

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
ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2010**

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The candidate entry for the Literatures in English examination has stabilized. The 2010 examination had a combined candidate entry (Units 1 and 2) of 3195, just about the same for the past three years. The performance on this year's examination, the fourth testing of the revised syllabus, approximated to about the same as the previous two years, in Unit 2. However, there was an increase in the overall performance in Unit 1, with a corresponding increase in the candidates gaining the higher grades in both units. As a consequence more candidates achieved Grades I, II and III this year. The overall improvement is a result of improvements in all three modules on the paper. There continues to be improvement on Paper 02 of the examination, but there is still room for improvement on some aspects of the essay paper. While candidates gained more marks for showing evidence of knowledge of genre, the performance on the poetry and drama modules was basically about the same, but there was a significant improvement in the performance on prose.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN KNOWLEDGE

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 at that basic level. 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, fewer candidates are merely narrating the story or relevant sections of the story and are now producing more analytic essays. In all genres, candidates can also improve their performance on the knowledge profile by expanding their knowledge in extra-textual information — contextual, biographical and critical.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN APPLICATION AND ORGANIZATION

Candidates will have to continue to improve their essay writing, question analysis and argumentative skills in order to improve their performance on the skill of application and organization. There is evidence that most candidates are not making a plan for their essays before writing them and this lack of coherence and focus will definitely affect their application or organization grade.

Candidates should learn the importance of writing a good introduction which is more than a repeat of the question and a list of the books or poems that they will refer to in their discussion. Isolating the key terms of the question and indicating the definition of key words that will help build an argument must be emphasized. Candidates must be able to write a thesis statement articulating their own position in relationship to the question, to summarize their supporting arguments and to indicate the kinds of evidence they will use to augment their argument. Candidates should also be encouraged to effectively use topic sentences, clincher sentences and transitions to organize their argument. Some candidates need to be taught how to integrate quotations into the body of their discussion.

While film versions of literary texts can be very useful in exploring the ideas and issues of the set texts and in providing a context for evaluating artistic choices, they should not be used as a substitute for the actual literary text. Some training must also be done to helping candidates to learn how to analyse examination questions. This would involve their being able to identify the key terms of the question, the task that is set for them and to ensure that all aspects of the question are addressed in their plan of a response to the question.

DETAILED COMMENTS

UNIT 1

Paper 01 – Short-Answer Questions

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 (especially the use of irony), use of structural elements such as characterization, and features of drama such as stage directions and props. Also, candidates were expected to evaluate the role of humour in this extract.

Generally, many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the genre of drama; the questions on characterization, use of props and the function of stage directions were well done. Even the questions requiring candidates to make judgements about the use of these dramatic features were fairly well done. However, the evaluation of the playwright's use of humour and irony was not as effectively done as one would expect. Some of the weaker candidates did not know the dramatic concept of a prop.

Module 1: Drama

Question 1

Generally this knowledge/comprehension question was well answered. Candidates were able to identify character traits and could provide evidence for their claim. The evidence provided could be in the form of a quotation, line reference, paraphrase or summary.

Question 2

This knowledge/analysis question was well handled by candidates, although there were some weaker candidates who did not know ‘prop’ — one of the significant tools of staging a play. Most candidates could identify the ‘switchboard’ and the ‘telephone’, but not as many noted the ‘chewing gum’. Most candidates were also able to comment on the dramatic significance of each prop in terms of any of the following: character development, stage action, conflict, symbolism, setting and its contribution to sound effects.

Question 3

Candidates were more able to identify the examples of humour than they were able to comment on the effectiveness of the playwright’s use of humour. Therefore, the knowledge portion of the knowledge/analysis question was better handled than the analysis portion. It is important that candidates develop the ability to make judgments on artistic choices. This is at the core of the syllabus and a demonstration of critical thinking skills. A number of main arguments could have developed around such points as: humour is used to engage the audience or to highlight conflict or to emphasize thematic concerns or to intensify the drama or to reveal character or even to establish a comic atmosphere.

Question 4

This two-part question was a knowledge/analysis type question as well. Around 70 per cent of candidates scored full marks for this question. Most candidates were able to explain the dramatic significance of stage directions. Many candidates were able to provide an explanation that emphasized the dramatic elements of characterization or thematic development or stage action or to produce irony/dramatic irony or to create sound effects.

