

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
JUNE/JULY 2008**

**LITERATURES IN ENGLISH
(REGION EXCLUDING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO)**

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION JUNE/JULY 2008

GENERAL COMMENTS

The candidate entry for the Literatures in English examination continues to increase. The performance on this year's examination, the third testing of the revised syllabus, saw an increase in the number of candidates accessing acceptable grades.

Candidates have been improving on their performance on Paper 01, including the Poetry Module. They must continue to pay equal attention to all three modules in order to maximize their overall performance on this paper. Since the marks on Paper 01 are awarded for specific responses, failure to attempt a question results in no marks being awarded for that section or question. Candidates should also pay attention to how many marks are awarded for particular questions because they might lose too many marks when they fail to attempt questions with a higher weighting of marks. Students must continue to receive practice in time management under examination conditions. Some candidates spent far too long on the first Module and seemed to have had difficulty completing the other Modules.

It is important that candidates maximize their chances of doing well in Literatures in English by giving due attention to both papers.

There has been some improvement on Paper 02, the essay paper, of the examination, but there is still room for improvement. While candidates are gaining more marks for showing evidence of knowledge of genre, they continue to fail to demonstrate aspects of knowledge beyond thematic development and a few basic features of genre. In drama, theme, plot and characterization continue to be emphasized while insufficient attention is paid to the other generic features of drama, knowledge of literary devices and their function, and knowledge of literary context. On the Poetry Module, many candidates demonstrated knowledge of the conventions of the poetic genre, although much more attention is given to symbolism, imagery and diction than to the other generic aspects of poetry. However, there is evidence that many more students are exploring the range of poetic devices to their credit. On the Prose Module, candidates limit themselves to discussing theme, plot and characterization, and often ignore the other generic features.

In both poetry and prose, candidates need to understand not just the terms associated with the generic features, but the ways in which writers manipulate the different features of each genre to achieve artistic effect. The ability to explain how different artistic choices reinforce an author's view on a particular issue is an important skill for candidates to learn, merely giving a list of features of the genre is not sufficient. In the prose genre in particular, candidates often simply narrated the story or relevant sections of the story rather than produce analytic essays. Candidates will have to continue to improve their essay writing, question analysis and argumentative skills in order to improve their performance.

DETAILED COMMENTS

UNIT 1

PAPER 01

Candidates generally performed well on this paper. Some had difficulty identifying and/or explaining the irony in the drama and the poem, while some did not seem to understand the concept of “dramatic significance”. Additionally, where students had to provide a fuller explanation or rationale for choices made, examiners found that candidates’² (is this a quote from someone? Where does it end?) poor use of language and limited vocabulary affected their (content) responses and the quality of communication.

Module 1 – Drama

The questions on this dramatic extract tested candidates’ ability to explain the ways in which meaning is conveyed through the playwright’s choice of language, structural elements such as characterization, creation of suspense and features of drama such as stage directions. Generally, candidates demonstrated fair knowledge of the dramatic function served by entrances and exits, or by stage action. Weaker candidates continue to have difficulty explaining the ways in which playwrights manipulate language and literary techniques such as irony to create dramatic effect.

Question 1

Candidates performed well on this question. They were able to explain the ways in which Henry’s speech shows him to be rude and opinionated, even while he is philosophical and aware of human foibles. Responses were both creative and insightful.

Question 2

Candidates found this question straightforward and responded satisfactorily. Responses suggested that candidates understood the ways in which the introduction of a character on stage provides an opportunity for character revelation, creates suspense and promotes stage business. Stronger candidates were able to identify the ways in which Eliza’s entrance introduces the theme of appearance versus reality.

Question 3

Candidates responded satisfactorily to this question. Responses suggested that most candidates generally understood the ways in which stage directions reveal character, and advance plot. Weaker candidates were not always able to fully explain what the stage direction indicated about the character and resorted to merely repeating words from the lines given in the question.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to identify the props. Some candidates identified the “door” as a prop and did not understand that a stage prop is a moveable theatrical property that is used by the actor. Weaker candidates confused use of stage props with other stage conventions such as the use of lighting and costuming. The second part of the question required candidates to comment on the dramatic significance of those two props. Many responses focused on the ways in which these props allow for character revelation. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the ways in which the props allow for characters to act in particular ways and the ways in which some of the props produce sound effects that enhance the drama unfolding on stage.

