

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2004**

THEATRE ARTS

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GENERAL COMMENTS

This is the second year in which Theatre Arts is being examined and the aims of the syllabus are presented for easy referral.

The syllabus aspires to:

- (i) foster appreciation for the forms that Theatre Arts have assumed in the various cultural contexts in the Caribbean;
- (ii) develop an understanding of the nature, process and logistics of the theatre;
- (iii) enable an appreciation for theatre by participating (as actor, playwright, director, artist, painter, designer, dancer, choreographer and stage manager) in making theatre;
- (iv) provide opportunity to experience theatre through the mind, senses, voice, emotions and body;
- (v) nurture an understanding of theatre by studying certain prescribed texts, audio and video tapes;
- (vi) enable evaluation of texts and works of theatre through the written, oral and graphic media

The Theatre Arts syllabus offers three options:

OPTION 1 – Drama Improvisation, Playmaking, Performance Skills

OPTION 2 – Dance Improvisation, Dancemaking, Dance Fundamentals

OPTION 3 – Drama Improvisation, Dance Improvisation, Stage Crafts

The examination is comprised of three papers.

Paper 1 is a written test with SIX compulsory structured essay-type questions.

Paper 2 is a practical examination, set by CXC, conducted in the school, marked by the teacher and moderated by an external examiner. For this paper, candidates are expected to answer questions on any one of the three options shown above.

Paper 3, the School-Based Assessment (SBA) requires candidates to produce a research paper and a critique of a production.

This year, 258 registered for the examination but it was written by 237 which represents 91.86% of the initial registrants.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01

The names of many of the cultural forms found throughout the Caribbean are listed on page ten of the Theatre Arts syllabus. The specific cultural forms to be examined in the period 2003 to 2006 are also identified on that page. Candidates are required to have a thorough understanding of three of the cultural forms for the examination.

The opening instruction on this paper stated, “A different cultural form must be used in each of the questions 1, 2 and 3.” Many candidates did not follow the instruction and this impacted negatively on their acquisition of marks. Generally, candidates failed to identify the cultural forms or they used one form in the three questions.

Question 1

In this question candidates' knowledge and understanding of cultural forms and their representation in plays, dance, video productions or documentaries was tested. Many candidates were unable to make the link between the cultural forms that they studied and how they were presented in any of the formats mentioned previously.

Question 2

The focus in this question was on candidates' appreciation of the significance of cultural forms in Caribbean societies in the areas of social relations, the economy and the arts. Candidates made relevant points but many could not proffer the three points needed in each area. In the area of social relations, issues of class, race or ethnicity, the use of games and rituals should have emerged in candidates' responses. Many Caribbean territories depend on tourism for the development of their economies, so the mention of the sale of products and services, the attraction of tourists, the generation of employment would have allowed candidates to access a higher number of marks. Finally cultural forms have made a significant contribution to the arts. They have provided material for exhibitions, plays, films, documentaries and dance productions, they form part of the cultural heritage in the Caribbean and artefacts are stored in museums in the different territories.

Question 3

Candidates were required to look critically at how cultural forms have been represented in the media in order to shape their responses to this question. They were able to describe the positive and negative impact that the media has on different cultural forms. Many candidates however, were unable to detail how the media had affected their attitude towards a particular cultural form. It was expected that candidates would describe what changes they made in their behaviour, relationships and their tolerance of different aspects of the culture in their territories.

Question 4

Candidates' understanding and appreciation of their practical work, was tested in this question. Candidates were able to list the four points, which the practical work attempted to highlight. Candidates were unable however, to describe how their performance of the work improved their understanding of the play or video that was studied. Candidates should be able to make associations and understand the relevance of the activities in which they are engaged while studying this subject.

Question 5

In this question candidates' ability to describe production roles in the context of a play or cultural form was tested. Most students did not read the question carefully and failed to name the play or cultural form. The answers given did not relate to the text and in some cases only general characteristics were listed. The relationship to the play or cultural form was important. The expectations of the make-up artist in a play such as "Echo in the Bone" would be different for the make-up artist for the cultural form, the Maypole.

