

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

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

**MAY/JUNE 2006**

**ENGLISH A**

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**GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS**

**MAY/JUNE 2006**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

**General Proficiency**

The examination in 2006 was the first year the revised syllabus was assessed. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of summary, literary and persuasive writing. In Paper 02 candidates were allowed a choice in Section 3 between story writing and description. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Expression and Understanding) across the two papers is as follows:-

	<b>PAPER 01 Multiple Choice</b>	<b>PAPER 02 Essay</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Understanding	60*46+	40*30+	76+ = 40%
Expression	-	90*114+	114+ = 60%

\* raw score  
+ weighted mark

The statistics this year have to be read more carefully because of the changes in the marks allotted and the changes in the weighting in Paper 02.

The percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above this year and previous years is as follows:

$\frac{2003}{49.53}$	$\frac{2004}{49.60}$	$\frac{2005}{52.70}$	$\frac{2006}{48.54}$
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The performance mean for the examination (out of a total of 125) for 2003-2005 and (out of a total of 190\*) for 2006 is as follows:

(2003)50.62    (2004) 50.74    (2005) 52.76    (2006) 41.51

Average performance over the last four years on the multiple choice paper (Paper 01) out of a total of 60 marks is as follows:

$\frac{2003}{34.63}$	$\frac{2004}{33.09}$	$\frac{2005}{33.67}$	$\frac{2006}{32.36}$
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Average performance (2003-2005) in the component sections of Paper 02 (all out of 25 marks) is given below. Average performance in 2006 is given out of 25 for comparison with previous years and also out of the relevant 2006 totals.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Section 1 Summary skills	8.20	9.23	8.80	8.66/10.40 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension	8.22	9.30	9.16	10.85/12.15 (28)
Section 3 Story Writing/Description	8.84	8.79	9.70	10.22/14.31 (35)
Section 4 Argument	9.29	8.66	10.54	9.75/13.65 (35)

There was improvement in performance in Section 2 (Comprehension) and Section 3 (Story Writing/Description).

### General advice

Teachers need to emphasise that CXC English A (both Basic and General) is an English language examination and that candidates must, above all, demonstrate competence in and control of the English language. The fundamental preparation for the examination is that candidates should develop high-level skills, both passive (comprehension) and productive (expression) in the English language. These skills must be demonstrated in all areas: the proper use of punctuation marks (not only full stops and commas, but also the not so frequently used ones such as colons, semi-colons), as well as other conventions in writing, such as inverted commas, upper case/lower case, abbreviations, the writing of numbers whether in figures or in words, correct spelling, proper sentence structure and paragraphing. The kind of writing that has become popular in e-mail messages and in advertisements is not acceptable in this examination.

Students should come to the exam with a well rehearsed procedure for tackling each question, that is, identifying the topic, jotting down points, doing a rough copy, producing a fair copy. This is especially important in writing a summary, in doing a description, in writing a story and in producing a cogent argument. Teachers should advise each student, based on the student's ability and speed, about the best way to move from a rough copy to a fair copy under CXC examination conditions. Teachers should give students specific instructions about deleting and editing in order that markers can read and understand what the candidate intended without undue difficulty.

In Section 1, when a summary is required, main points must be identified and organised logically within the word limit specified. In cases where the original is reproduced verbatim by the candidate, CXC markers are instructed to interpret this as incompetence. In other words, some attempt must be made by candidates to use their own words. Summarising is a real-life skill and should be treated as such by teachers and candidates.

Some of the better candidates, in attempting to put the summary in their own words, sometimes change meanings or insert extraneous material. This is penalised. Therefore, those candidates who are seeking to achieve full marks or high marks should make sure that they preserve the meaning of the original.

The questions in Section 2 are set in such a way that precise answers are required. Candidates should be trained to pay close attention to every word that is used and to the different ways in which questions are asked. For example, instructions sometimes say 'give a word'; at other times they say 'give a phrase'; at other times still they say 'give a clause'. In each case candidates are expected to give precisely what they are asked to give. Candidates need to read and re-read the questions themselves as well as the passages on which the questions are set. Answers should be to the point. These questions never require paragraph-long answers. Responding to

a question which requires a precise answer by simply lifting a long extract from the passage is a bad strategy, one which usually results in zero being awarded for such an answer.

