, candidates seemed to have found the topics manageable. Misinterpretations were not common, but interpretations were generally parochial and predictable. Teachers are encouraged to continue to help students stretch their imagination through working with various kinds of topics or situations to develop expertise in writing to give pleasure.

Beyond stimulus interpretation, stories (even competent ones) were generally unimaginative though quite often generally accepted story-writing techniques were used. Of course, there is the recognition that not all competent users of the language are great storytellers. The mark scheme takes this into consideration, notably by its breakdown to award marks for content, organization, and expression, so directing examiners to focus on the areas indicated. The following is a list of four texts in a series called *Elements of Fiction Writing* which have proven to be very useful in teaching story writing.

Dibell, Ansen. *Elements of Fiction Writing: Plot*. Cincinnati: Writing Digest Books, 1999.

Noble, William. *Elements of Fiction Writing: Conflict, Action & Suspense*. Writing Digest Books, 1999.

Scott Card, Orson. *Elements of Fiction Writing: Conflict, Characters and Viewpoint*. Writing Digest Books, 1999.

Harvey, Stephanie, Anne Goudvis. *Strategies that work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*. Second Edition. Stenhouse Publishers, 2007

These books may be consulted by all stakeholders: teachers, students and parents who may wish to improve creative writing.

Recommendations

Teachers are encouraged to do the following:

- Continue promoting writing creativity, and the development of literary writing skills among all students. The superior stories demonstrated this talent or flair, and it is still a target for this exercise.
- Continue to help students engage in writing that uses techniques applicable to the different types of writing that are tested throughout this English A examination — helping students to recognize the different kinds of writing. This includes giving attention to not only content, but also to style — that is, the quality of writing, which distinguishes the superior story, the superior exposition, summary, and report.
- In relation to marking, the examining team (basic and expanded) continues to recommend the training of a cadre of expert examiners in the appreciation and

assessment of short stories. This would include attention to varied types of stories, new (or different) styles in writing, and other elements of the genre to which students may be exposed beyond traditional strategies and expectations.

Section D

Question 5 (Argumentative Essay)

In the 2018 examination, candidates were not given a choice of topics in this section. Educational consultants are concerned that candidates are required to make too many decisions in the short time given to write the paper, hence the reduction of choices in the paper. This question is worth 25 marks and it is used to assess Profile 2 only. The following areas are used in the marking of the question: content is awarded ten marks; organization five marks and effective use of language another ten marks. Candidates seemed to have no problem with the topic chosen. The problems noted were in the execution related to the mechanics of writing: poor skills at creating an argumentative structure, and weak language skills.

There was wide ranging interpretation of the term *community service*. The stimulus was a fairly good one in that most candidates, even the weaker ones, had an opinion on the topic and reasons for this opinion. However, there were some instances where candidates did not understand the concept of *community service*. This was probably caused by their different experiential backgrounds while some Caribbean countries require secondary school students to complete community service, this is not so in all cases. For example, some students focused on 'graduation', making suggestions for fundraising. This showed a clear lack of understanding of the concept of community service.

Too many students were unable to organize their work into paragraphs which resulted in a number of ideas being jumbled together without proper development of the topic. The structure of the essay, introduction, body and conclusion, was not evident in many cases.

There were the usual language difficulties for average to weaker candidates: lack of control of tenses and spelling. Punctuation and run-on sentences continued to be a very serious problem. These language problems, especially the poor punctuation, often had a severe impact on the quality of the response.

The essay which follows was chosen primarily as an example of the candidate's understanding of how to write argumentatively. It puts forward a clear position, includes relevant content, examines different perspectives, uses a very simple structure for development (first, second etc. and conclusion) but expands/supports each point, so developing a reasoned line of thought. There are undoubtedly language issues, but the errors do not impede our understanding of the argument.

"Every secondary school student should be required to do community service as a condition for graduation." Write an essay giving your views on the statement.

Student Response

Firstly, yes, community service is one important part in the life of a student. Community service helps to develop one's character in terms of work ethic and people skills. Community service often involves working with others which allows the students to develop their ability to work well with others which is a characteristic that many employers look for.

Secondly, community service requires that the student give of his free time to help others. This shows that the student is selfless and not selfish. Based on the above reasons, this is why employers often hire people who have done community service. However, not all students can do community service. For example, the student can be living in a dangerous community with a lot of crime. In such situations it can be dangerous to simply walk outside one's home.

Also, for some students, they may not have any time available for community service. For example, students have to work as soon as they leave the school compound, students who have sick parents and students who spend all free time helping their parents in a home business.