Question 5

This two-part knowledge/analysis question was not well done. Many candidates were unable to demonstrate their knowledge of irony by offering an explanation of how the irony was produced or what was ironic about lines 56 – 57 of the passage. Any of the two clear ironies could have been cited: (1) It is ironic that after dedicating so much time on instructing Miss Brandon on how to use the phone to ensure he receives his calls, O’Keefe now insists that he wants no call put through to him OR (2) It is ironic that O’Keefe has such an inflated concept of himself, he declares that he is out of telephone reach of even God, when it is the one person with whom he would be compelled to speak if God ever called. Those who answered the second part of the question correctly could have discussed the way in which irony contributed to thematic development, character development or humour in the entire extract as a whole. A number of candidates failed to acquire full marks for questions such as these because they neglected to explore the holistic impact of irony on the entire passage.

Module 2: Poetry

The questions in this module tested candidates' ability to recognize imagery and to identify the form of the poem, to correctly identify literary devices such as imagery, simile, metaphor, irony, alliteration, oxymoron, paradox and symbolism and to evaluate the effectiveness of their use. They were also required to comment on the significance of the poet's word choice and to explain the effectiveness of the last line as a fitting end to the poem. On this module, candidates performed satisfactorily, however, Questions 9 and 10 posed problems for a number of candidates.

Question 6

Candidates performed well on this knowledge/comprehension question. They were able to identify the sonnet as the correct form of the poem and could easily identify three different responses of the persona to America.

Question 7

This question that tested candidates' knowledge and application skills was satisfactorily done. Some candidates, though, had problems with the application section of the question which required them to make judgements on the writer's use of literary devices. For 7 (a) 'bread of bitterness' (line 1), the possible answers included imagery, *metaphor*, *irony*, *alliteration*, *oxymoron* and *paradox*; for Part 7 (b) 'her tiger's tooth' (line 2), the possible answers included *imagery*, *metaphor*, *alliteration* and *symbolism*.

One possible commentary regarding the imagery in Part 7 (b) could be as follows:

The image of the tiger's tooth sinking into the persona's throat effectively conveys the idea that America viciously extracts more from the persona than s/he receives. The animal imagery associated with America further suggests that the persona is preyed upon by America who feeds him/her the 'bread of bitterness.'

Question 8

This knowledge/analysis question which required candidates to identify similes and comment on their effective use was satisfactorily done. Most candidates could identify the two similes and produce at least one good commentary on the effectiveness of the writer's use of simile. It is important in the commentary to establish clearly what two things are being compared and the effect that this comparison creates.

Question 9

This question which tested candidates' knowledge/application skills was surprisingly not well done. Candidates should not have had trouble with the basic concept of diction. Responses gaining full marks would make an association between the specific instance of the word choice and some larger development in the poem such as the persona's mood, attitude, overall response to America, or thematic development or the reinforcement of imagistic pattern.

One possible commentary could be:

The word 'darkly' is significant because through the writer's choice of this word, that is associated with negative emotion, the writer is able to convey the persona's brooding mood or feelings of anger. The use of this word effectively reinforces the impression conveyed that the 'pull' of America also elicits (dark) feelings of resentment.

Question 10

Candidates did not perform satisfactorily on this comprehension/analysis question. Most candidates could not give one clear reason why the last line was an effective ending to the poem. Candidates should have recognized the use of imagery in the line to convey ideas about America. In this final line, America is imaged metonymically through the reference to 'granite wonders', associated with America's 'might' which wanes after some time. First, candidates would have to read the lines prior to the last line to see what was 'sinking in the sand' and the referent of 'sinking' is 'her (America's) might and granite wonders' from line 12. Knowledge of English syntax is crucial for candidates to figure this out. When the persona looks into the future ('darkly I gaze into the days ahead'), s/he sees America's 'might' and monumental wonders sinking under the pressure of time's passage.

Candidates could comment on the power of the image at the end to reinforce the overall theme of the poem or to reinforce and extend the motif of water imagery used throughout the poem or any other reasonable response. Thematic development and structural symmetry are two clear ways in which the ending effectively connects with the rest of the poem. 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, symbolism, characterization and their ability to assess the significance of naming. The main question that posed problems for candidates was the last question which required that they comment on the significance of naming — in essence a question about symbolism.

Question 11

Candidates responded satisfactorily to this comprehension question. Most of them were able to identify two reasons for the narrator's sense of alienation and could provide evidence. Some candidates failed to separate their responses according to the sections outlined by the question.

Question 12

In this knowledge/analysis question, most candidates were able to identify an appropriate adjective for each parent and could explain what each adjective revealed about the narrator's attitude to each parent. There were, however, a few candidates who did not know what an adjective was.