In Section 3 many candidates are exceeding the suggested length for the short story and though excess is not penalized in the marking in this case, spending too much time on one question can affect performance in others. Every candidate doing this examination should have read the best story from preceding years in order to get a sense of what is required. (These 'Best Stories' are available from CXC). These stories, however, should not be memorised and reproduced with slight alterations. Although the question paper states word limits as mainly approximations, the experience has been that the better students tend to write stories that fall within or not too far out of the word limit. Stories that stretch into four, five, six and more pages tend to be rambling, out of control and weak. Often too, students who write excessively long stories have insufficient time left to complete the paper properly. Teachers are encouraged to help their students to plan their stories, focus on building plots, intensifying conflict, creating a good sense of character, instead of merely relating one or a string of events. Candidates should not memorise published stories and hope that this kind of cheating escapes the attention of the examiners.

In the case of Section 4, note that argument skills require both mastery of persuasive language and presentation of sound points, supported by suitable examples. Candidates need to read the questions carefully, make sure they understand key words, then select their points, choose examples that corroborate their points and be consistent and clear in their presentation. For some inexplicable reason, some candidates operate on the assumption (consciously or unconsciously) that they must agree with the opinion given and that if they do not, they will not receive high marks. The fact is, however, that the questions are deliberately set in such a way as to allow for differences of opinion and most likely if candidates state their real views, they will do better than if they merely agree with what they think is the examiners' views.

### **General Proficiency**

#### **SECTION ONE** (Understanding & Expression)

##### Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to read a passage taken from a newsletter and to summarise in no more than 120 words the major factors which contribute to the disadvantages encountered by women in the labour market. Candidates were expected to organise the information and present it in continuous prose.

According to the passage, the major factors contributing to disadvantages are:

- limited access to stable and well paid employment
- inability to pay for public education/training
- inability to qualify for entry to training
- choice of 'feminine' and non-technical fields in training
- socio-cultural factors in the attitudes of key people
- private sector training that possibly reinforces gender roles and biases.

Following are three excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- (1) *Many factors contribute to the disadvantages encountered by women in the labour market. Women have limited access to stable, well-paid employment and are confined to 'feminine' work. In vocational courses women opt for less technical fields which narrow their opportunities. Women are also faced with the attitudes of employers and society itself when they seek employment. This is due to socio-cultural factors. In poor countries, women are disadvantaged in secondary or tertiary education because of entrance requirements or the cost of courses. Although numerous programmes are put in place by non-governmental organizations, they do not look at the impact of this training due to lack of monitoring and reporting. Such programmes may reinforce existing gender roles and biases. [118 words]*
- (2) *Though women have increasing opportunity to earn income, they are still disadvantaged economically, being mostly restricted to low-level, low-paying jobs. Contributing factors include low female enrolment in the technical-vocational areas that pay well. Females make some poor choices in areas of study because of their own values. They are influenced by other negative social attitudes towards various areas of employment. Another factor is that the school system does not help already disadvantaged girls to reach the entry requirements for technical training nor can they pay the high costs. Informal training is provided by private companies, but the quality of this training is not monitored, and it may only serve to maintain a negative situation. [114 words]*
- (3) *The main factors that contribute to the disadvantages found by women in the world of work are educational and social. In relation to formal education and training, many women in most parts of the world cannot afford or do not qualify for entry to post-primary institutions. Those who do often restrict themselves to non-technical "feminine" subjects. This practice is reinforced by society and helps to limit the women in their job choices. Non-formal training is available in private institutions, but the courses in these situations are inadequately monitored and might reinforce the negative attitudes and gender issues that are already contributing to the disadvantages faced by these women in the arena of work. [113 words]*

Performance on Question 1 this year was just marginally below last year's. There are still too many presumably genuine attempts which pay absolutely no attention to the word limit given. Some candidates operate with the casual assumption that excess will be overlooked in all answers. **This absolutely does not apply to Question 1.** As usual, many candidates lifted portions of the passage of varying lengths verbatim, or paraphrased them indiscriminately. Superior scripts clearly demonstrated satisfactory comprehension and writing skills, without any injection of extraneous material, that is, material not found in the passage.