Due to special cases such as these where it is difficult to engage in community service, I believe that community service should not be a condition for graduation. A final reason for why I believe this is, is because forcing unwilling students to partake in community service is not a compulsory activity but rather an activity strongly encouraged by the school system and some form of reward is given to those who get involved.

Recommendations

- It is important to establish a focus for the response, even if that focus is 'It is my intention to discuss the pros *and* cons/the advantages *and* disadvantages.'
- Students need to be taught/reminded that organization of the essay is within and across paragraphs — the relationships between thoughts on an idea and the sentences as they follow each other within the paragraph; and the relationship between points as they follow in paragraphs.
- The concept of the line of an argument progressing from introduction to conclusion needs to be emphasized. To ensure that this is possible, candidates need a much clearer understanding of paragraphs.
- Students should be given practice with short passages which require them to identify sentence boundaries.

Paper 031 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This was the first time the School-Based Assessment was used as a part of student assessment for English. Students were required to work individually as well as in groups (of 4 or 5) to complete and submit a project consisting of six sections. All sections were marked by the teacher and three of those (the Plan, Reflection and Written Report) were moderated. Although there were many students whose projects met the required standard, there were others who did not follow the requirements or suggestions set out in the syllabus.

Most students did the Plan of Investigation well. The main area to be improved is in how the language skills would be used in the SBA. Language skills cover a wide range of speaking, writing, reading and listening. Expected responses included developing and using skills in writing genres such as report writing to provide information about the chosen topic, or narrative/descriptive/creative writing to craft a personal response to the theme.

The students' attempts for Reflection 1, that is how each piece of material helped to shape his or her thinking about the issue/topic/theme/event were done well and so too was the discussion of artefacts in the written report. However, there were some issues noted. In writing Reflection 2 which required students to discuss the use of language in the material selected, many students failed to identify and discuss a suitable language technique. Students needed guidance in choosing suitable artefacts, especially visual artefacts. Students must be able to discuss the use of language in each artefact.

Some students' written expression, especially in the reflections, was very unclear.

Plan of Investigation

Students were to give a title/topic, a reason for selecting such, the perceived benefits to themselves as students of English, and the proposal for the collection and use of the material (three pieces as specified by the syllabus).

The suggested length was 100 words and should have been in continuous prose. However, many plans were over 300 words. There were several unnecessary 'Introductions' to the plan as well as bulleted lists of several 'problems' the students expected to occur. Students also wrote the 'requirements' of the whole project as part of the plan. For example, a student writing "I am expected to find three pieces of data and I will write a poem or a story which will be followed by an oral presentation. After this, I plan to write three ..." would not have scored any marks for Section (C).

However, it was obvious that many students gave much thought to the selection of their topics and the reasons for such, but selecting a topic "because the information is easy to find" and stating "to get a Grade I in English" as the benefits to an English student, would not have been awarded any marks in Section B.

Several students were able to state the type of materials to be collected but the majority did not give a source, nor outline what English Language skills they hoped to use to analyse the materials.

Reflections

This section comprised three entries on how the topic/issue/theme shaped the student's thinking; the use of language in the pieces; and the benefits/effects the process of completing the SBA had on the student. The last entry was to be written in class after the completion of the major part of the SBA exercise. The suggested length was 150 words for each entry.

On the one hand, numerous entries exceeded 500 words, and instead of presenting three separate entries, many SBAs had one long essay for the reflection. Moderators had to 'sift' through the 'essays' to award marks. In many instances, the analysis asked the same questions of each artefact, regardless of the kind of artefact. For example, a student who chose a cartoon rendering of inappropriate dress would have shown how the piece set him/her thinking. The second artefact with a worded reaction, however, was treated in the same way, rather than have the language analysed.

Although the majority of students ignored the suggested word limit, many submitted the correct format and were able to score between three and five marks for Entry 1/Reflection 1 and Entry 3/Reflection 3. However, very few students scored more than two marks for the discussion of the use of language (Entry 2/Reflection 2). This failure stems from failure to give examples of either the figures of speech or literary devices that they had named, as they should have done to show that they understood how such devices work to enhance the pieces and, by extension, the project. Examples such as "The writer used similes in the piece" and "The author used many devices such as alliteration in the poem" could not adequately be described as successful attempts at examining the language. Some answers were also vague as in "Emma uses language to illustrate why people take drugs" or "The use of language is effective because of the way the words are used. It is also effective because of the way they were stated. It is also effective because of the picture printed in one's mind and also the effectiveness that it causes. The use of language is effective because of the tone or tones that are used and the way that the words are used and also how they were used and also when, why and where they were used. It is also effective because of the way they were stated." This response was given full marks by the class teacher. Teachers are advised against the inflation of students' scores as the moderation exercise will result in the scores for the entire class being reduced using regression analysis.