Question 5

This question was satisfactorily handled. Candidates' responses were creative and insightful, often linking their explanation of irony to the broader purpose ~~to~~ for which the playwright deploys irony, be it for comedic impact as in the instance of Mrs. Higgins warning her son about the need for social decorum and his subsequent inelegant blundering towards the divan, or for character revelation as it relates to Higgins' subtle schooling of Eliza into socially appropriate behavior even while he seems to possess none. Weaker candidates failed to understand the concept of irony and to apply it appropriately to the extract.

Module 2 – Poetry

Candidates' performance in this Module continues to improve. The questions in this section tested candidates' ability to recognize imagery and symbolism, and to correctly identify literary devices and to evaluate their effective use. The knowledge of poetic elements continues to be an area of weakness and candidates' ability to make evaluative judgments on the use of these techniques is equally weak.

Question 6

Candidates responded well to this question. They were able to identify the various activities which demonstrate the father's devotion to his family.

Question 7

This question was satisfactorily handled. Candidates were able to speak extensively about the association of "blueblack"- and were able to offer interesting explanations as to why the poet chooses such a phrase. Stronger candidates were also able to show how the repetition of the "b" (plosive) sound in the alliteration "blueblack" reinforces the idea of the force or destructiveness of the cold winds and the way in which the cold is presented as something injurious and damaging to the father. Weaker candidates, while they were able to explain the image of "blueblack", were unable to comment on the ways in which the poet's choice of this phrase reinforces the father's devotion while at the same time helping to create atmosphere.

Question 8

This question was not well-handled. While candidates were able to identify the appropriate poetic devices, they were unable to comment on the purpose and the effectiveness of these literary devices. Far too often, they resort to labeling all poetic techniques as examples of imagery. Figures of speech such as symbolism, onomatopoeia and onomatopoeia and alliteration, while they could be identified, could not be appropriately explained in terms of effectiveness.

Question 9

This question was satisfactorily handled. Candidates' responses were creative and insightful, and many candidates were able to comment on the irony of the family's response to the father's devotion and the ways in which he is able to break the ice that coats the house in the morning, yet unable to thaw the indifference with which his family responds to him.

Question 10

This question posed some difficulty for weaker candidates. While many candidates were able to identify the tone as reflective and remorseful, weaker candidates were unable to explain how the poet uses tone to highlight the persona's growth and adjusted judgment on his father.

Module 3 – Prose

Candidates responded positively to this extract but many tended to be tangential in their responses, focusing too closely on the circumstances which produce that may have produced this abuse, rather than remaining within the confines of the abstract. Weaker candidates continue to have difficulty commenting on the effectiveness of literary devices. In general, students should be given more practice in developing their analytical skills.

Question 11

Candidates responded well to this question. They were able to explain the conditions of Louie’s life and in their enthusiastic empathy went on to indict the adult in the extract, making a moral judgment that the question did not require. Most candidates scored full marks on this question.

Question 12

Responses were both creative and insightful. Candidates saw the name “Loo-loo” as pejorative and as an indication of the low status she held in the household.

Question 13

This question posed some difficulty for weaker candidates. While many candidates were able to explain the meaning of the phrases, they were unable to comment on their appropriateness. “Legend of the family” posed difficulty for weaker candidates who tended to read the phrase literally and were thus unable to speak to the irony implicit to it.

Question 14

This question was well done. Candidates were able to identify the literary devices and produced interesting explanations of the appropriateness of these devices.

Question 15

This question posed some difficulty for weaker candidates who often misunderstood the wording of the question: “What TWO contrasting impressions”, and consequently identified only one contrasting feature, for example, Louie’s clumsiness vs. the neatness displayed in the photograph.