Question 13

Most candidates could explain two ways in which the whip was symbolic of the father's character. Any of the following would have been among acceptable responses to the question: *violent nature, authoritative personality, love of power, his patriarchal tendency, his stern/cold or hard-hearted nature, his alienating nature, his sadistic nature or his tendency to be a disciplinarian*. The explanation would have made a link with the literal associations of a whip and the father's character. For example, here is one way of making that connection: *The whip is a symbol of violent action because it is used to inflict violence. By its association with the father, he is marked as an abusive person who seems to have no objection to punishing people via violent means.*

Question 14

Generally, candidates were able to identify character traits from the statements made by the main character. This application question was well handled.

Question 15

This comprehension/analysis question was not well handled. Many candidates needed to move their commentary beyond the literal; many of them only explained the circumstances of the giving of the names. For example, the name Nwanyibuife (a female is also something), according to candidates is given to the narrator because of the parents' disappointment in having yet another female child. However, the significance of saying 'a female is *also* something' was never addressed by these candidates. Many also failed to recognize the sarcasm expressed in the sentence that follows: 'Can you beat that?' One kind of significance is related to thematic development:

The name given by the father seems to reinforce the limited role that women in these societies are assigned. The word 'also' almost suggests that women are an after-thought and the vague 'something' that they can be almost suggests that their contribution will be rather nondescript and of little, unnamed significance.

However, the answers could also relate significance to structural and character development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS ON PAPER 01

On Paper 01, 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. In many cases where candidates were scoring 8 or 10 out of a possible 24 marks, there were candidates who were not even attempting to answer a whole question or parts of a question.

It is clear that candidates need to be given 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 all modules on the paper. Also, all candidates must pay equal attention to both Paper 01 and Paper 02 in order to maximize their performance overall.

Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

While performance on the essays continues to improve in the areas of knowledge, application of knowledge and in organization, many more candidates can access the higher grades. 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, more candidates are referring 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, from 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.

In drama, more focus needs to be given to 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 candidates develop critical judgements 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. On the poetry module, candidates should be guided not to treat poetry as merely sociology.

The elements of poetry, literary devices and poetic forms, for example, should be given equal focus. 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

Module 1: Drama

Question 1

In the Drama module, the text-specific questions allow candidates to focus on particular aspects of the dramatic texts. This particular question was designed to test candidates' ability to critically assess the sources of theatrical appeal in the play, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Specifically, candidates were asked to discuss whether the dramatic device of 'war', used to explore relationships of love, was the main source of theatrical appeal. It is important to note that the question gave candidates the chance to discuss those aspects of the play that help to create dramatic appeal and to construct an argument defending their own views of the play. In spite of the invitation to discuss the sources of theatrical appeal, too many candidates restricted themselves to the discussion of the theme of love to the exclusion of the other structural elements and features of drama. Attention to such features of drama as dialogue, soliloquy, stage directions, stage conventions (costume, lighting, sound effects, movement, set including backdrops and props, disguise, spectacle and other elements of drama such as plot structure, characterization and setting) would have enhanced these responses. Very little attention was given to language, although much of the humour/comedy is produced by the 'merry war of words' between characters such as Beatrice and Benedict; this comedy could be considered part of the play's theatrical appeal. More use could be made of the historical, political and social contexts of the play.

Question 2

Performance on this question was about the same as that on Question 1. This question required candidates to assess Shakespeare's use of 'spectacle'. Candidates were specifically directed to consider whether spectacle was used to explore the issues/themes of deceit and villainy in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*. While candidates were specifically directed in this question, the way the question was framed (asking candidates to say to what extent they agreed with the claim) provided a stimulus for candidates to provide their own 'informed and independent opinions and judgements about the chosen play' (CAPE Syllabus, 6). Many candidates seemed uncertain about the dramatic concept of spectacle which is usually a display that is large, lavish, unusual and striking, usually employed as much for its own effect as for its role in a dramatic work. Some of the sources of spectacle in the play that candidates could have discussed were the pomp and ceremony of the soldiers return from war, the visually striking nature of the garden — beauty of the flowers etc., the masked ball with all its elaborate costumes and masks and

the wedding ceremony at the end. While most candidates engaged with the issue of deceit, many others ignored the term ‘villainy’ or conflated the two words, making villainy a synonym of deceit.

