

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 ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2009**

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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LITERATURES IN ENGLISH**CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION****MAY/JUNE 2009****GENERAL COMMENTS**

The candidate entry for the Literatures in English examination seems to have stabilized. The 2009 examination had a combined candidate entry (Units 1 and 2) of 3195, just about the same as for the past three years. The performance on this year's examination, the fourth testing of the revised syllabus, approximated to about the same pass rate as the previous two years, but with a very slight increase in the candidates achieving the higher grades.

There continues to be improvement on Paper 02 of the examination, but there is still a great deal of room for improvement on some aspects of the essay paper. While candidates are gaining more marks for showing evidence of knowledge of genre, the performance on all (Drama, Poetry and Prose Fiction) modules is basically about the same. However, in the area of knowledge, candidates should demonstrate aspects of knowledge beyond thematic development and the basic features of genre - plot and characterization. In drama, theme, plot and characterization are emphasized to the general exclusion of knowledge of other generic features of drama - knowledge of literary devices and their function and knowledge of literary context. While many candidates are familiar with the conventions of the poetic genre, many fail to demonstrate knowledge of the prose genre. In poetry, much more attention is given to symbolism, imagery and diction than to the other generic aspects of poetry. Nevertheless, there is evidence that, to their credit, many more students are exploring the range of poetic devices. On the prose module, candidates are very keen to discuss theme, plot and characterization, but 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; giving a list of features of the genre is not sufficient. In the prose genre, in particular, candidates often merely 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.

For this year, the performance on Paper 01 was not as good as expected. Some basic concepts such as juxtaposition/contrast or assonance were not understood or known by some candidates. Far too many candidates spend time re-writing the questions and far too many fail to attempt entire questions or parts of questions. Since the marks on Paper 01 are awarded for specific responses, failure to attempt a question results in an inability to score marks 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. It is clear that teachers need to give their students 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, therefore, that candidates maximize their chances of doing well by giving due attention to the three modules on the paper. Also, all candidates must pay equal attention to both Paper 01 and Paper 02 in order to maximize their overall performance.

DETAILED COMMENTS**UNIT 1****Paper 01 – Short-Answer Questions****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 (including literary devices), structural elements such as characterization and setting, and features of drama such as stage directions and stage movement. The role of contrast or juxtaposition was also tested in this extract. Generally, many candidates demonstrated fair knowledge of the genre of drama; however, when questions required that candidates make judgements about the use of these dramatic features, the answers were often inadequate. Weaker candidates continue to have difficulty understanding the concept of contrast and explaining the dramatic significance of the playwright's manipulation of language, literary techniques and dramatic elements.

Question 1

Generally this knowledge/comprehension question was well answered. Some candidates could have been more precise in their response to Part (b) of the question which required an identification of activities taking place. Given the request for "activities," use of the verb form to indicate the activity would have enhanced their answers.

Question 2

This knowledge/analysis question was not well handled by candidates. First, it is clear that many candidates had trouble with the concept of contrast. This is surprising since the juxtaposition of images and other literary elements is a conventional strategy deployed by many writers. Also, many failed to explain the ways in which specific choices in the dramatic representation are connected to the larger significance of character, plot, thematic development, or help to enhance the playwright's creation of mood, atmosphere and dramatic tension. Many weak candidates could only provide the circular argument that the use of contrast helped to produce contrast, while others failed to offer a response to this question.

Question 3

Candidates found this comprehension/application question about characterization fairly straightforward and responded satisfactorily. Some of the weaker candidates were unable to recognize character revelation in the extract.

Question 4

This two-part question was a knowledge/analysis type question. Most candidates were able to demonstrate appropriate knowledge by correctly identifying the literary device. However, the second part of the question, which required candidates to make an assessment of the playwright's use of literary devices, posed some difficulty for many candidates. The relationship of one part of the extract to the whole extract was poorly established. Many candidates failed to explain the ways in which the use of literary devices can add to the dramatic impact.

Question 5

The two-part comprehension/analysis question was not well done. Many candidates were unable to offer comments on the dramatic significance of the stage movement or Ampoma's closing speech. The ability to make connections between discrete moments of a dramatic extract and the overall organization of the work of art is one kind of skill in the candidate's critical thinking repertoire that is clearly deficient. More attention needs to be given to the ways in which the writer's use of specific moments/techniques in a dramatic text help to contribute to the impact of the larger structural elements of drama such as thematic development, characterization, structural symmetry and audience response. Candidates must always bear in the mind that a play is always meant to be performed before an audience.