PAPER 02

This year there has been some improvement in candidate performance and we hope this is the start of a new trend. While stronger candidates formulate a coherent response to the question, weaker candidates often seem to write without planning or outlining. Many candidates referred to knowledge of genre or the writer’s biographical, historical and social contexts in their answers, although weaker candidates are still not synthesizing this information into a strong argument in response to the questions.

We continue to remind candidates that elements of prose fiction beyond plot and theme should be given attention. Narrative point of view, characterization, setting, the use of various motifs, literary devices, styles of narration (interior monologue, stream of consciousness), and satire might become significant aspects of the writer’s technique in exploring various issues. In the profile of organization, many students are not maximizing their marks by paying particular attention to the effective use of: thesis sentence, introduction, transition, conclusion and paragraphing. Outlining your argument in the beginning of an essay establishes, from early, a candidate’s main thesis and provides a guide for the candidate to maintain focus throughout the essay. Also, it is often important to define the terms on which the argument rests.

Module 1 – Drama

Generally, this Module was well done. Again, as in past exams, the seemingly thematic questions appear more attractive to candidates than those which are explicitly “technique-focused.” However, all questions in this Module require candidates to assess how meaning is expressed through the playwright’s choice of language, use of literary devices and stage conventions and manipulation of the structural elements of drama” – syllabus objectives that are being tested in this examination. Much more emphasis has to be given to exercises that help the students develop critical judgments about literature.

Question 1

This was a very popular question but candidates did not score top marks because they failed to engage rigorously with both aspects of the question. Specifically, many candidates concentrate mainly on establishing the dramatic conventions Shakespeare deploys – soliloquies, masques, music, playacting - that make “Much Ado About Nothing” comedic/humorous. In so doing these candidates neglected to explore serious matters such as betrayal, deception and the death of hope. Where candidates concentrated on the discussing the themes of the play they were unable to illustrate how specific comedic features were used to convey these issues.

Question 2

While this was not a popular question, candidates who attempted this question did very well. They were able to demonstrate knowledge of the variety of themes and other dramatic techniques and devices linked to the concept of ‘gardens’ pertinent to this play. Stronger candidates were able to argue that the while ‘the garden’ advances plot, the garden’s setting allows the playwright to introduce various themes; it is also a perfect frame for the lightness, color and gaiety which are at the heart of comedy. Again, much more use could have been made of extra-textual knowledge in these responses.

Question 3

This was the more popular of the two “Henry IV” questions. However, like Question 1, candidates did not score top marks because they focused more on the thematic concerns of the play than on demonstrating how Shakespeare deliberately uses this sub-genre to explore the theme of rulership. Candidates needed to demonstrate knowledge of the ways in which Shakespeare’s histories chronicle national events in British history and portray the life of historical royalty—the threats to their safety, the wars they fought to preserve their rule. At the same time, these historical plays detail the humanity of these larger-than-life historical figures – their pettiness, insecurities, and their greed. The playwright is able to render these actions dramatic by his characterization of these rulers, his use of elevated military language, and his depiction of the pomp and ceremony of war. The question, in requiring the candidates to engage with the problems of leadership, allowed for extra textual connections to be made between the reign of Elizabeth 1, and the national anxieties that surrounded her queenship.

Question 4

This question was the least popular of the four questions. Candidates who attempted it; did not handle this question very well. They were unable to identify “clever verbal patterns”, be they Falstaff’s use of puns, *double entendres* and asides; Prince Hal’s verbal parries with Falstaff; or Hotspur’s elevated military language. While candidates had a general sense of the theatrical effect of the play, they were unable to engage in a rigorous exploration of Shakespeare’s use of stage conventions such as costume, sound effects and stage props to achieve theatricality.

Module 2 – Poetry

In this Module, Objective 3 of the syllabus needs to be constantly emphasized in candidate-preparation: “explain how meaning is expressed through the poet’s choice of language, literary devices, and structural elements commonly found in poetry, such as image, symbol, alliteration, assonance, meter, lineation, and rhyme” (9). In addition, the inclusion of relevant extra-textual information can be of great use in responding to the questions.