Students generally seemed unable to describe the pictures chosen, and several simply repeated the caption, as in: "*This picture is an example of physical abuse*". For example, the following paragraph was given a total of five marks (the most that could be allotted) when most of what is said is skirting the issue in vagueness.

The use of language is effective because of the way the words are used. It is also effective because of the way that they were stated. It is also effective because of the picture printed in one's mind and also the effectiveness that it causes. The

use of the language is effective because of the way that they were stated. It is also effective because of the tone or tones that are used and the way that the words are used and also how they were used and also when, why and where they are used. It is also effective because of the way that they were stated. It is also effective because of the picture or pictures that are printed in one's mind. The use of the language is effective because of the tone that is used. It is also effective because of the way that they used it. It is also effective because of the picture or pictures that are printed in one's mind.

Written Report

The group had to choose three pieces of data (from their combined total of 15) and write a report identifying the theme chosen, the processes/tasks involved in choosing the three pieces of data (adequately identified), the reasons for the choices, an analysis of the data and the outcomes of the research. The suggested length was 250–300 words.

The length was generally adhered to and many reports showed evidence of good research. However, there were hundreds of reports which indicated that the processes used in the group involved a 'Divide and Conquer' or 'SOAPStone' approach (SOAPStone (speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject, tone) is an acronym for a series of questions used to help students write compositions. These reports showed evidence of 'plagiarism' with paragraphs used in these projects being identical to the photocopied texts submitted.

In addition, some reports did not identify three specific pieces but discussed the topic chosen by each student as it related to the theme, spoke in general terms about the advantages/disadvantages of working in a group, or discussed the three pieces chosen by the student whose project was selected for moderation. Generally, the responses implied that the reports were not 'group' reports, or that there was a lack of clarity over what was required. Moderators also noted that class teachers awarded full marks for reports which did not identify any of the pieces and spoke in general terms about group work. Again, it must be pointed out that inflation of the scores does not help students.

Recommendations

- Teachers should follow the guidelines for the format of the SBA as set out by the revised syllabus.
- Teachers should follow the format for submission of the projects and ensure that the correct cover sheet accompanies the project with one SBA project per folder. There were thousands of projects without cover sheets or which had the wrong cover sheets attached. There were also some instances with several projects in one folder or several cover sheets. With the submission of the cover sheet there is also no need to submit all the rubrics for each section for each student.
- Teachers should ensure that they follow the marking rubric for each section, recheck that they have put the intended mark for each section in the appropriate column and add

correctly if using a photocopy of the SBA form. There were too many instances of teachers awarding ten marks to a section where the maximum was five, placing the oral mark in the reflection column, or simply adding incorrectly. The addition, most of the time, was not to the advantage of the student. One sample, for instance, was incorrectly totalled giving the student 31 instead of 41.

- Projects should have the appropriately titled sections. The Plan of Investigation should not be linked to or be a part of an introduction or acknowledgements (the latter is also unnecessary).
- The Reflective pieces should be separate and entitled Reflection 1, Reflection 2, etc. or the section could be titled 'Reflection' and then be followed by 'Entry 1', 'Entry 2', etc.
- There should be evidence that there are three artefacts used for the individual sections. Links to video files should open directly to the artefact. Some of the links could not be opened and could not be verified. Some links/addresses were even sent as a scanned image file.
- Teachers should ensure that the SBA actually contains the sections which are to be moderated and for which they have awarded marks.
- In some schools where where several teaches are responsible for the English SBA, 'table marking' is advised. By this process teachers arrive at a common standard. This removes the element of uncertainty over quality, makes the sample selection more representative of overall quality, and eliminates anxiety/dissatisfaction over results.

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

Paper 032 is the alternative to the SBA. It is designed for private candidates who enter to write the subject through a private institution, a recognized educational institution or the local registrar's office. Three pieces of stimulus material were provided: a newspaper article, lyrics to a song and a poem. Candidates were expected to answer three compulsory questions. Two questions required short answer responses, and the third question required the creation of an imaginative piece in response to the theme selected.

Many candidates were able to identify the issue and language techniques in the three texts. The responses to the texts in Question 3 were generally satisfactory, especially those who responded with poetry as it contained the majority of the criteria specified in the mark scheme. However, some candidates had difficulty identifying the medium used in the text and speaking about its effectiveness. Although they were able to identify the language techniques used in the stimuli, they were challenged with writing about the effectiveness of the language techniques they identified.