Module 2: Poetry

The questions in this module tested candidates' ability to recognize imagery and to comment on the appropriateness of those images, to recognize contrasts, to correctly identify sound devices such as alliteration and assonance and to evaluate the effectiveness of their use, to explain the ways in which sound might contribute to mood and to comment on the significance of the title to the poem as a whole. On this module, candidates' performance was less than satisfactory. Candidates seem to have difficulty with the syntax and vocabulary of the poem, in spite of the glossing of several words. Even the question asking candidates to explain two lines of the poem was not well handled. It was also noted that candidates were imposing from the outset interpretations that they could not support with evidence from the poem. The preparation of our candidates should expose them to all forms of writing, even writing with unconventional syntax. If candidates are reading and understanding Shakespeare, then they ought not to have problems understanding the syntax of a poet of the 1800s (Romantic period).

Question 6

Candidates performed well on this comprehension-type question. Candidates were asked to identify three aspects of the woman's physical appearance and three aspects of her character that the persona admired.

Question 7

This question that tested candidates' knowledge and application skills was not as satisfactorily done as expected. Some candidates had problems with the knowledge portion of the question: many did not know the terms "assonance" and "alliteration" (See Syllabus "Specific Objectives 3" Page 9). All of the concepts in the syllabus must be covered for this part of the examination. Also, many candidates failed to explain the way in which the use of sound devices assisted the poet in creating the mood of the poem. In this poem, for example, the candidates could have discussed the use of the mellow "o" and "u" vowel sounds that contribute to the calm/romantic mood created in the poem. Alternatively, candidates could comment on the soft, seductive "s" and liquid "l" sounds or the long vowel sounds or the harmonious rhyming sounds that all help to create the mood of contentment, romance and awesome reverence.

Question 8

This comprehension/analysis question requiring candidates to explain specified lines was surprisingly poorly done. Some candidates seized on one word, read the word out of context and totally misunderstood the lines. Comprehension ought not to be a major problem for candidates at this level. For example, many took the word "impaired" rather literally and linked the word to visual impairment. Thus, answers such as "I think the lines speak of the persona's eyes, and speaks of her visual impairment." There was no connection to the first part of the sentence in the poem. The idea that nothing short of this perfect light (no shade lighter or darker) is crucial for observing the woman's

beauty was missed by most candidates. Without understanding the lines, candidates would experience difficulty completing the second part of the question which was to then explain the effectiveness of the lines. The writer's use of light imagery and the symbolism of perfection that was evident in these lines would most likely be missed.

Question 9

This question testing the candidates' application skills was not well done. Although candidates usually do not have trouble with identifying imagery, they seem to have problems grasping the concept of contrast/juxtaposition. There were various pairs of contrasting imagery throughout the poem (dark/bright, dark/light, day/night, ray/shade, glow/shade, more/less, tender light/gaudy day), yet the majority of candidates could not even get full marks for identifying two pairs of these juxtaposed images. Not surprisingly, then, they were also not able to effectively comment on the appropriateness of the writer's use of contrasting images.

Question 10

Candidates did not perform satisfactorily on this comprehension/analysis question. Most candidates could explain what the title of the poem meant, but many could not comment on the significance of the writer's choice of title to the understanding of the poem as a whole. Candidates must avoid vague, generalized answers that do not clearly indicate their precise understandings of the poem. Answers such as "the title helps to create a clear picture of what is to be revealed in the poem" are too vague to help the candidate gain marks. If the picture is so clear, then the candidate should be able to explain that the title announces the focus of the poem to be about a "woman of beauty." Furthermore, the image of movement or her "walking in beauty" or the declarative statement of the title or the reverential tone of the statement or the emphasis on the personal pronoun "she" are all possible kinds of significance that the candidate can comment on as important in leading us to a fuller understanding of the poem. Again, attention to the ways in which artistic choices are part of a larger design needs to be reinforced. Significance in terms of thematic focus, development of tone and mood, atmosphere and organizational structure needs to be emphasized.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

Candidates understood the extract and performed well on this module. The questions here tested candidates' knowledge of diction, figurative devices, characterization and atmosphere. Surprisingly, candidates did not perform well on the last question which was a straightforward comprehension /analysis question.

Question 11

Candidates responded satisfactorily to this knowledge/application question. Most candidates were able to identify the figure of speech. However, many candidates faltered when asked to identify the impression given of the house by this comparison. Weaker candidates tended to quote lines rather than explain the association being made with the house when the writer refers to it as a "museum of better times."

Question 12

This application question was satisfactorily done. Candidates found the question straightforward and responded adequately. Candidates were asked to identify two aspects of Mrs Chowdhury's character that are revealed by the physical description of the house. Candidates were directed to the lines they should use to support their answer.

Question 13

In this comprehension/analysis question, most candidates could handle the comprehension part of the question very well. However, many experienced difficulty making a connection between the writer's diction and the atmosphere identified. Part of the practice of "close reading" emphasized by this syllabus is to be able to explain how the writer achieves certain effects.

Question 14

Generally, candidates were able to use evidence from the passage to identify character traits of Mrs Chowdhury. This application question was well handled.

Question 15

This comprehension/analysis question was not well handled. Many candidates needed to identify Mrs Chowdhury's state of mind from the lines indicated and then link the effective representation of the character's state of mind to the writer's use of language in the commentary.

Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

While the performance on the essays continues to be satisfactory in the area of knowledge, application of knowledge and organization, too few candidates are managing to obtain higher than adequate marks. Many candidates are not exploring the opportunities to gain higher scores by demonstrating a range of knowledge, by carefully constructing a clear, logical argument or by presenting good models of organization and expression. In the area of knowledge, some candidates referred to knowledge of genre or the writer's biographical, historical and social contexts in their answers, but many of them were still not synthesizing this information into a strong argument in response to the questions. Also, candidates need to formulate a proper introduction and conclusion to their argument. **Outlining the argument in the introduction of an essay establishes, very early, a candidate's main thesis and provides a guide for the candidate to maintain focus throughout the essay.** A re-statement of the question followed by an assertion does not constitute a proper introduction. Here is a typical example of a weak introduction: 'A great poet is never restricted to the use of similes and metaphors in exploring issues of life.' This statement can be argued to be true for the poems 'She Dwelt Among Untrodden Ways,' 'Solitary Reaper' and 'I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud'. Also, it is often important to define the terms on which the argument rests. **However, candidates should not waste time taking this requirement to an extreme.** This type of response by a candidate is not helpful:

To accumulate a full understanding of this statement, one has to look beyond the horizons to decipher its hidden contents. To achieve this, one has to define the key terms. The key terms are defined as follows: 'great' can refer to something or someone superb or possessing power, 'poet' is a person who writes poems, 'never' refers to something that will not exist, 'restricted' means not allowed or it could also mean limited, 'similes' are the comparison of two things using as or like, metaphors are the comparison of two things without using as or like...

Candidates need not define every word, but just the word or words whose definition allows him/her to establish a good argument. Many candidates often seem to write without planning or outlining. Too many candidates produce very inadequate introductions. Far too many candidates are not maximizing their marks by paying particular attention to the effective use of: thesis sentence, introduction, transition, paragraphing and conclusion. Also, too often, the language of candidates at this level remains pedestrian.

In drama, more focus needs to be given to drama objectives 2 and 3. Candidates' ability 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" is what is being tested. Much more emphasis has to be given to exercises that help the candidates develop critical judgments about literature.

Whenever some themes are highlighted in a question, candidates tend to ignore the fact that the writer has chosen a particular genre to articulate those concerns. Attention to the elements of poetry, literary devices and poetic forms, for example, should be given equal attention. While there has been improvement on the prose module with fewer candidates merely telling the story, more work has to be done on reinforcing the features of the genre. Carefully selected incidents from the plot should be used primarily as evidence to support an argument. Furthermore, 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 like interior monologue, stream of consciousness and satire might become significant aspects of the writer's **narrative technique** in exploring various issues. On the poetry module, students should be guided not to treat poetry as merely sociology.

Module 1: Drama

Question 1

The Drama module contains the text-specific questions in this Unit and these allow candidates to focus on particular aspects of the dramatic texts. This particular question was designed to test a candidate's ability to critically assess the sources of theatrical appeal in the play, *Much Ado About Nothing*. In examining the dramatic representation of the relationship between men and women, candidates were expected to pay attention to the ways in which the playwright's choice of language, literary devices, structural elements and features of drama might help to create dramatic impact. Essentially, the question required candidates to indicate the sources of theatrical appeal. While the responses were generally satisfactory (especially in the discussion of relationships between men and women and in demonstrating knowledge of historical context), some candidates tended not to focus enough on the phrase "theatrical appeal" and missed opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of genre. It is very encouraging to see more candidates making use of their knowledge of the historical, political and social contexts of the plays in their responses to the question; however, candidates need to focus more on the theatrical dimension of dramatic texts. More attention needs to be given to objectives 2 and 3 of the drama objectives. Candidates' ability to evaluate the effectiveness of "the playwright's choice of language, use of literary devices and stage conventions and manipulation of the structural elements of drama" is being tested by these kinds of questions.

Question 2

The performance on this question was marginally better than that for Question 1. Question 2 required candidates to consider the significance of the visual and comedic appeal of *Much Ado About Nothing*. While many candidates discussed the use of comedy in the play, many candidates failed to engage with the word "thoughtful." The phrase "thoughtful laughter" was used to help candidates think of humour as functioning not just for theatrical effect, but also for its role in stimulating reflection on serious and significant issues. Also, many candidates failed to focus on the visual appeal of the play. While candidates need not accept the validity of the statement, they should engage the significant terms of the question. As usual, the question left room for candidates to suggest that there were other sources of dramatic impact other than what was suggested in the question.