Question 5

Many students supplied their own definition of “commonplace.” The stronger students were able to skillfully incorporate poetic techniques; to illustrate how the poet successfully treated the commonplace; so that new meanings were created. Wordsworth and Atwood were the poets of choice and these responses, especially those on Atwood, produced some of the most thought-provoking responses. The essays on Frost were generally weaker, for the candidates’ choice of poems generally did not offer them enough scope to produce convincing answers. Teachers should encourage students to study a range of poems and not to limit themselves to three, the minimum required for an essay.

Question 6

Some candidates appeared to have difficulty in understanding what a symbol is. Generally speaking, the weaker ones chose images. Since the question already pointed them to the technique (the symbol), many candidates ignored the other stylistic devices. Stronger candidates were able to disagree with the statement and effectively analyze the poems to show that the world which was being treated in the poems was indeed the “real” one, and not one that was being dreamt of.

Module 3 – Prose Fiction

These questions on this Module require candidates to assess the relationship between narrative technique and theme, between form and content. Candidates are denying themselves the chance to earn higher marks on application of knowledge by not making more discriminating arguments prompted by the phrase “the extent to which”. In this regard, many candidates again missed opportunities to provide more nuanced discussions of the question. Some responses provided more in-depth analysis of one book than the other. Candidates should strive to give equal attention to each book in this two-book response.

Weaker candidates continue to ignore the fact that literature is an art form with distinctive features marking each genre. The syllabus highlights the genres/sub-genres of prose fiction, the elements of fiction and general literary devices that writers can manipulate to reinforce theme. There will be no question on this examination that will be primarily thematic. All questions will demand that candidates connect form and content as the syllabus requires. Stronger candidates showed a wide knowledge of the set texts and the features and characteristics of the prose genre, thereby producing essays that were rich in knowledge.

Teachers should ensure that discussions of themes are not separated from discussions of narrative form and technique. More practice in comparative essay writing is needed. In addition, students need continuing practice so as to develop their writing skills – paying attention to diction, syntax and the use of transitions to connect their ideas.

Candidates are using texts from other Modules to answer questions on this Module and accordingly penalize themselves by this choice. It is obvious that students who did this totally disregarded the rubric requirements for that section of the paper and teachers must make it their point of duty to remind students of the importance of distinguishing the genres and texts.

Question 7

This question was handled fairly well by most candidates. The arguments for the most part were a little lopsided because candidates tended to write more on the first book chosen and not enough on the second. For most candidates their knowledge of the techniques was sound. The most popular books for this question were “Brother Man” and “Their Eyes Were Watching God” followed by “Pride and Prejudice” and “A Grain Of Wheat”. Again, candidates are denying themselves the chance to earn higher marks on application of knowledge by not making more discriminating arguments prompted by the phrase ‘to what extent’.

Question 8

For this question, “Brother Man” and “Their Eyes Were Watching God” were the most popular texts chosen and “Meeting Point” the least popular. This question was not well done. Candidates had difficulty relating “boundaries” to the “social context.” Boundaries were easily identifiable, but “social context” seemed a concept with which many candidates seemed unfamiliar. Candidates also had difficulty connecting the elements of genre to “boundaries.” In other words, they were unable to say what techniques the writer used to highlight boundaries. Weaker candidates continue to write on theme and nothing else. Students should be encouraged to see how themes are developed by way of the resources of the prose genre. In addition to teaching the text and the elements, teachers should teach students how to interpret questions.

UNIT 2

PAPER 01

Module 1 – Drama

The questions on this dramatic extract tested candidates’ ability to explain the ways in which meaning is conveyed through the playwright’s choice of language, structural elements such as characterization, creation of suspense, and features of drama such as stage directions. Generally, candidates demonstrated fair knowledge of the dramatic function served by stage action. Weaker candidates continue to have difficulty explaining the ways in which playwrights manipulate stage action to reveal character and to create dramatic effect.

Question 1

This question was well handled and many candidates scored full marks. Most candidates were able to say that the opening lines of the extract provided an indication of the setting, allowed for the introduction of characters, established the conflict and heightened audience expectations.

Question 2

Candidates found this question straightforward and responded satisfactorily.