In some cases, written expression, especially comparing texts, seemed to challenge candidates. Candidates need to know how to phrase comparison and contrast statements to produce more effective responses. Further, candidates had problems with the specific terms and elements of language such as a *medium of communication* and *types of texts*. Candidates could not differentiate between *aspects of a group* and *members of a group*.

The questions in the examination were faithful to the syllabus and indeed the specimen paper; however, it was clear that the language of several questions presented a major challenge to candidates. The challenges were mainly in the use of literary terms, the jargon of the discipline, suggesting that persons who are private candidates perhaps have very little exposure to the study of literature and perhaps need to consider using appropriate textbooks to help them prepare more effectively for the examination.

Question 1

In Part (a), candidates were asked to identify the main issue addressed in each of the three texts given. In many cases, candidates did not identify the main issue addressed (Text 1: Farmers' concern about climate change and its impact on their viability and sustainability. Text 2: The price we pay for urbanization. Text 3: The negative impact of urbanization.) Rather than identify the main issue, candidates provided examples or elements of the issue.

For Part (b), candidates were expected to choose one of the given texts and to identify the appropriateness of that medium for communicating the specific issue. Many did not understand the meaning of *medium*. Instead some gave the purpose of the issue. For example, "The purpose of the issue is to let people know even though the fancy buildings with big businesses are convenient, cutting down trees for them are causing huge problems in our environment." As a result, many did not provide the expected responses:

Text 1: Can be referred to repeatedly. It is a tangible vehicle for circulating and recording community and national issues.

Text 2: It is aural and oral. The use of the refrain and repetition helps to ensure the message remains in the mind of the listener.

Text 3: Free verse form is effective for communicating, and it helps with engagement through conversational tone.

In Part (c), candidates were expected to identify one language technique used in each form and to explain its effectiveness.

While some candidates were able to identify language techniques, this question proved to be very problematic to others. *Narrative* and *description* were inaccurately identified as language techniques. For effectiveness, the following were given by some students: "It states what people should do in the environment to be safer." Another inaccurate response was "In this text, the singer is telling us ways that we are destroying the environment. Some of the responses which were awarded marks were as follows:

Text 1: Citing farmers by name/conversational tone/farming vocabulary (agronomist, forestation)/use of headline

Text 2: Repetition/rhyme/pronouns

Text 3: Religious imagery/light imagery/ diction/ repetition

Effectiveness: In Text 1, the student could have stated that citing farmers by name and occupation lends credibility to their case or makes their concerns real. In Text 2, the use of the pronouns, for example, *they* and *I* help to highlight a difference in views between the persons and the developers. In Text 3, the diction, for example, *heated smog*, *struggling waves* helps highlight the destruction of the environment.

Question 2

In Part (a), candidates were expected to indicate how written texts are different from oral presentations. Some candidates were able to identify the differences. However, others were unable to do so, providing responses such as the following:

“Oral presentations will have more information rather than facts and in Text 3, this is different because there isn’t any information to be given for an oral presentation.”

The following were some of the responses which were awarded marks.

- The writer relies on the written word and not the sound of the word.
- The readability of the text is important, for example, word length, format, length of paragraph, use of graphics, headlines, poetic structure/ forms.
- In written discourses, the pages do the ‘speaking’ whereas in an oral presentations, the speaker’s effectiveness is evaluated, for example, mannerism, gestures, nervousness, poise.

For Part (b), candidates were expected to provide three points to be discussed in the oral presentation. This is the part of the question on which most candidates were able to score points. The following were some of the expected responses which gained marks.

- The need for government to take environmental issues seriously
- Climate change and its impact, especially on farming communities
- Greater attention to be given to the needs of small farmers
- Need for public education on environmental issues
- Need for sustainability interventions, for example, the replanting of trees

In Part (c), candidates were required to identify a group who may be interested in the oral presentation, identify features of the group, and identify three techniques to keep the group interested in the oral presentation. Candidates were able to identify a group, but in many cases, did not accurately identify three features of the group. It seemed that the term *features* was not

understood. For one candidate the response was “Three features I would use is a computer, a board and a projector.”

Some candidates were able to identify techniques to keep the audience interested, for example, using audience feedback, use of technology, music and visuals.

The following are some of the responses which were awarded marks.