Question 3

While the questions on *Henry IV, Part 1* were not as popular as those on *Much Ado About Nothing*, the performance was marginally better on the questions on the history play than the questions on the comedy. Candidates were very good at discussing the play's concern with human relationships, but some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge of "stage action" and "stage spectacle." In this play that features a war, for example, there are many instances for creating stage spectacle (visual images on stage) and stage action: movement of large groups of people in fighting, elaborate costuming for military dress, the number of props for war activity, and action that leads to death (the staging of death), to state a few. Candidates should not forget that the written play provides the blueprint for a theatrical production and should pay attention to clues for the staging of the drama. Knowledge of features and elements of drama, as well as the use of stage conventions is crucial for strong performances in this module.

Question 4

Of the two *Henry IV, Part 1* questions, the better performance was seen on this question. Candidates were required to assess the ways in which drama was an effective vehicle for the "representation of power." Many of the weaker candidates tended to focus on the issue of power, but not always to discuss the "dramatic" representation of power. A critical evaluation of the playwright's manipulation of elements of drama (plot, setting, characterization), features of drama (dialogue, soliloquy, aside, stage directions) and stage conventions (costuming, lighting, sound effects, movements, backdrop and props) would help candidates to earn top marks in both knowledge and application. Although the works of art on the drama module will have the distinctiveness of dramatic features which implies staging, these works rely on literary language as well.

Module 2: Poetry

Question 5

Although this question fore-grounded the music of rhyme and rhythm, it required candidates to consider what leads to enjoyment in poetry. This question was satisfactorily done and represented the best performance across genres on this paper. However, while candidates could discuss various themes of the poems and demonstrated knowledge of figurative devices, many were unable to confidently discuss metre, rhythm, rhyme or lineation. Often, the discussion of these literary techniques was limited to vague, imprecise pronouncements. For example, a topic statement such as "Rhythm is an important element of poetry, which gives life to the themes of peace and beauty in nature" is too general a statement to be an effective topic sentence. Why does the theme of "peace" need life? What does it mean to "give life to a theme"? Specific rhythms may contribute to mood and atmosphere which might also reinforce certain themes, but candidates are not gaining any marks for these generalizing comments that do not indicate that they understand the ways in which the poet's choice of literary conventions can be effective in thematic development. In very good responses, candidates discussed with ease and comfort the various ways in which the music of rhythm and rhyme contributed to the enjoyment of the poetry. To their credit, many candidates did not limit the enjoyment of poetry to only the poet's use of rhythm and rhyme, they also considered the range of devices available to the poet. Here is an example of a candidate who did not restrict the focus to only rhyme and rhythm: "While rhyme and rhythm first capture our attention, it is the poetic word choice that creates a more lasting intellectual impression." Objective 3 of the syllabus needs constant emphasis 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, metre, lineation, and rhyme" (9). Candidates must also be careful of merely listing generic features and providing examples; they must be able to explain the function of these devices in augmenting meaning. In addition, relevant extra-textual information can be of great use in responding to the questions.

Question 6

This question was the more popular choice and many candidates did not have any trouble using any of the three poets Margaret Atwood, William Wordsworth and Robert Frost to debate the statement: “A great poet is never restricted to the use of similes and metaphors in exploring issues of life.” As usual the words “great” and “restricted” provided points of debate or controversy that would allow candidates to express their own personal response to these issues in literature. Candidates are only just beginning to offer their personal responses, supported by carefully selected evidence and well constructed arguments. The “relationship between form and content” is at the heart of all the questions and candidates should continue to grasp the opportunities given to discuss the means by which poets achieve artistic impact.

Question 7

The performance on this question was satisfactory. However, many candidates gave priority to theme over technique. As a consequence, there was a disproportionate emphasis on cultural and historical concerns to the near exclusion of discussions of the writer’s craft. The ability to see and discuss the relationship between theme and narrative technique is absolutely crucial for doing well on these questions. Candidates should note that knowledge of generic features (plot, characterization, point of view, setting, structure, motif, flashback, interior monologue, for example) is more than just listing. Candidates will need to discuss the ways in which each element of fiction or each narrative technique is mobilized to reinforce theme. These questions require candidates to assess the relationship between narrative technique and theme, between form and content. Too many candidates are ignoring the fact that literature is an art form with distinctive features marking each genre. While this question was satisfactorily done, weaker students ignored the part of the question that asked them to discuss “the extent to which” the statement was true. Again, candidates are denying themselves the chance to earn higher marks on application of knowledge by not making more discriminating arguments prompted by that phrase. 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. More practice in comparative essay writing is needed. Students should be encouraged to see how themes are developed by way of the resources of the prose genre. In addition, students need to develop their writing skills paying attention to diction, syntax and the use of transitions to connect their ideas.

Question 8

Candidates generally performed satisfactorily on this question. Most candidates were knowledgeable about the characterization, theme and some basic narrative elements such as plot and setting. 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. Teachers should ensure that discussions of themes are not separated from discussions of narrative form and technique. Also, many candidates ignored the phrase “depends entirely” which opens up a debate about the primary technique used by writers to anchor theme. This kind of extreme position helps to trigger the candidates’ personal response which in turn provides the basis for more nuanced arguments. Here is one example:

In the novels *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Brother Man*, the element of characterization is fundamental to thematic and plot development. However, in general, characterization can never be the sole element which determines thematic development, as the writer combines characterization with several other narrative techniques. In this essay, I will show that thematic development is depended on the writers’ manipulation of characterization, as well as imagery, symbolism and interior monologue.