Question 3

Candidates found this question straightforward and responded satisfactorily. Responses suggested that most candidates generally understood the ways in which stage directions reveal character, and advance plot. Weaker candidates continue to have difficulty explaining how dramatic techniques work.

Question 4

This question was well handled. All candidates were able to identify the two props. The second part of the question required candidates to comment on the dramatic significance of those two props. Many responses focused on the ways in which these props allow for character revelation. Stronger candidates were able to

comment on the ways in which these props allow for characters to interact in particular ways, and enhance the drama unfolding on stage. For example, the bar of soap provides the opportunity for Cliff to reveal a tenderness towards Allison which contrasts with his earlier violence.

Question 5

This question was satisfactorily handled. Candidates' responses were creative and insightful. They were able to explain fully that the calm of the ending contrasts with the violence of the opening, and that the ending allows the audience a different view of Cliff. Stronger candidates were able to show how the suspense that introduces the extract remains, although now it is more speculative as the audience tries to make sense of the tenderness unfolding on stage.

Module 2 – Poetry

This year, there was an improvement in candidate performance in this Module. The questions in this section tested candidates' ability to recognize imagery and symbolism, and to correctly identify literary devices and to evaluate their effective use. Candidates can benefit from reading the questions more carefully and by paying attention to all parts of the questions.

Question 6

This question was well done. Most candidates were able to identify the sonnet by its form.

Question 7

This question was satisfactorily handled. In some instances, although candidates could state impressions of the woman along with evidence, they were not careful to state two distinct impressions with two distinct pieces of evidence.

Question 8

Generally, candidates were able to identify the various poetic devices, but as in other questions of this nature, the weaker candidates were unable to explain the appropriateness of those literary devices by drawing evidence from the poem.

Question 9

This question was satisfactorily handled. In some instances, candidates tended to make the same point in two different ways. When multiple responses are required from one source candidates must ensure that their offerings are discreetly different.

Question 10

Surprisingly, this question was generally poorly answered. Candidates did not pay enough attention to the potential of the sestet to diverge from the rest of the poem and were unable to recognize that the reader is now exposed to a different view of the woman than that which is indicated in the first part of the poem. Consequently, they reiterated many of the responses made to Question 9 in their responses to this question. Superior candidates were able to show that the woman is framed and contained on the canvas, and similarly the impressions of her as she once was, is fixed in the artist's memory.

Module 3 – Prose

This Module was well done. Candidates displayed a great understanding of the passage and were able to produce interesting responses to the questions asked.

Question 11

This question was generally well handled. Weaker candidates were unable to recognize that the question required that they discuss the ways in which the writer uses tone, irony, comparison and the use of negation to create an impression of Prince.

Question 12

This question was satisfactorily handled. Some candidates are still experiencing difficulties in commenting on the effectiveness of the figures of speech. Teachers can be encouraged to assist students in being able to identify the element that is being highlighted in the technique used and show them how to explain the significance of its use in the passage. The difference between the definition and the effectiveness of the technique could also be stressed, for the weaker students will invariably provide the definition.

Question 13

Although the majority of the candidates understood this question and were able to quote salient examples, a few still quoted lengthy sections of the passage; hence, revealing their difficulty in identifying the key words. Where candidates were able to identify the active verbs, weaker candidates were not able to identify the effectiveness of the writer's use of these verbs. Stronger candidates were able to recognize that these verbs help to reinforce the violent power and force that define Prince.

Question 14

This proved to be the question of greatest difficulty. Many candidates were able to identify the irony, but found some difficulty in explaining it. In many instances, the phrases were explained but the irony was not highlighted. However, stronger candidates were able to comment on the ways in which the writer positions Prince as tough and violent and simultaneously undercuts that representation by showing him using that power against those who are unable to retaliate, instead of on the able-bodied who manage to escape.

Question 15

This question was well handled. A range of interesting examples and explanations were produced.

PAPER 02

While there has been an overall improvement in performance on this paper, many candidates still fail to formulate a coherent response to the question; candidates often seem to write without planning or outlining. While some referred to knowledge of genre or the writer's biographical, historical and social contexts in their answers, many of the candidates were still not synthesizing this information into a strong argument in response to the questions. Candidates should be given exercises in improving their writing which is often pedestrian. At this level, clarity of expression and even elegance in writing is expected.

