Exemplar responses to CXC CSEC English B Paper 020, 2012

Question 11

The CSEC English syllabus outlines the skills that are tested by the English B examination. Four critical skills that are outlined by the syllabus are the testing of (i) description (*the outlining of relevant content*), analysis (the ability to break down, select and comment on the significance of relevant details) and, synthesis (the ability to bring together and condense in a new form information drawn from various sections of a text for the purpose of answering a particular question); (ii) the ability to communicate informed opinions and judgements in well-structured, analytical responses in oral and written form using the vocabulary of literary criticism; (iii) the ability to recognise the writer's craft (the writer as a person who employs various techniques in the shaping of language and the presentation of character and behaviour) and (iv) the ability to respond to West Indian and other Literatures in English: novels, short stories, poems and plays; to make rational and sensitive appraisal of value judgements, states of consciousness and other concepts explored in literature, and relate these to everyday living.

In short students are expected to:

- demonstrate the ability to describe or outline relevant content
- analyse, that is, break down, select and comment on significant relevant details
- synthesize, that is, appropriately select relevant information from different sources and organize it coherently in response to a particular question
- comfortably and fluently write about literary works using the language of literary criticism
- recognise the writer's use of techniques and devices to effectively convey issues, thoughts and observations
- respond to the various issues and ideas explored in literature and demonstrate an understanding of how these reflect, elucidate and relate to everyday life.

These skills represent, to a significant extent, the expectations regarding students' abilities once they are thoroughly prepared to study and respond to literature. More specifically, students who are so prepared are expected to demonstrate (in their responses) understanding through knowledge of text and insight which includes their having adequate and relevant content, and their selecting relevant and accurate examples. Of equal importance is their expression which takes in properly organized responses which are appropriately structured and developed, have clear and logical argument, and use language which includes clear and appropriate expression and show competence in the mechanics of writing (sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling).

The essays students write are therefore evaluated in the context of these skills outlined by the syllabus and analyses of students' work will be useful if guided by the parameters outlined in these skills in the syllabus.

11. In 'The Day the World Almost Came to an End' and 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' humor is used.

(a) Describe ONE humorous incident in EACH story. **(8 marks)**

(b) Which story do you find more interesting? Justify your response. **(8 marks)**

(c) Show how the writer creates humour in the telling of EACH story. **(9 marks)**

Total 25 marks

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Example #1

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In the short stories 'The Day the World Almost Came to an End' and 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' humour is used. How this humour is presented in the stories is different however and this in turn contributes to the preference of 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' as a more interesting story. The respective writers create humour in various ways.

In the story 'The Day the World Almost Came to an End,' Pearl Crayton portrays a twelve year old girl who continues to indulge in her "delicious sins" despite the central figure in the village being "religion". The narrator gets a rude awakening by her cousin Rena who tells her that the world is going to end on Sunday. As time elapses, the supreme confidence of the narrator that such an event was impossible, begins to weaken. By the end of the story, fear grips the narrator as she over reacts to the distant rumblings of an airplane overhead. She makes a scene by screaming and running through the village warning others that the world was ending. This is humorous because of her childish reaction to the unknown - the aircraft.

In 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker,' the humorous incident is the encounter with a social worker named Miss Rushmore. Miss Rushmore enters the world of Mom Luby in order to investigate the living conditions of Elijah and Pudding, after Mom Luby makes a request for state aid. Her very dress is stereotypical of office workers of a bureaucratic agency

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and her reactions to Mom Luby's probing questions like "Do you have a man?" are funny. What is humorous is that by the end of the story Miss Rushmore's apparent composure is ~~wiped~~ dispelled and she appears dishevelled and bedraggled after she gets a real dose of what efficiency is to Mom Luby. She says Mom Luby "got more done in two hours than she could do in two years." This statement is also satirical and pokes fun at the Social Welfare System of America.

'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' is a more interesting story because it points out the flaws in a system and shows the efficiency of that system to carry out a job it was particularly designed to do. The system is challenged by an older woman who runs a speakeasy to make ends meet and who is an uncertified herbal doctor, preacher and has two children to look after. This contrast is hilarious because it causes the reader to condemn the system and continue with their life without the hassle of "state aid" ~~Well~~ "We'll do just fine," Mom Luby says. The other story is humorous, but to a lesser extent and therefore less interesting. The presence of the primitive religious system and the ~~comic~~ continuous anxiety and fear of the narrator are not elements of the story which are enjoyable by the reader.

In the story, 'The Day the World Almost came to an end' humour is created in the fact that the narrator was a child, a very innocent and ig-

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narrant one too. The fact that she over reacts to the plane is humorous. Humour is created here by immersing the reade in a ~~read~~ world patterned by religion and then experiencing a situation in which religion has a key role to play for the narrator's over reaction and fear. In the second story, humour is created by the stereotypical views of Miss Rushmore and the bureaucracy of the Social welfare system. The list of instruction Miss Rushmore gives Mom Luby just to get one pair of shoes is comical. Mom Luby's responses and interactions with the social worker are also funny. They incite ~~many~~ answers from the worker which ~~shows her~~ are somewhat expected and predictable, for eg example ~~she~~ she replies "That is none of your business," to Mom Luby's question of whether she had a boyfriend. Humour is also created with the dishevelled appearance of Miss Rushmore at the end of the story.

These two short stories are the epitomy of what is humorous in the ~~collection~~ selection of short stories. The humorous accidents are with the over reaction to the unknown in 'The Day the World Almost came to an end' and the satirical view of a highly inefficient and bureaucratic ~~soc~~ social welfare system in 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker.' Humour created in these stories occurs from the over reaction of a narrator in 'The Day the World Almost came to an End' and ~~by~~ from the satirical and exaggerated presentation of a system

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in 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker.'