Making evaluations about artistic production is at the heart of this examination; the question provided this kind of opportunity for the candidates' informed personal response. Students should be encouraged to articulate their informed personal responses to literature and should be made aware of opportunities that questions provide for such personal opinion. The section of the question, "discuss the extent to which you agree," provides such an opportunity.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Unit 2

Paper 01 – Short-Answer Questions

Module 1: Drama

Candidates found this extract interesting and responded satisfactorily to the questions. The questions on this module tested candidates' ability to explain the ways in which meaning is conveyed through the playwright's choice of language, use of structural elements such as characterization and setting, and use of features of drama such as stage directions and prop. However, the ability to explain the significance of specific lines to the extract as a whole and to explain dramatic function was not always evident in candidates' responses.

Question 1

This knowledge/comprehension question was satisfactorily handled. Most candidates provided the correct responses; however, weaker candidates described settings based on inferences that could not be conclusively supported by evidence and therefore could not receive full marks for such answers.

Question 2

This knowledge/application question was satisfactorily done. Although many candidates provided acceptable answers, there were some candidates who did not observe the restriction "revealed in the opening stage directions." Consequently, some candidates provided character traits that were observed in other parts of the extract. Candidates should therefore pay attention to the specific requirements of the question. It is important that candidates can distinguish between stage directions and dialogue.

Question 3

For this question, basic comprehension was required. Most candidates were able to provide evidence for the inferences they made about the personalities of Cutler, Toledo and Slow Dog. However, some candidates failed to provide the appropriate evidence for their inferences about characters. Candidates should also lay out answers so that the correct quotation is clearly linked with the appropriate character.

Question 4

This analysis question was not as well done as the examiners would have expected. The question required candidates to assess the ways in which the playwright's use of a prop contributed to dramatic effect. The ability to comment on the playwright's artistic choices for the development of various aspects of the drama (character revelation and development, thematic development, plot development – creation of conflict, complication, climax, building dramatic tension, creating stage symbol or action or to develop audience engagement) is evidently lacking in many candidates. This exercise in critical thinking through this analysis-type question continues to demonstrate weaknesses in candidate preparation.

Again, attention to the ways in which artistic choices support the larger design of an artwork needs to be reinforced. Many of the exercises for the internal assessment provide practice for these types of questions requiring critical thinking skills.

Question 5

Candidates did not do much better on this comprehension/analysis question than they did on Question 4. The ability to see relationships between a specific utterance in dialogue and the way in which the entire drama is being developed requires urgent attention. The ability to comment on the playwright's artistic choices for the development of various aspects of the drama (character revelation and development, thematic development, plot development - creation of conflict, complication, climax, building dramatic tension, creating stage symbol or action or to develop audience engagement) needs to be developed.

Module 2: Poetry

While the performance on this Module in Unit 2 was better than the performance on the Unit 1 Module 2, candidates are still performing below expectation on this the poetry module. The questions in this section tested candidates' knowledge of diction, rhyme, figures of speech and the ability to evaluate the effective use of these devices. Generally, candidates had no difficulty describing the context of the poem. However, many candidates were unable to identify rhyme. Moreover, the inability to explain the effectiveness of literary devices continues to be a weakness and, accordingly, candidates were unable to offer adequate comments on the significance of these devices.

Question 6

This comprehension-type question was well done. The majority of candidates scored full marks. Although evidence was not required, many candidates provided evidence which showed that they fully understood this aspect of the poem and they responded adequately to this task.

Question 7

The two skills tested on this question were comprehension and analysis. Candidates had to identify the adjective and then comment on the effectiveness of the writer's choice of that adjective. For example, in responding to Part 7 (i) "mechanical encounter" (line 3), one appropriate answer could have been "the writer's choice of the adjective "mechanical" is effective in conveying the monotony of waiting to do banking transactions. Both tellers and customers are aware of the conventions of banking and the workers carry out their functions in a kind of automatic and automated fashion." Many candidates tended to offer explanations that did not identify the adjective in the phrase nor addressed its effectiveness.

Question 8

Though some candidates could identify the rhyme, not many of them could offer comments that were adequate. Their answers tended to be vague in this knowledge/application question. The significance of the rhymes to mood creation, structural development and thematic reinforcement could be more clearly explained.

Question 9

This knowledge/application question was not as well done as one would have expected. Most candidates were able to identify metaphor for both examples. However, many candidates were unable to explain the significance of the writer's choices. For example, for the phrase "shrine of economics" (line 19), a candidate could say that "in this example, the writer uses shrine as a metaphor.