When candidates take contrary positions to ones articulated in the question, they often find room for less clichéd responses and for offering their personal responses to, and critical evaluations of, literature. Many more candidates need to be encouraged to make use of the opportunities created by the questions to offer their unique, informed perspectives on literary production. Much more emphasis has to be given to exercises that help the students develop critical judgments about literature.

In the profile of organization, candidates would maximize their marks by paying particular attention to the effective use of: the thesis sentence, introduction, transition, conclusion and paragraphing.

Module 1 – Drama

Candidates demonstrate an awareness of the factors that contribute to the dramatic impact of “King Lear,” “Death of a Salesman” and “Pantomime.” Credit is always given to any recognition of the ways in which the playwright’s choice of language, literary devices, structural elements and features of drama might influence audience response. However, many needed to establish from the start of the essay the terms on which their argument would rest. The development of a thesis allows the candidate to maintain focus throughout the essay.

Question 1

This question was designed to test a candidate’s ability to recognize the relationship between dramatic form and content. While many candidates could identify the social relations in the play, they failed to identify the different means by which these relationships are dramatically rendered. Candidates also need to develop the ability to explain how these features contribute to thematic and dramatic significance. More sophisticated responses discussed the ways in which costuming, lighting, symbolism, sound effects and even props influence the audience’s understanding of the social relations explored in the play. Very few candidates took issue with “primarily”, and in failing to respond critically to the opinion offered in the question and tended to ignore the request to “discuss the extent to which [they] agreed with [the] statement.” These kinds of question provide scope for candidates to debate and express their reasoned personal response to literature.

Sometimes, candidates did not give equal weight to both plays and in this regard tended to lose marks especially in the area of knowledge.

Question 2

This year, as it has been in past exams, in this question an opposition was set up in this question between “stage conventions” and “language and literary devices”. It would seem that dramatic power is achieved by one and not the other. This kind of dichotomy is difficult to maintain and the question provided a space to engage with the playwright’s manipulation of stage conventions and the other structural elements of drama, as well as with the playwright’s choice of language and, use of literary devices. Weaker candidates did not take advantage of the opportunity for varying arguments about what really is the source of dramatic impact in the two plays chosen. More attention to question analysis, and to the significant features and elements of drama will help candidates to respond more effectively to such questions.

Module 2 – Poetry

In this Module, candidate performance has improved and they are demonstrating knowledge of poetic craft. There is still a tendency to discuss thematic issues in isolation and to treat poetry as merely history or sociology; candidates should not ignore the artistry of poetry. Teachers must continue to engage in exercises that force candidates to make connections between poetic technique and theme. Objective 3 of the Poetry Module needs to be emphasized. The ability to “explain how meaning is expressed through the poet’s choice of language, literary devices, and the structural elements commonly found in poetry such as imagery, symbol, alliteration, assonance, meter, lineation and rhyme” needs to be demonstrated to maximize marks.

Question 3

This question represented the first of four specific questions on Paper 02. Most candidates performed creditably; stronger candidates took full advantage of gaining higher grades with this question by engaging with Senior’s use of symbolism, ironic contrasts, diction, imagery, repetition and sound devices to represent trauma. The nature of this question, with its emphasis on the resources of poetry, encouraged them to deal with the genre of poetry and to incorporate techniques into their discussion. Weaker candidates however were simplistic in their responses, mainly explaining what the word “trauma” meant and providing examples from Senior’s poetry.

Question 4

This question proved more challenging than Question 3 because some candidates took the word “language” literally to mean only the language variety. Stronger candidates were able to analyze the stylistic features of the poems, showing how effective they were to the presentation of ideas. Very few candidates took advantage of the opportunity to argue that Senior’s Caribbeanness might equally be marked by the poetic representation of her concerns, and then discuss how all her techniques help to reinforce Caribbean issues. Questions like this encourage candidates to respond critically to the opinion offered in the question. However, candidates still tend to ignore the request to “discuss the extent to which [they] agreed with [the] statement.” These kinds of question provide scope for candidates to debate and express their reasoned personal response to literature.

