

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

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

**JUNE 2005**

**ENGLISH A**

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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.

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

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.