By bringing a symbol of worship to associate with economics, the writer is able to suggest that people tend to worship money or genuflect to the economic machinations of the world.”

Question 10

The last question on this module required candidates to see endings as significant in the development of theme and in the creation of poetic structure. This analysis-type question that required candidates to make connections between “the part and the whole” (the ending and the entire poem) continues to create difficulty for candidates. In most cases, candidates were only able to offer ONE explanation and in that explanation, many were unable to see the connection between the specific moment and the overall development of theme or the careful creation of poetic structure. For example, a candidate could focus on the imperfect rhyme in the last stanza and could offer an explanation such as this one: “The use of the imperfect rhyme of “glance” and “thanks” in the last four lines structurally reinforces the idea that beautiful things are not often encountered in the cold world of finance. A “glance” is a small look or a look of short duration – that offers a glimpse of something and, for these “small mercies” of beauty that are so rarely seen, we should be grateful.” Or alternatively, a candidate could say “the last four lines are an appropriate ending to the poem because they create a contrast to the first four lines that emphasize monetary activity compared to aesthetic beauty that is featured in the end.” Stronger candidates were able to explain effectiveness in terms of thematic and/or structural importance to the poem.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

Although this passage was very accessible, candidates performed below expectation primarily because they had gaps in their knowledge about basic concepts such as “adjective” and “contrast.” As in Unit 1 Module 1 and Module 2 that had questions with the word “contrast,” candidates performed abysmally. Similarly, the question about adjectives in Module 2 of this Unit elicited poor responses, primarily because it was evident that candidates at the CAPE level did not know the part of speech—adjective. The questions on this module tested candidates’ knowledge of diction (use of adjectives), imagery and contrast. Candidates were also asked to demonstrate the ways in which writers were able to create dominant impressions of characters and setting. Further, their critical thinking and evaluation skills were tested. Again, when questions were posed requiring candidates to explain connections between the writer’s choices at specific points in the narrative to the overall thematic emphasis and structural design, they seemed to flounder and fall short in their performance of these critical thinking skills.

Question 11

This comprehension/analysis question was well done. Most candidates scored full marks. Candidates were required to indicate the ways in which a dominant impression is created about a specific character.

Question 12

In this question, candidates were required to locate evidence to support TWO dominant impressions that the writer conveyed about an aspect of setting. Candidates found this comprehension/application question straightforward and were able to perform satisfactorily.

Question 13

This knowledge/analysis question posed difficulties for many candidates. Many seemed unfamiliar with the concept of contrast. Not all scored full marks for even the section requiring them to identify images of light and dark. It was therefore not surprising that comments on the effectiveness of the writer’s use of contrasting images were inadequate.

Question 14

Surprisingly, most candidates were unable to identify the adjectives in the phrases given: “lofty drawing room” (Line 1), “polished sarcophagus” (Line 5) - the word “sarcophagus” was glossed - “ashy halo” (Line 12) for this comprehension/analysis question. Without being able to identify the adjective, most candidates therefore encountered difficulty in attempting to explain the effectiveness of the writer’s diction (choice of adjective). It was also clear that many candidates did not know the meaning of the word “lofty” nor could they use context clues to figure out its meaning.

Question 15

Candidates failed to maximize marks on this comprehension/analysis question. While some were able to explain the meaning of the phrase, many encountered difficulty commenting on the significance of this phrase to the passage as a whole. The ability to make connections between the phrase and thematic development and structural design in the passage seems to be weak.

Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

Compared to Unit 1, Paper 02, the performance on Unit 2, Paper 02 was marginally better this year. Of the three genres, the best performance over the two Units was in drama. However, candidates will not score very high marks if they only write on one book for the drama module in which candidates are required to answer the questions with reference to two books. In respect of the poetry module, candidates seemed to produce much better answers on Martin Carter’s poetry than on Olive Senior’s. While some very brilliant essays on Senior’s work have been produced, there is a general tendency to treat her work as sociology rather than as literature. Candidates must pay attention to the directive of questions that helps them to focus on the matter of artistic representation. Yet, many candidates’ knowledge of the writer’s craft is in name only. In many of the responses, candidates are only listing some techniques, but are not demonstrating that they understand how these techniques help to reinforce meaning/theme.

In addition, **the understanding of how rhyme, rhythm and metrical arrangement function in poetry is less than satisfactory.** The ability to write a cogent argument, using evidence to explain why the writer’s choice of a particular poetic technique helps the reader to understand the thematic emphases is glaringly absent from many of these responses. In respect to the third module, not enough reference is being made to **the elements of prose fiction such as narrative point of view, characterization, setting, structure, motif and use of literary devices** that provide a writer with tools for representation. The term narrative technique covers all the tools of prose fiction that the writer can manipulate to explore various issues and themes.

Candidates should be given exercises to improve 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 the 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.

Module 1: DramaQuestion 1

This question required candidates to determine the primary source of dramatic appeal in the plays they have studied. They were specifically asked whether dramatic appeal is primarily related to the “playwright’s use of stage conventions” or subject matter.