Question 6

In this question candidates were required to analyze and interpret an excerpt from a text. Candidates gave fair responses for the definition of the term "blocking" and the suggestions about occurrences in the previous scene. In the last part of the question, candidates were asked to describe two movements they would have created for the celebration at the end of the scene. The responses were poor indicating the need for candidates to be more involved in creative interpretations.

Paper 2

Generally, performance on Paper 2 could be considered as very good.

This paper, comprising three practical assignments, was marked and moderated in schools. The following general observations however could be made:

- (i) Of the three options offered, Option 1 was the most popular choice. Very few candidates chose Dance or Stage Crafts.
- (ii) For Option 1 more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of improvisation techniques. There was an over-emphasis on the spoken word with little corresponding effort in the areas of characterisation and use of body and space. There is a beginning, middle and end to every improvisation and many students failed to use the three minutes allotted to show this. They rushed this aspect of their assessment, and their 'crisis moments' were not obvious or problems were left unresolved.
- (iii) The value of relationships should be emphasized in the creation and presentation of scenarios.

Paper 3

Performance on this paper improved in 2004. The submissions of the two SBA assignments afforded a more comprehensive view of the performance of candidates.

Research Paper

Candidates experienced some difficulty in meeting the interview requirement where the subject of the study proved to be inaccessible. Some chose to interview other informants on the subject. The interview is not only an important source of data-gathering but a means of developing questioning and interactive skills valuable in communication and conducting research. In some instances candidates from the same centre had identical questions. While candidates may plan together there must be evidence of individual work. Cultural practitioners can be used as subjects of study, but theatre or dance practitioners are preferred.

The exercise is intended to encourage students to interpret information and express themselves in writing. It should be noted that separate marks are allocated for 'content' and 'supporting material'. Candidates are advised to submit copies rather than originals of valuable material loaned by informants.

Candidates must include all sources of information in their bibliography.

Critiques

Candidates must be guided about the details required in the analysis of the various components of a theatrical or dance production. In many instances marks were lost through the lack of basic information such as the time and place of performance, lead actor/dancer.

In some cases, teachers' marks were at wide variance with the moderators' marks. However an improvement was seen as a greater attempt was made to closely follow the mark scheme.

Recommendations to Teachers

The Theatre Arts syllabus covers two areas not formerly undertaken for academic study and examination in schools. The theatre arts and Caribbean expressive cultural forms such as but not limited to folk tales, dances, festivals and religious ceremonies are novel as a subject area. Approaches to their teaching therefore must be innovative, resourceful and trans-disciplinary. The optimum delivery of the syllabus requires that teachers are:

- (a) trained in the arts of the theatre, drama and dance.
- (b) provided with adequate time on the timetable and space for the teaching of the subject.

- (c) equipped with appropriate teaching and support materials.

Based on the performance of schools in the 2004 examination, the Examining Committee recommends the following:

- (1) Schools should request through their Ministries of Education, access to training programmes and workshops to better equip their teachers to deliver this syllabus. A list of resource persons who can facilitate such workshops can be obtained from the Local Registrars in the different territories.
- (2) Teachers must attend plays, read the required and supplementary texts and familiarize themselves with Caribbean cultural forms.
- (3) Teachers should develop lessons / projects in collaboration with subjects such as Caribbean History, Social Studies, English A, English B which have content areas which are similar to the Theatre Arts syllabus especially for Paper 01.
- (4) Teachers should review the syllabus as well as past papers, in order to adequately guide students in the content areas and in the reading, understanding and preparation of responses to examination questions.
- (5) Teachers should arrange for students to visit performances of live theatre, dance productions and cultural events. Many producers will offer special discounts or even free performances to student audiences.
- (6) Teachers must adhere closely to the detailed mark scheme for Papers 02 and 03 when awarding marks.