Groups and features: farmers, environmentalists, students, policy-maker, NGOs

- Interested in the preservation of the environment
- Desirous of spreading information/educating the public
- Educators, policymakers

Techniques to keep group interested

- Open microphone (allowing for audience feedback/ participation)
- Call and response (use phrases that will encourage group participation, for example, “Let’s repeat, ‘We must care for the environment’”; using technological devices
- Visuals presented in the form of Powerpoint as the speaker is presenting
- Use of effective background music to enhance point made

Question 3

Candidates were given the opportunity to use any genre to develop a creative response to the given issues. Candidates attempted responses using short stories, poetry, song and argument and song. Some of the pieces proved to be informative and all manifested the candidates’ creative abilities.

Recommendations

- Teachers must engage students in the analysis of different genres and classroom activities must focus on technique and form.
- Oral communication must be studied in more detail, so that students have an appreciation and understanding of oral communication and its essential components.
- The sample question paper issued by CXC must be used, and used as part of classroom activities so that students have a sense of what is expected in the examinations.
- Teachers and tutors of private candidates need to spend more time helping them to understand and interpret questions and the requirements of the task.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE[®]
EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2019

**ENGLISH A
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The CSEC English A examination comprises three papers: Papers 01, 02 and 032. Approximately 10,000 candidates wrote the examination in January 2019. The marking exercise points to variations in performance, from very weak scripts to scripts which clearly indicated that candidates were competent on the assigned tasks. This report focuses on candidates' performance on the three papers.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 — Multiple Choice

This paper consists of 60 compulsory multiple-choice items arranged in two sections. Section I consists of 25 discrete items. The number of items in this section increased by five in the revised syllabus tested for the first time in June 2018. Section II consists of 35 reading comprehension items based on five stimuli as follows: one poem; one literary extract (for example, novel, short story, biography, diary, letter); one expository extract (for example, encyclopaedia extract, report, instructions, newspaper article, texts of speeches, transcript of conversations); one argumentative extract (for example, an advertisement, a speech or a letter to the editor); and one visual extract (for example, table, chart, form, diagram, map, cartoon, advertisement).

One mark is allocated to each item. In Section I, marks are awarded for the ability to understand meaning conveyed through word choice, grammar, syntax, sentence structure, punctuation and paragraphing. In Section II, marks are awarded for the ability to

- obtain information accurately
- grasp insights from reading literature
- recognize and evaluate opinions expressed in various forms.

The mean mark for Paper 01 was 38.15. Candidates are encouraged to pay particular attention to reading the stimuli presented to them in the examination, particularly the narrative and expository pieces, to ensure a total understanding of the material before responding to the questions. Candidates are also encouraged to ensure that they refer to the stimulus for each question, especially where line numbers are referenced in the questions.

Paper 02 — Extended Response

Paper 02 comprises four components: Summary, Free Response, Short Story and Argument.

Question 1: Summary

This question was worth 25 marks and the mean score was 8.76. A total of five marks are allocated to Profile 1, Understanding, and 20 for Profile 2, Expression. The passage dealt with the issue of terrorism and crime, how they affect the world, and the measures governments are adopting to counteract their effects. Candidate performance on this component varied; scores ranged from 0 to 23, the highest recorded score out of 25. Many candidates seemed incapable of identifying the main points of the summary. While marks were being awarded for identifying five points which would form the basis for the summary, some candidates produced titles as the points, for example, the following were given as points:

- The fighting against transnational
- The CARICOM single market
- Customs and Excise Officers

These titles were not awarded any marks.

The following points were accepted and marks awarded accordingly.

- The Caribbean, like the rest of the world, is threatened by a wide range of organized criminal activity and terrorism.
- Individual governments recognize the need to protect their borders, both physically and financially.
- Many governments already recognize the need to develop and share strategies.
- The criminal elements use a wide and clever range of ways to carry out their acts, including taking advantage of opportunities created for tourism.
- There is already cooperation between regional and international customs, sharing technology and information.
- The demands today for implementing and managing new procedures means that training and retraining personnel working at ports of entry are needed.
- The Department of Customs and Excise is a country's first line of protection and revenue collection.
- Border security must be well organized to be able to meet the financial and social threats.

Another noted feature of the work of many candidates is the heavy lifting and reporting verbatim of content given in the original passage. For summary writing, candidates are expected to write as much as possible in their own words, and this is clearly stated in the instructions. Another directive given to candidates was that the summary must be written in one paragraph. Some candidates ignored this directive and produced paragraphs. Candidates must follow the instruction to write only one paragraph. In addition to identifying the relevant main points, candidates are expected to produce writing that is free of grammatical errors. The scripts of some candidates highlighted lapses in language use: grammatical as well as spelling errors, and run on sentences.