Question 3

The first of the two *Henry IV, Part 1* questions required candidates to assess the impact of the dramatic representation of power in the play. Again, it specifically asked whether this dramatic representation of power deflected attention from the violence of the historical period.

Candidates were generally good at discussing the violence that characterized the historical period. In this regard, they demonstrated knowledge of ‘how meaning is affected by context’ (Specific Objective 6: CAPE Syllabus, 6). However, many candidates failed to engage with the other part of the question which required them to assess the role of Shakespeare’s dramatic representation of power. The word *representation* is a word which always signals that candidates need to consider the means by which the writer is able to communicate meaning. Also, candidates should not forget that the written play provides the blueprint for a theatrical production and should pay attention to the clues for the staging of the drama. Knowledge of the features and structural elements of drama, literary devices and their function, 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. Indeed the best performance on the entire Paper 02 of this unit was on this question. Candidates were required to assess whether the play’s historical focus provided no entertainment for its audience. Most candidates easily disagreed with the statement and suggested that the seriousness of history does not negate the entertainment value of the play. Most candidates could discuss the historical context of the play and also the entertainment value of the play. Many candidates were able to critically evaluate the playwright’s manipulation of elements of drama (plot, setting, characterization, theme), features of drama (dialogue, soliloquy, aside, stage directions) and stage conventions (costuming, lighting, sound effects, movements, backdrop and props) to provide entertainment. By creating their own response to this question in carefully structured arguments, candidates were able to score high marks on application.

Module 2: Poetry

Question 5

Although this question emphasized form, it required candidates to consider what leads to the ‘powerful depiction of human issues’. This question was satisfactorily done and some candidates were able to produce some of the best performances across genres on this paper. However, while candidates could discuss the thematic development of ‘human issues’ and demonstrated knowledge of imagery and symbolism, many were unable to confidently discuss form, other elements of poetry and figurative language (beyond

symbolism and imagery). Sometimes, candidates were not demonstrating that they understood how the various literary devices and resources of poetic expression were being mobilized by writers to convey meaning. The way in which form relates to meaning was not explored very well. Teachers must give more attention to the use of form in poetry. 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 watch mere listing of generic features and providing examples; they must also 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 just as popular among candidates as Question 5. It required candidates to assess whether poetry primarily explored 'imagined worlds' using 'fanciful language'. As usual, the use of the word 'merely' provided a source for debate that would allow candidates to express their own personal response to these issues in literature. For example, one candidate argued that *poetry is not solely a fabrication or make-up of something unreal but takes into account real people, real places or real experiences*. Although the question forced candidates to focus on poetic technique by the reference to 'fanciful language,' many candidates failed to discuss poetic technique. The 'relationship between form and content' is at the heart of all the questions and candidates should continue to take up the opportunities provided to discuss the means by which poets achieve artistic impact. In this year's performance on this question, candidates tended to focus more on the thematic issues than on making connections between thematic development and poetic craft.

Question 7

Performance on this question was satisfactory. The question required candidates to assess what gave novels longevity — relevance to different generations of readers. In essence, the question could also be seen as asking how is it that narratives can have relevance beyond the historical contexts of their production and dissemination. This idea of a work of art's timelessness is part of the conceptualization of the idea of a classic. Further, candidates were expected to assess whether the use of narrative technique to augment theme was the main reason a text would be classified as 'timeless'. While most candidates were able to discuss the use of narrative techniques to reinforce themes, many students failed to engage with the part of the question on 'timelessness'. It cannot be said too often, 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 and interior monologue) is more than just a matter of listing these conventions. 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. In addition, the questions from year to year will have a

specific context in which to assess the relationship between form and content. Candidates must therefore ensure that they tackle all aspects of the question to maximize their performance.

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. Candidates should be encouraged to see how themes are developed by way of the resources of the prose genre. In addition, candidates need to develop their writing skills paying attention to diction, syntax and the use of transitions to connect their ideas.

Question 8

This question was the more popular of the two questions asked in this section. Unfortunately, while performance was satisfactory, this question saw the worst performance of the entire Paper 02 in general as well as the best essay across the genres. The question required candidates to evaluate whether the tensions between personal ambition and societal demands were magnified by the writer's use of narrative techniques. Most candidates were knowledgeable about narrative techniques and could discuss both the clash between personal ambitions and societal demands. Some candidates failed to deal with the question of whether these techniques helped to 'magnify' the aforementioned issues. This portion of the question provided another opportunity to raise questions and to offer one's own informed opinion.