The question sets up an opposition between the two, but most candidates challenged that opposition and showed that dramatic appeal might not be limited to any one element or feature of drama. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, producing the best performance of all questions on Paper 02 of this 2009 examination. Weaker candidates could discuss with confidence theme, plot and characterization, but many did not examine the other dramatic features. Many candidates even when they considered the other dramatic features, such as stage conventions experienced difficulty in establishing a relationship between the dramatic elements and meaning (See page 6 of CAPE Syllabus). The ability of candidates to assess the dramatic impact of a playwright's use of the structural elements of drama was crucial for doing well on this question. Candidates need to be able to explain the crucial relationships between form and content, theme and style. Also, some candidates did not focus on the central issue of what determines dramatic appeal; many candidates only discussed dramatic techniques and their role in reinforcing theme. However, they needed to show in that discussion what determines dramatic appeal. This kind of open-endedness of the question provides room for candidates to receive marks for their informed personal response and to gain better marks for application of knowledge.

Question 2

The essential issue of Question 2 is “what makes a play memorable”? Although the question offers its own answer by suggesting that “dramatic representation of conflict” is what makes a play memorable, it is a proposition that is open to debate. Candidates were expected to use their own experience with these plays as the basis for their responses. These types of debatable statements provide room for candidates to establish various responses that can incorporate their informed personal response. Candidates were given an opportunity to suggest other factors, beyond conflict, that make the play memorable. Any attention to Objectives 1, 2 or 3 should have provided ready answers to the question. One should note as well that “**dramatic** representation of conflict” also provides room for discussion what tools and resources of drama did the playwright employ to magnify the conflict in the plays and, therefore, make the play memorable? In *King Lear*, for example, how do the stage actions of putting Lear out of his daughter's house or the gruesome plucking out of Gloucester's eyes magnify the family conflicts that in turn make the play memorable? More attention to question analysis and to the significant features and elements of drama will help candidates to respond more effectively to such questions. The performance on this question was satisfactory.

Module 2: Poetry

Question 3

This question represented the first of four specific questions on Paper 02. The performance on this question was generally satisfactory, as it was on all the questions on Paper 02. Most candidates performed creditably, but they did not take full advantage of gaining higher grades with this question. While most candidates demonstrated knowledge of Senior's vision of Caribbean life, not all candidates were connecting her use of irony and other literary techniques in elaborating this vision. Many candidates spent most of their time narrating the content of the (narrative) poems, but failed to explain the effectiveness of Senior's use of various poetic techniques. Teachers must engage in exercises that force candidates to make connections between poetic technique and theme. They should also be warned about discussing thematic issues in isolation and treating poetry as merely history or sociology; they should not ignore the artistry of poetry.

Objective 3 of the poetry objectives needs to be emphasized. The ability to “explain how meaning is expressed through the poet's choice of language, literary devices, and the conventional elements commonly found in poetry such as imagery, symbol, alliteration, assonance, metre, lineation and rhyme” needs to be demonstrated to maximize marks.

The more capable candidates identified these other features of the poetic genre that they saw engaged by Senior to express her vision of Caribbean life. Yet, some candidates failed to take up the opportunity to respond to the specific question of whether any one technique (namely irony) was more important than other techniques in expressing Senior's vision of Caribbean life. So, for one candidate, "though irony is almost an identifying characteristic of Senior's tone, it undoubtedly works hand in hand with her skillful use of other techniques". We are gratified by candidates demonstrating knowledge of extra-textual information such as information culled from history, from statements made by the author or from knowledge of the author's life and also from evaluations and interpretations of critics. However, they need to also apply this information to the question asked. Synthesizing their material as a response to the question is crucial in candidates maximizing their marks under "application of knowledge," which represents the largest portion of the essay marks.

Question 4

This question required candidates to engage with poetic craft by directing attention to Senior's use of repetition in her poetry. Many candidates who chose this question recognized repetition as an important feature of Senior's craft and many clearly demonstrated extra-textual knowledge (biographical, historical, critical information). However, many candidates did not marshal the extra-textual information as a response to the specific question and many could not make any connections with other aspects of Senior's craft. Beyond repetition (as seen in recurring motifs, structural repetition in terms of syntax and line/phrase parallelisms, and repetition of words) or repetition as in recurring themes and tropes, are there other techniques that are important to her poetic craft? Expanding the response to include other elements of the poetic genre would also have been an effective way to respond to the question. Alternatively, candidates could also argue that stylistic and/or thematic repetition is not the most important feature of her craft.

Question 5

The performance on the Carter questions was much better than the performance on the questions on Senior. Many candidates who attempted this question were able to avoid the theme/poetic technique divide because the question emphasized this relationship. The essential question is what accounts for the "enduring power of Martin Carter's poetry". Many candidates were able to correctly discuss both the themes of Martin Carter's poetry, as well as features of his poetic craft beyond imagery (symbolism, metaphor and tone), but not all of them engaged with whether one element of craft or the other determines the enduring power of the poetry. More attention to question-analysis skills will be important for candidates to maximize their scores.