The following is a sample summary.

World leaders are aware of the constant threat of organized international crime and try to protect their lands and people. Attacks from well-organized, international crime include physical and financial measures. Caribbean governments have made an effort to allow the easy movement of people between territories but this makes the region vulnerable to criminal elements. Such persons have tried to take advantage of these special circumstances. To counter criminal cleverness, the region has already formed international alliances which bring the benefit of upgraded equipment, training and the benefit of communication. What is still needed is for government to pool resources to strengthen security, as Customs and Excise departments are the first lines of defence and revenue collection.

Recommendations

- Teachers are encouraged to make summarizing and summary writing an integral part of English classes.
- Summary writing should be taught, as is done with all other genres of writing, as a process.
- Teachers should ensure that students are exposed to different types of material; this would help to improve their skills.
- Students should be taught to identify the main theme or issue or topic the writer is discussing. The simple question ‘what is the passage about?’ should help to identify the main issue. They should also be taught to identify the point in each of the paragraphs which the writer highlights or uses to support the theme, issue or topic.
- Teachers are encouraged to train students how to take points and organize them into the paragraph; this is a critical step.

Question 2

For this question, candidates were expected to read a given situation and to produce an email based on the situation. The scripts marked varied in quality with some candidates showing a mastery of the expected skills, while some demonstrated incompetence.

Many candidates were able to identify and produce the main points of the given scenario:

- Purpose of travel: Teacher attending conference for modern language teachers.
- Country to be visited: Spain.
- Duration of trip: One week/week of 23 September 2019/23—27 September 2019.
- Arrangement made for replacement: Mr Abdool will be teaching the class.
- Work assigned: Reading from the text *Vamos Amigos*.

In some cases, candidates did not give all the expected points. While the question required students to produce an email, the email format was not evident in many responses. Some candidates produced the format of a memo, some a formal letter, while others combined memo format and email. An example of this is given below:

To: James Charles
From: Peter Smith
Subject: Teacher's Absence

When sending an email, only the *To* and *Subject* fields are required and *cc* or *bcc*, if required or requested.

The writing of many candidates was negatively affected by lapses in language use: spelling errors, grammatical inaccuracies and run-on sentences.

Recommendations

- For this section of the paper, teachers are encouraged to give students experiences in writing reports, emails, notices and letters; these are the forms of writing that will be assessed.
- Teachers should guide students based on the writing process so that they are trained to focus not only on content, but also on the mechanics of writing.

Question 3

This question required candidates to study a given picture and write a story based on it. There were a few creative interpretations of the stimulus. Some candidates used the first person narrative voice to craft their stories. Invariably, these stories made good use of setting and characterization as their prominent elements. However, some candidates used the picture as a stimulus to write a commentary/report/argument. These candidates ignored the requirement to write a story.

Question 4

Candidates were required to write a story which includes these sentences: *Kodi wondered why his Uncle Brandon had decided to spend his retirement years with him. It did not take him long to find out.* Some candidates used the stimulus to craft very good stories. In some instances, however, candidates forced the stimulus into the story line/plot they constructed. The most common misinterpretation of this stimulus was Uncle Brandon being sick with a terminal illness (invariably cancer) and spending his time with Kodi.

General Observations

Some candidates demonstrated satisfactory use of language, appropriate to the genre of story writing. Often, these candidates made satisfactory use of grammar and mechanics. However, some candidates did

not have adequate mastery of the language and invariably made a plethora of errors in grammar and mechanics: run on sentences, subject and verb agreement, spelling and punctuation errors. Candidates' handwriting also posed a challenge to markers.

Recommendations

- Students should be given continued exposure to the language of story through the use of actual stories in teaching /learning experiences. Good models should be used.
- Teachers are encouraged to utilize the writing process as a teaching aid and take students through the whole process from conceptualization to the publication of a story.

Question 5

For this question, candidates were asked to present their views on the topic “No student should be expelled from school”. All candidates, even those who produced the weakest responses, had an opinion or position on the topic, and reasons to support this opinion. Many candidates had fairly good and varied responses and evidence to support their views, but many were unable to express them well, as there were many lapses in the use of language. Another noted issue was that some candidates were often unable to organize their response into paragraphs. While there was evidence of indentation, candidates often did not demonstrate the elements of a paragraph – the topic sentence with supporting details.

There were the usual language difficulties for average to weaker students: lack of control of tenses, spelling, and of great importance to the argument – punctuation. Run-on sentences continue to be a serious problem. These language problems, especially poor punctuation, often had a severe impact on the quality of the responses.