Paper 03 - Internal Assessment

Unit 1

Performance on the SBA this year was similar to the last two years. The samples show evidence that candidates continue to enjoy these activities that provide room for critical judgement, informed personal response and creativity. Among candidates receiving the better grades, there was evidence of a heightened sensitivity to the importance of the features and characteristics of the genre in analysing texts, their adaptations or reinterpretations. These students also demonstrated excellent (informed) personal responses.

In instances where students submit a creative piece — usually an adaptation or reinterpretation, they need to be reminded that marks are only awarded for the commentary or evaluation. However, even when they did provide this explanation, the explanatory texts did not always make available the evaluative dimension required to score high marks. This explanation should provide reasons for the artistic choices of the director and for the dramatic effectiveness of such choices; the explanation could also provide an evaluation of the performance. In this discussion, evidence of knowledge of generic features would be crucial for scoring high marks. Students need to be reminded of the word limit — some of them exceeded the word limit while others wrote brief descriptions — too short to allow for any meaningful analysis. The word limit is 1500 – 2000 words.

The art pieces of specific scenes were well done and the dramatic adaptation, through live performance, was generally well done, too. Too many students can only list features without sufficient analysis of their effective deployment in the piece of art. However, sometimes the problem was related to the stimulus 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 needed to be careful that the assignments set were 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.

In some cases where students did the critical responses to a review, excellent review articles of appropriate length and quality were selected that provided students with the opportunity to offer reasoned arguments and informed personal responses. Students 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 students still seem to have difficulty in offering 'informed' opinions on these critical essays. Students should be encouraged to identify the source of the review.

Some schools/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. Students registered for one particular unit should do assignments based on that unit. Students must use the text relevant to the genre; they cannot use a drama text to answer the question on the prose section or vice-versa.
3. The responses need to be presented as one continuous essay and not a segmented response. In some cases, students included unnecessary biographical sketches and histories of the texts.
4. Assignments should be identified by name.
5. It is the detailed commentary (1500 – 2000 words) that is marked out of 48 **not** the reinterpretation or other creative pieces.
6. Teachers should ensure that, if students are given the highest marks in each category, their assignments are excellent in nature.

7. Some teachers are not adhering to the stipulation of sending five samples. Some send two or three even when they have eight or 15 students doing the examination. Some send in two of three even though the rules say all samples should be submitted if there are fewer than five students.

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 tone, use of structural elements such as characterization and use of features of drama such as stage directions. 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 very well done. Most candidates could identify two character traits for each of the three main characters. Many candidates received full marks for this question.

Question 2

This knowledge/application question was satisfactorily done. Most students could identify the steward's reaction to Joan and many could explain one function of the character.

Question 3

For this question, most candidates could explain the dramatic significance of the stage directions identified. This question required candidates to explain the dramatic significance of the playwright's use of stage directions, therefore, only identifying the significance would not have given candidates full marks. The explanations of significance could be in relationship to costuming, movement on stage, plot development, setting, thematic development and creation of suspense.

Question 4

This analysis question had two parts. It required candidates to explain the change in the tone of the character, Robert, and then to comment on the significance of this change in tone. Most candidates could explain the difference in Robert's tone which moves from a commanding one to a conciliatory one. However, some students had difficulty explaining

how the change in tone was dramatically significant. Some of the acceptable responses included *character development or revelation, plot development, structural shifts or the creation of humour through irony.*

Candidates did not do much better on this comprehension/analysis question than they did on Question 4. They were required to explain two ways in which the last line of the extract was dramatically significant. Most candidates could only produce one reason. 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

There was improved performance on the poetry module this year, but candidates are still not handling the evaluation questions very well. Performance on a question that required candidates to explain why two similes were effective was also shocking and revealed a major weakness: candidates' inability to explain how a specific choice of literary device contributes to the interpretations we arrive at in reading poetry.

The questions in this section tested candidates' knowledge of simile, other figures of speech, sound techniques, imagery and the ability to evaluate the effective use of these devices. Generally, candidates had no difficulty identifying activities taking place in the poem. However, the inability of many candidates 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. The evidence given could be in the form of a direct quote, a summary, a paraphrase or a reference to a specific line.