Question 5

This question was the one of choice for Martin Carter and candidates performed well. In their answers candidates were not only able to deal with the socio-historical and political issues in the poems, but to include relevant background information and to illustrate how the poet’s craft was integral to an understanding of the work. Stronger candidates were able to argue that no one dimension—theme, style, context, biography—but all aspects help in the appreciating and understanding of Carter’s poetic expression. In some instances, candidates concluded by arguing that the socio-historical/ political context is not limited to Guyana, but it is part of the whole postcolonial world, which is why Carter’s work is relevant to Caribbean society and other post colonial spaces.

Question 6

Although not the major choice for Carter, there were still some outstanding essays where candidates were able to show how the very craft of the work effectively presented Carter’s distinct poetic voice. Many candidates were able to correctly discuss both the subject matter of Martin Carter’s poetry that make him distinctive as well as features of his poetic craft (symbolism, imagery, metaphor, motifs, parallelisms and tone).

Module 3 – Prose Fiction

Candidate performance in this Module has improved. This year, some candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of not just the terms associated with the generic features, but of the ways in which writers manipulate the different features of each genre to achieve artistic effect. The ability to explain how different artistic choices reinforce an author’s view on a particular issue is an important skill for candidates to learn; giving a list of features of the genre is not sufficient. Weaker candidates, unable to differentiate between knowledge of text and knowledge of plot, still merely narrated the story or relevant sections of the story rather than produced analytic essays. Candidates will have to continue to improve their essay writing, question analysis and argumentative skills in order to improve their performance in this Module.

Question 7

This question was the more popular one. It required candidates to evaluate the centrality of setting to the exploration of personal and social concerns. Candidates performed well. Generally, they displayed an improvement in discussing how features of the genre conveyed thematic concerns. However, many candidates failed to respond critically to the opinion offered in the question and tended to ignore the request to “discuss the extent to which [they] agreed with [the] statement.” These kinds of question provide scope for candidates to debate and express their reasoned personal response to literature.

Question 8

This question was not a popular choice. It required candidates to engage with literary craft by directing attention to the story-telling technique. Candidates who attempted this question made a good attempt to connect narrative techniques such as characterization, motifs, setting and symbolism to elements of plot and theme. Candidates are reminded that they need not agree with the proposition in the question, especially when asked to “discuss the extent to which [they] agreed with [the] statement.” These kinds of question provide scope for candidates to debate and express their reasoned personal response to literature.

PAPER 03

INTERNALASSESSMENT

UNITS 1 AND 2

This year, there was a decrease in candidates’ performance on the Internal Assessments. The samples showed evidence that candidates are enjoying activities that provide room for their critical judgment, informed personal response and creativity. The art pieces of specific scenes were well done, So too were the dramatic adaptations. However, the explanatory texts did not always provide the evaluative dimension required to score high marks. This explanation should provide reasons for the artistic choice of the director and the dramatic effectiveness of such choices; or an evaluation of the performance. In this discussion, evidence of knowledge of generic features is crucial for scoring high marks. Too many candidates can only list features without providing sufficient analysis of their effective deployment in the piece of art.

However, sometimes the problem was related to the passage selected: it was often too short and without sufficient evidence of features of the genre to generate full responses. A careful selection of appropriate passages for an activity like this one will help students in their close-reading skill, so necessary for Paper 01. Teachers need to be careful that the assignments set are able to fulfill the objectives of the syllabus. Topics chosen must allow for the exploration of the themes and stylistic features of each genre. Length, complexity and appropriateness in light of syllabus objectives must be considered. Teachers need to provide students with articles/essays of literary worth and some depth in order to elicit detailed and meaningful responses from the candidates. Published blurbs downloaded from the internet, and popular textual notes do not give students arguments, or literary perspectives that they can refute or support in their explication of the original text. A review of a poet should be of at least three poems from the collection of poetry. A review of one poem, unless it is being argued as typical of the poet’s style and concerns, severely limits the candidates’ ability to be comprehensive. The same goes for reviews of prose fiction that limit the candidates to a few pages of the text.