Recommendations

- Students are reminded that they need to establish a focus for the response, even if that focus is to discuss the pros and cons/the advantages and disadvantages.
- The concept of the line of an argument, progressing from introduction to conclusion needs to be emphasized.
- Teachers are encouraged to use graphic organizers in teaching students to write argument.
- The process approach to writing needs to be emphasized/re-emphasized.

Paper 032 — School Based Assessment

Since CXC introduced the SBA component to the English A examination in June 2018, the Paper 032 has been written by private candidates as the alternative to the SBA. The marking revealed several issues which will be discussed in this report. In the second year of the sitting of this examination, candidates still appear inadequately prepared for some of the questions, although there was some improvement over the June 2018 examination.

Question 1 (a)

This part of the question required candidates to outline the main idea or issue presented in each of the three texts provided as stimulus. Some candidates found difficulty determining the main idea of all three pieces. Even those who were able to glean the main idea did not score full marks for this question, as they failed to understand the requirement for the word *outline* and therefore provided no supporting statements to outline the main idea. Some candidates were also unable to understand inference and therefore for the cartoon, misinterpreted the intent by stating that children should learn their work.

The following highlights expected responses for this part of the question.

The main issue addressed in Text 1 is the importance of disciplining children. The writer argues that corporal punishment had its place and was effective when not abused, but he contends that the school should be free to administer appropriate punishment without the fear of legal repercussions.

The main issue addressed in Text 2 is the effect of corporal punishment on students. The cartoonist highlights corporal punishment from the perspective of the students and shows how teachers instill fear in students through verbal abuse and the use of the belt. It also highlights the humiliating effects of corporal punishment.

The main issue addressed in Text 3 is the long-lasting effect of corporal punishment. The emotional scars on the victims of corporal punishment is long-lasting. It highlights how students who have been physically abused by teachers/educators can have long-lasting psychological issues. It is seen from the perspective of the student.

Question 1(b)

This part of the question asked candidates to choose one of the three texts and to assess the appropriateness of the text for the purpose of communicating the idea or issue. The term *appropriateness* posed a problem for some candidates. These candidates simply repeated the main idea without stating whether the chosen text was appropriate for conveying the information. The following responses should guide teachers in helping their students to respond to this question.

Text 1: The medium used is a news article which is appropriate because it can reach a large audience on a topic of national importance. The news article is able to present a holistic view of the topic by documenting responses by the main source to questions and challenges. It also emphasizes the seriousness of the issue through its formal register. Prose is also more easily understood by a larger number of people than poetry.

Text 2: The cartoon is appropriate in communicating how verbal abuse and corporal punishment can stem from one who has power or position. The visual image has the impact of capturing the humiliating effects of verbal abuse and corporal punishment. The cartoonist addresses this by exaggerating the size of the teacher in relation to the students, and this helps focus on his position of power. The laughter on the faces of the other students is also humiliating to those being punished. The expressions on the face of the teacher (rage, anger) as opposed to the expressions on the faces of the students (fear, students crying) help to capture the fear and hurt the children experience. This fear prevents /affects learning, and this is highlighted by the Mathematics problem written on the board.

Text 3: A poem is an expression of one's feelings/one's inner thoughts; this makes it effective for conveying a topic of this nature: a painful reflection. The poem is appropriate in communicating how corporal punishment has long-lasting effects. The use of the short, recounted narrative of the incident, from the perspective of the student, leads to the conviction that corporal punishment affects victims in the immediate and long term. The poet notes 'landmarks that linger in a person's life' and 'the wounds are marked deep in memory'.

Question 1 (c)

This part of the question required candidates to choose two of the texts and to identify one language technique used in each and explain its effectiveness. While candidates were, for the most part, able to identify one language technique from two of the stimuli used, most were unable to explain the effectiveness of these techniques. The concepts of *appropriateness* and *effectiveness* will require greater attention in the classroom.

The following are some of the acceptable responses given.

The language technique used in Text (1):

- Citing statements from an authority, the 'Professional Association of Teachers Chairman', lends credibility to the argument. The reader is also made aware of the need for control when the chairman is quoted as stating that children had "an extreme degree of freedom".
- The article also cites examples of cases where panels have been reversing schools' attempts to discipline children.