Question 7

This knowledge/analysis question was well done. Candidates were required to identify an example of auditory imagery in two lines of the poem. Not only were candidates able to identify an example of auditory imagery, they were also able to offer clear commentary on why the use of the sound device was effective. Nevertheless, from some candidates, we continue to see very generic responses that lack specificity. An example of this sort of response was expressed this way: "The effectiveness of the literary device is to allow us to hear the sound of the baby". If the device was so effective, why is it that the candidate could not explain what kind of sound was being represented by the comparison? Another standard response was this: "The device enables the reader to get a picture of what is taking place". This kind of comment can be said about any literary device which produces sensory appeal. There needs to be practice explaining how the association of

one thing helps us to understand another. Here is one possible explanation for the use of auditory imagery:

The emphasis placed on the guttural ‘u’ sound in the phrases ‘plugged by a heavy nipple’ and ‘tugs like a puppy’ actualizes the chugging sound that the baby makes while feeding. This repeated guttural sound in the auditory image helps to magnify the hunger of the baby because that sound is only produced with effort. The auditory image reinforces the sound of the baby’s eager, almost desperate swallowing of the milk.

In the response, one expects that an explanation will help us see specifically how the device functions in reinforcing ideas being communicated in the poem.

Question 8

Surprisingly, this question about the function of comparisons produced responses that were unsatisfactory. The two-part knowledge/application question that first required candidates to identify what two things were being compared in each of the similes before requiring them to comment on the effectiveness of each simile was not well handled. While most candidates could provide answers for the first part, most of them could only provide the most generic answers for the second part of the question. A response such as this one fails to offer any specific explanation: “The comparison made in lines 9 – 10 is effective as the reader is able to paint a picture of the movement of the child’s mouth as he breast feeds. This is similar to that of a puppy and the sound it makes while feeding.’ However, if the comparison was so effective, why was the candidate unable to say what kind of picture was created and what kind of sound was being illuminated through the comparison. Here is a much clearer and more pointed response: The comparison effectively tells the reader that the baby is so hungry that he feeds as voraciously as a puppy. The line “Tugs like a puppy” allows the reader to call on a common experience — that of a puppy feeding — to visualize how hungry the baby must have been, eagerly and forcefully taking what is necessary for its survival.

Question 9

This knowledge/application question was not as well done as one would have expected. Most candidates were able to identify the literary device for both examples. However, many candidates were unable to explain why the use of the device was effective. For example, for the phrase ‘yet in that drowsy stream’ line 13, a candidate could say that *in this example, the comparison of a stream to a drowsy person allows the reader to understand the level of slow movement of the river and the general inactivity in the environment.*

Question 10

This last knowledge/application 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 identify the symbolic association

of the nature imagery, but they were unable to see the connection between the specific moment and the overall development of theme or the careful creation of poetic structure.

Here is an example that sees some symbolic association with the nature imagery and also sees the role of this imagery in the larger patterning of the poem:

The writer's use of nature imagery in the last stanza is appropriate because it helps to sum up the main point of the poem which is about the mother's protection of the child. Like the hill that shades the village, the mother provides protection and relief to her baby — this we have seen throughout the poem. By using nature imagery, this protection of the baby is seen as natural to mothers.

The evaluation of appropriateness could be connected to thematic development, structural arrangement or contribution to atmosphere.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

This passage elicited some very good responses. Even the application questions saw marginal improvement over the performance on the other two genres. The questions on this module tested candidates' knowledge of auditory imagery, irony, symbolism and other literary devices. Candidates were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the writer's use of auditory imagery to create atmosphere.

Question 11

This comprehension question was well done. Most candidates scored full marks. Candidates were required to indicate things learnt about the delivery of bad news.

Question 12

In this knowledge/analysis question, candidates were required to identify the literary device used in each of two lines and to comment on the effectiveness of each device. Most candidates could correctly identify a literary device, but many could not effectively comment on the effectiveness of the use of the literary device.

Question 13

This knowledge/analysis question did not seem to pose as much difficulty for most of the candidates. Many candidates were able to identify two examples of auditory imagery. Not all candidates scored full marks for the second part of the question because their explanation of effectiveness failed to make a link with the creation of atmosphere. So if candidates identified the 'sparrow's twittering' as an example of auditory imagery, they could comment thus:

The aural image of birds singing represents a happy sound which is in contrast to the sad sound of weeping that permeated the extract. The sound of the bird's singing transforms the atmosphere from one of gloom to one of hopeful possibilities.

Question 14

Performance on this knowledge/analysis question was good. It was clear that candidates understood the concept of symbolism and could provide reasonable explanations of why the phrases were symbolic. A good response for ‘storm of grief’ would be:

The power and intensity of the woman’s grief is being compared to a storm. The writer evokes the energy and fury of a storm to symbolically underscore the immensity of the woman’s grief. Here, the sheer scope of the woman’s anguish over the death of her husband is conveyed.