Question 6

Many candidates responded to the implied connection between the melodramatic quality and the careful crafting of Carter's poetry, suggested by the question. The suggestion that melodrama in poetry is not necessarily in opposition to careful crafting elicited very strong responses from the candidates. Many did not agree with this characterization of Carter's poetry as melodramatic. Indeed, this kind of interrogation and resistance to the suggestions of these statements provided the candidates with the opportunity to present their informed personal responses and their solid arguments challenging these statements. These kinds of careful arguments are able to earn higher marks in the application of knowledge marks. Some of the weaker candidates ignored the phrase "melodramatic quality" and only focused on the careful crafting. Nevertheless, by focusing on aspects of poetic language such as tone, symbolism, diction, imagery, oxymoron, repetition, puns, motifs and exaggeration, many were able to discuss the relationship between artistic choices and thematic development in Carter's poetry. Consideration of all parts of the question can allow for candidates receiving optimum returns in the awarding of marks for application of knowledge. This question was fairly well done.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

Question 7

Satisfactory performance was observed in the responses to this question that required candidates to evaluate the centrality of memories to narrative structure and thematic development. Candidates demonstrated knowledge of thematic concerns and memories of the past, but many had difficulty discussing narrative structure. Candidates should note the generic features of prose fiction (plot, characterization, point of view, setting, narrative arrangement, motif, flashback, interior monologue and so on) are covered by the term, narrative structure. Any of the narrative conventions available to a prose fiction writer allows for the writer to carefully organize the story for maximum artistic effect. In this question again, candidates failed to engage with the debatable parts of the question requiring them to make judgments on whether the statement provides a valid account of the novels. The essential question of what determines narrative structure and thematic concerns in these novels was not always dominant in the candidates' responses.

Question 8

While this question was satisfactorily done, on the whole, many candidates concentrated more on the writers' use of motif primarily as theme, but not as symbol, trope or structuring device. Additionally, not many candidates focused on the word "cohesion" that implied that works of prose are carefully structured to have coherence. What provides the ordering or organizational principles of a work of fiction? Is there any one device that single-handedly provides coherence for a work of art? Although the word "**solely**" was printed in bold, many candidates ignored that part of the question inviting debate and interrogation. The opportunities for more refined arguments are often avoided by most candidates and this suggests that they need more practice in developing their own informed responses to literature and in building confidence in making judgements on artistic expression. The activities of the internal assessment provides such opportunities and teachers need to use them in such a way as to demonstrate the connection between those activities and the external papers that the candidates sit.

UNIT 1 and UNIT 2

Paper 03 - Internal Assessment

The performance on the Internal Assessment this year was similar to that of last year. The samples show evidence that candidates are enjoying these activities that provide room for their critical judgment, informed personal response and creativity. It was apparent from the submissions that candidates enjoyed the assignments. The art pieces of specific scenes were well done and the dramatic adaptation, through live performance, was generally well done, too. However, the explanatory texts did not always provide the evaluative dimension required to score high marks. This explanation should provide reasons for 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 would be crucial for scoring high marks. Too many candidates can only list features without sufficient analysis of their effective deployment in the piece of art. However, sometimes the problem was related to the passage selected that 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. Also, in some cases, 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 continue to be vigilant about plagiarism but should always provide the evidence and explanation when such an example is included in the sample. Candidates must be reminded of the word limit of 1500 - 2000 words.

In some cases of the critical responses to a review, excellent review articles of appropriate length and quality that provided candidates with the opportunity to offer reasoned arguments and informed personal responses were selected. Candidates were able to find room to agree and disagree with different aspects of these articles, using textual evidence to support their claims. The weaker responses tended to merely summarize the critical essay/review without any evaluation of the critic's argument or any reference to the characteristics and features of the genre. Others sometimes lost focus on evaluating the essay and began discussing the poems studied, but not as a means to challenge or support the critic's ideas. Some candidates still seem to have difficulty in offering "informed" opinions on these critical essays. Candidates are reminded of the need to identify the source of the review.

Some teachers are not paying enough attention to the requirements of the syllabus. Here are a few reminders:

1. The syllabus stipulates the use of "prescribed" texts for assignments.
2. It is the detailed commentary (of 1500-2000 words) that is marked out of 48 not the reinterpretation or other creative pieces.
3. Teachers should ensure that if students are given the highest marks in each category their assignments are excellent in nature.
4. Some teachers are not adhering to the stipulation of sending 5 samples. Some send two or three even when they have 8 or 15 candidates doing the examination. Some send in two of three even though the rules specify that all should be submitted if there are fewer than 5 candidates. Teachers are reminded that such practices adversely affect the candidates' final grade.