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Example #2

Out of the collection of stories, 'The Day The World Almost came to An 'End' and 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker,' are both humorous and bring forth ~~comedy~~ traditions and beliefs ~~and~~ in different societies. To explore this, one must describe one humourous incident in each story, which one is more interesting and how the writer creates humour in each story.

Firstly, 'In the Day The World Almost Came to An End', one humourous incident was when the narrator, a young Pearl Christian expresses her fear of going to hell although she was 'a church going sinner' Ultimately, as Pearl laid in her bed and hears a rumbling she believes what her cousin Roney said that 'the moon is gonna whip the sun' and Pearl runs out clad in her night gown to only go and run ~~sh~~ to her father. Although terrified, when her father explains it was simply an air plane, Pearl cries yet begins to the world anew and appreciate life. However, in the story ~~To Da Duh~~ 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' one humourous incident was when Mom Luby, the care taker of the narrator, Elijah, and his sister Ruddin', go to receive some

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welfare to afford clothes for them. Elijah explains that Mom Luby is 'older than Santa Claus' yet would rather pose as their mother instead of their grandmother. Despite this, they still get through with the paperwork without anyone noticing.

In addition, 'The ~~World~~ Day the World Almost came to an end' is far more, to me, than 'Mom Luby and the social worker'. Moreover the story is more relateable through a child's eye and the reader can share her thoughts. Also, this story is based in the days ~~per~~ just after slavery and West Indian persons also can relate to the presence of new technology. In addition, the reaction the young Pearl by running out of her house and into the cane field is a funny, childish response to what she has heard. Thus, her running into her father and flailing her limbs as a means to escape was also humorous and funnier to read. Thus, that is why I believe this story is much more humorous.

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Furthermore the writer creates humour in 'The Day the World Almost came to an End' ~~is~~ by introducing it through a childs eye and also the setting affects the humour as the character has never seen or heard a plane before, (Mom Luby and the social worker) the prideful Mom Luby helps create humour. The disbelieving social worker is also comedic

Overall, 'The Day the World almost Came to an End' and 'Mom Luby and the Social Worker' are both ~~humerous~~ humurous stories

Questions 11 (Prose Fiction–Short Story) on the 2012 CSEC English B paper will be analyzed in the context outlined above

Question 11 – Prose Fiction

Short Story

A World of Poetry for CXC – Hazel Simmonds-McDonald and David Williams

Question 11 on the 2012 English B paper required that candidates describe a humorous incident in the two named stories, give justification for which story they find more interesting and show how humour is created in the telling of each story. The given stories are "Mom Luby and the Social Worker" and "The Day the World Almost Came to an End".

This question seeks to get candidates to demonstrate skills outlined page 22 of the syllabus with particular focus on skills number 2, 3, 4 and 5. In a nutshell, the candidate is to outline relevant content (describe), select and comment on relevant details (analyse) , draw from relevant sections of the texts to answer the question (synthesise), recognise and write about the writer's craft and produce well-argued judgements based on the information in the text.

This candidate describes in accurate detail what is humorous in both texts. In describing the humour in both texts, the candidate focuses on giving both the details of each story but emphasises the sense of humour in each. In "The Day the World Almost Came to an End", after describing the personality of the character, the candidate highlights the character's reaction to the incident to demonstrate that he/she is fully aware of how the character's seeming courage followed by his/her response the introduction of an airplane being heard for the first time is nothing short of humorous. Describing a seemingly assured narrator, the candidate traces the weakening of the narrator's confidence that the world is almost coming to an end and its ultimate breaking on the sound of the airplane. The candidate leaves no doubt that "the childish reaction to the unknown – the aircraft" is what is humourous. This response is good because it not only describes but directs the reader to how the candidate is thinking by highlighting specifically what the candidate considers humorous.

In "Mom Luby and the Social Worker", the candidate is spot on in highlighting the different responses of Mom Luby and the Social worker to a similar situation. The candidate is not lost on the humour in the fact that Mom Luby is far more knowledgeable about what ought to happen than the state's officially appointed worker. According to the candidate "the contrast is hilarious" but the response goes further to point out that such contrast "points out the flaws in the system". Here we see a candidate who not only describes humour but importantly offers us a view regarding what the story uses such humour to highlight about society. The good response would simply have described the incident; this superior response provided an insight into what the description highlighted about life.

In describing how humour is created in "The Day the World Almost Came to an End" the candidate choses to build the argument around the innocence of the child, the immersion of both the reader and the child in the world of religion and the child's ignorance of technology – the airplane. The capacity of the candidate to bring these details together and argue that the author's combining of these three things leads to the child's humorous reaction is demonstrated. In "Mom Luby and the Social Worker" the candidate points out the contrast between both characters and Mom Luby's questioning the social worker as the basis on which the humour in the story is created. It is not lost on the candidate that the "dishevelled appearance of Miss Rushane" after being subject to questions and a lesson from Mom Luby is the climactic moment in the story.

In responding to the final section of the question specifically, this candidate who has done well to include throughout the response critical insights into how the humour is created and what it means simply summarises. The final paragraph therefore, appropriately points to the idea that "humour created in these stories occurs from the overreaction of the narrator in "The Day the World Almost Came to an End" and from the satirical and exaggerated presentation of a system in "Mom Luby and the Social Worker". Such a statement points to the focus the candidate has which helps him/her to note that he/she has responded to the question so well that there is only a need to summarise what has been presented in the essay.

This response highlights a candidate who has superior organisational skills, excellent analytical and synthesising skills and commendable understanding of literary language and how to talk about literature in such language.