Question 15

Though this knowledge/analysis question was satisfactorily done, candidates failed to maximize their marks on this question. While some were able to explain the irony 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 seemed to be weak.

Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

Compared to Unit 1, Paper 02, the performance on Unit 2, Paper 02 was about the same. Of the three genres, the best performance was on the responses to Martin Carter’s poetry. However, students will not score very high marks if they only write on one book for the drama module in which they are required to answer the questions with reference to two books. 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 was in name only. In many of the responses, candidates were only listing some techniques, but were not demonstrating that they understood how these techniques helped to reinforce meaning/theme.

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 was glaringly absent from many of these responses. In respect to the third module, there is more reference 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 a writer can manipulate to explore various issues and themes.

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. 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 assess the relationship between ‘actions on stage’ and the ‘elevation of the dispossessed’. Is the use of ‘action on the stage’ the primary strategy for representing the issues of the oppressed? Essentially, what are the tools of drama the playwright uses to represent the issues of the oppressed and does the dramatist employ these resources to ‘elevate’ the oppressed? While the question emphasizes one main dramatic technique, the study of the syllabus would help candidates to recognize that there are several strategies available to the playwright to reinforce theme.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, with even some candidates earning as much as 37 out of 40 for their answers. Yet, there were candidates who could not contend with both ‘elevate’ and ‘dispossessed’ in their arguments. Again, there were candidates who were not engaging with all the key terms of the questions. More extra-textual (contextual, biographical and critical) material could have been used in more of the responses. That extra-tier of knowledge will help candidates to maximize their knowledge mark.

Question 2

This question set up an opposition between the entertainment value of plays and the communication of serious issues. Candidates should first recognize that this opposition was not an inevitable one. Based on the plays they prepared and their own evaluation of the plays, candidates could decide if entertainment in these plays was a distraction from the serious issues or whether entertainment reinforced the serious issues. There was also the possibility of arguing that the engagement with serious issues provided its own entertainment. 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.

While many candidates engaged with the issue of the seriousness of the plays, they did not engage as much with the role of dramatic techniques in either distracting or reinforcing those issues. The weaker candidates tended to deal primarily with theme and ignored the role of dramatic techniques — the structural elements of drama, the features of drama including stage conventions, literary devices — that would help to contribute to the entertainment value of the play. 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 well as performance on all the questions on Paper 02. The question required candidates to assess whether ‘Senior’s careful use of literary devices’ helped to create ‘poems that were both disturbing and delightful’. Most candidates were able to identify aspects of Senior’s poetry that were disturbing and delightful, identify literary devices such as metaphor, alliteration and personification and were able to use their knowledge of the Caribbean context to discuss themes. However, many failed to engage the range of poetic techniques beyond the basic. Even when they referred to these basic techniques, they used them randomly, incorrectly or without commenting on the effectiveness of the devices employed or their relevance to the question.

Teachers must engage in exercises that force students to make connections between poetic technique and theme. Students 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.

Question 4

This question required candidates to assess whether Senior’s use of poetic technique allowed her to ‘transform the ordinary experiences of Caribbean life’ in her poetic representation. The question allowed candidates to use their extra-textual information and knowledge of the poems to discuss the ‘ordinary experiences of Caribbean life.’ Candidates tended to focus on the basic literary devices such as imagery, symbolism and diction. Yet, the prompts to engage their own personal responses and to construct more nuanced arguments were missed when most candidates ignored the phrase ‘creative play with technique’ or ‘transform the ordinary experiences’. The performance on this question was also satisfactory.

Question 5

Performance on the Carter questions was marginally better than performance on the questions on Senior. This question required that candidates assess the importance of Carter’s ‘experimentation with poetic technique’ to the exploration of ‘historical hurts’. Most candidates discussed ‘historical hurts’ from various angles and also other issues;

this kind of nuanced discussion was commendable. However, there were far too many candidates failing to engage with poetic techniques and when some candidates referred to poetic techniques, they were confusing the terms. In addition, candidates were not addressing all the key words of the question. For example, the issue of ‘experimenting’ with poetic technique was not engaged by many candidates. Even if candidates wanted to argue that the ‘experimentation’ was not crucial to the exploration of ‘historical hurts’, they should at least engage with the term initially and then discount it by the way they set up their argument. This is part of the role of a good introduction, to lay out the terms on which your argument will rest.