- It also cites an example of personal experience which reinforces the speaker's view of the effectiveness of corporal punishment.
- Oxymoron — 'unfavourable rewards' emphasizes the knowledge of the consequences of wrongdoing or undesirable actions.
- Formal register or formal language (not just 'formal')
- Emotive language

The cartoon (Text 2), makes use of the visuals

- The significant contrast in size between the teacher and the students helps highlight the impact of authority figure.
- The nonverbal cues – facial expressions of the students and the teacher, the reprimanding finger/hand of the teacher show the imposing of fear the humiliation/fear on the part of students.
- The presence of the belt, the symbol of punishment adds to the nightmare that is corporal punishment.
- There is the caricature of the teacher as bully and the children as victims/abused.
- Imagery

In the poem (Text 3), the poet uses

- Flashback – 'it happened so long ago' to set the stage for the events in the poem. We note the long-lasting effects of corporal punishment.
- Metaphor – 'wounds are marked deep in history', clearly demonstrates the long-term effects of corporal punishment.
- Irony in the title of the poem - The title 'Sister Elizabeth' is used to refer to a religious figure, but this figure is being far from Christian by inflicting such severe punishment on the student, indicated by the word 'lacerated'.
- Understatement and irony - in the expression, 'such petty landmarks'. Clearly it is not petty as the student is still affected many years after.
- Imagery – visual imagery created by the metaphor of wounds 'marked deep in history' and kinaesthetic imagery in 'my hands cringe/to a fist' (focus is on the hands as if the hands remember the pain).
- Imagery – visual imagery created by the metaphor of 'wounds marked deep in history' and kinaesthetic imagery in 'my hands cringe/to a fist' (focus is on the hands as if the hands remember the pain).
- Alliteration – 'petty landmarks that linger in a person's life'
- First person narration, by having the persona speak about his/her experiences, the readers are encouraged to sympathize/it makes the experience realistic.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were asked to explain three factors, other than the composition of the audience, which a speaker must consider when making an oral presentation. Most candidates seemed aware of considerations for oral presentations. However, several failed to provide the explanation for the factors which the speaker should consider, which formed the second part of the question.

The following are factors one should consider when preparing oral presentations:

- Elements of voice: Voice projection, articulation and enunciation. The speaker should also avoid using a monotone, as this may bore the audience.
- Eye contact: A critical component of oral communication is eye contact with the audience, as it helps the speaker to connect with his audience.
- Time: The speaker must consider the time and stay within the time suggested while ensuring that the elements of the presentation (introduction, body and conclusion) are all given due attention.
- Poise: One must stand erect as it helps convey confidence of the speaker and leads to audience respect.
- Nervousness: Care must be taken to avoid openly displaying signs of nervousness. The speaker needs to utilize physical measures to handle nervousness (forcing one hand against a hard object to release tension, flexing muscles).
- Dress/appearance: Care must be taken to dress appropriately for the occasion.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were asked to list three points they would use for an oral presentation on the subject presented in the texts. Most candidates were able to list three relevant points for an oral presentation based on the issues in the texts.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were asked to think of a group of persons who may be interested in the issues outlined in the oral presentation in 2 (b) and identify three features of the group to which the presentation would be made and three techniques that they would use to keep the group interested in the presentation.

There was some measure of misunderstanding of this question. Most candidates did not think of one discrete group, for example, parents, and then describe features of this group. Rather, they thought of a group and considered parents, students, government officials, etc. to be features of that group. Most candidates were aware of techniques that can be used in an oral presentation.

The following are the expected responses to this question.

Three features of the group to which the presentation would be made and three techniques to keep the group interested:

Groups

- Groups
- Parents
- Educators
- Policymakers
- Students
- NGOs

Features of Group

- Interested in the welfare of children
- Desirous of spreading information/educating the public
- Desirous of addressing issues adversely affecting children
- Group of new teachers
- Parents/educators/etc.

Techniques to Keep Group Interested

- Open microphone (allowing for audience feedback/participation)
- Call and response (use phrases that will encourage group participation, for example, 'Let's repeat, we must stop corporal punishment in schools')
- Use technological devices
- Visuals presented in the form of PowerPoint as the speaker is presenting, charts, art
- Use of video clippings, highlighting the negative effects of corporal punishment
- Documentary on children who have experienced corporal punishment
- Music highlighting abuse/corporal punishment from the perspective of victims

Question 3

This question asked candidates to create a response based on one of the issues. The question was handled fairly well by candidates who attempted it. Poetry seemed to be the genre of preference and some candidates, under examination conditions, were able to produce some competent, entertaining and at times humorous poems on the issues presented. The prose renderings also met the criteria given.

Recommendations

- Teachers need to place more emphasis on terms like *main idea*, *appropriateness* and *effectiveness of treatment* and *language techniques* in their teaching.
- Oral communication should be taught as a separate unit, so that the features of oral communication and matters relating to presentations are addressed.