Question 6

Many candidates responded well to this question that assessed whether it was Carter’s use of language to ‘fight against oppression’ that made him a remarkable poet. The best performance on the entire paper was shown on this question. Many candidates could discuss the struggle against oppression in Carter’s poetry and could also link this effectiveness of his particular fight to his use of language. Some candidates should recognize that they can define language broadly to mean poetic language which would cover any poetic convention available to a poet — not merely diction, imagery and symbolism.

Some of the best essays expanded the meaning of language to cover all poetic techniques and they ensured a firm connection between the effectiveness of Carter’s fight with the effective manipulation of poetic language. This kind of focusing on aspects of poetic language such as tone, symbolism, diction, imagery, oxymoron, repetition, puns, motifs and exaggeration led many to discuss the relationship between artistic choices and thematic development in Carter’s poetry. Consideration of all parts of the question can allow candidates to receive optimum returns in the awarding of marks for application of knowledge. This question was fairly well done.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

Question 7

This question that required candidates to evaluate the extent to which the ‘writer’s skill in crafting his/her narrative’ led to ‘the powerful representation of sacrifice’ was satisfactorily done. Candidates demonstrated significant knowledge of the theme of sacrifice and many were also able to identify aspect of the writer’s narrative craft. Candidates should note that the generic features of prose fiction (plot, characterization, point of view, setting, narrative arrangement, motif, flashback, interior monologue etc) are aspects of the writer’s narrative craft. 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, many candidates failed to engage with the issue of ‘powerful representation’ or the link between writer’s craft and the representation of sacrifice. These phrases that represent debatable parts of the question allow for candidates to make

judgements on whether the statement provides a valid account of their experience of the novel.

Question 8

While this question was satisfactorily done, on the whole, many candidates did not focus on all the key words of the question. The question required that candidates determine what the appeal of the modern novel was and whether that appeal was determined by the writer's 'artistic representation of the process of self-discovery as a cyclical journey'. The term 'artistic representation' alludes to all the narrative resources that a writer might deploy to reinforce theme.

While many candidates were able to name some of these genres, some of these candidates were unable to demonstrate their understanding of the significance of these techniques or how they function. 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 students sit.

Paper 03 - Internal Assessment

Performance on the SBA this year was similar to the last two years. The samples show evidence that students continue to enjoy these activities that provide room for critical judgement, informed personal response and creativity. Among students receiving the better grades, there was evidence of a heightened sensitivity to the importance of the features and characteristics of the genre in analysing texts, their adaptations or re-interpretations. These students were also demonstrating excellent (informed) personal responses.

In instances where students submit a creative piece — usually an adaptation or re-interpretation, they need to be reminded that marks are only awarded for the commentary or evaluation. However, even when they did provide this explanation, the explanatory texts did not always make available the evaluative dimension required to score high marks. This explanation should provide reasons for the artistic choices of the director and for the dramatic effectiveness of such choices; the explanation could also provide an evaluation of the performance. In this discussion, evidence of knowledge of generic features would be crucial for scoring high marks. Students need to be reminded of the word limit — some of them exceeded the word limit (1500 – 2000 words) while others wrote brief descriptions — too short to allow for any meaningful analysis.

The art pieces of specific scenes were well done and the dramatic adaptation, through live performance, was generally well done, too. Too many students can only list features without sufficient analysis of their effective deployment in the piece of art. However, sometimes the problem was related to the stimulus 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 needed 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.

In some cases where students did the critical responses to a review, excellent review articles of appropriate length and quality were selected that provided them with the opportunity to offer reasoned arguments and informed personal responses. Students 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 students still seem to have difficulty in offering 'informed' opinions on these critical essays. Students should be encouraged to identify the source of the review.

Some schools/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. Students registered for one particular unit should do assignments based on that unit. Students must use the text relevant to the genre; they cannot use a drama text to answer the question on the prose section or vice-versa.
3. The responses need to be presented as one continuous essay and not a segmented response. In some cases, students included unnecessary biographical sketches and histories of the texts.
4. Assignments should be identified by name.
5. It is the detailed commentary (1500 – 2000 words) that is marked out of 48 **not** the reinterpretation or other creative pieces.
6. Teachers should ensure that, if students are given the highest marks in each category, their assignments are excellent in nature.
7. Some teachers are not adhering to the stipulation of sending five samples. Some sent two or three even when they have eight or 15 students doing the examination. Some send in two or three even though the rules say all samples should be submitted if there are fewer than five students.