### **Advice**

In preparing students for this section of the paper, teachers should:

- (i) remind students to observe the stated length.
- (ii) drill students in the skill of reading questions for theme and specific tasks to be done; insist that students read the instruction given and not assume that every year it is identical.
- (iii) help students to recognise the fact that summary writing comprises reading and writing skills (comprehension and composition skills)
- (iv) help students to appreciate some of the basic features of summary writing:-
  - a) using one's own words as far as possible
  - b) using plain English with clarity and conciseness

- c) responding to the rubric of the question with its implications for audience, purpose and situation/context
- d) using connectives to achieve fluency of writing/reading
- e) observing correct mechanics of the language

## **SECTION TWO** (Understanding)

This section requires students to respond to levels of meaning and to express their answers clearly. It is expected that students have learnt to use their judgment in answering questions. For example, some questions require paraphrases and some ask for evidence. So, students should know how to select word or phrases (as required) and use quotation marks to so indicate. Also students need to do as the question asks: if it requires 'a word' or 'a phrase', then providing a sentence, for example, is often wrong – it is an indication that the student does not know exactly what the answer is. This is a recurrent problem which is likely to be the kind that would respond to more oral and written practice in class with immediate feedback and discussion.

### Question 2

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of ideas expressed in a narrative passage, a selection from Michael Anthony's "Pita of the Deep Blue Sea". The following were deemed to be the correct answers:

- (a) Pita/the fish
  - (b) fast moving action; suspense; tension
  - (c) panic; anxiety; frustration; desperation
  - (d) to show the tremendous effort being made to escape
  - (e) the net
  - (f) because that is where the fate of the fish was decided, where death took place
  - (g) he was now free
  - (h) it was the sound of the place where he would have died
- (a) This question was answered correctly by most candidates. The initial difficulty which candidates had to overcome was that the fish was given a name. Where candidates did not come to terms with this, the passage as a whole was not well understood.
- (b) This question was not answered correctly by most candidates. It is the type of question which reflects the level of instruction candidates received, since it deals with a writer's craft.
- (c) This question did not present great difficulty to most candidates. However, some candidates answered the question with words that were extreme or too vague.
- (d) It was not satisfactory to make a general statement, that is, that 'repeat' means 'emphasis'. Candidates needed to explain this specific situation. Candidates had to demonstrate that they understood the passage.

- (e) As in (a), candidates had to interpret the element of personification/animation correctly. Many candidates were unable to do this.
- (f) Some candidates interpreted 'fateful' as "faithful".
- (g) This question did not present great difficulty to most candidates.
- (h) This proved a difficult question for most candidates. Candidates needed to formulate their answers based on an understanding of the whole passage.

### Question 3

This question sought in part to test candidates' understanding of a view put forward in an article extracted from Time magazine. The following were deemed to be the correct answers:

- (a) The debate is 'Can people be overweight but still healthy?'
  - (b) The phrase suggests that most people are involved in the debate or that the debate is worldwide. Alternatively, the phrase gives weight to the issue or shows the importance of it.
  - (c) The impression that the writer wants to convey is that people take sides or that people hold strongly to particular views or that there are conflicting views.
  - (d) The writer uses the word 'however' to point out that other persons hold a contrasting view.
  - (e) The most important point in the last paragraph is that fitness and size are equally important.
  - (f) Two factors are people should eat well and people should exercise regularly.
  - (g) [As a result of confusion about the numbering of paragraphs, this question was removed from the examination and not marked]
  - (h) The writer is referring to fitness proponents.
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- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (b) As usual, the word 'effect' was beyond the competence of the majority of candidates.
  - (c) In this case, the word 'impression' did not constitute any major difficulty. Most candidates were able to formulate satisfactory answers to this question.
  - (d) Most candidates understood that 'however' introduced a contrast and were able to formulate a correct answer.
  - (e) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (f) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (h) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.

## Advice

Teachers still have to do more work in order to get students to move beyond literal interpretations. In the explanation of literary devices and specific phrases/sentences used by writers, candidates have to be accurate and precise in their answers. Teachers should dissuade students from giving long-winded answers which rarely conceal ignorance.

## SECTION THREE (Expression)

### Questions 4, 5 & 6

Good stories demonstrate interesting storylines, characterisation, good and effective use of details to create atmosphere and mood, good and refreshing language use. Weak stories tend to be linear, mostly behaving like reports, with weak language. There were several students who attempted to use words and structures with which they were not familiar. The result was that what they wrote was often verbose, sometimes unintelligible in parts and unimpressive. Teachers are encouraged to help students feel comfortable with the simplicity of language and the use of language that sounds and feels natural. Oral, spontaneous story-telling based, for instance, on photographs, sketches and proverbial statements could stimulate some interesting class productions – for listening, writing and peer interaction.

Description must be clearly constructed and developed (e.g. the different components must be linked appropriately). Details must be logically and effectively sequenced. The different focuses and facets must be linked appropriately (e.g. background vs. foreground; main focus vs. peripheral detail). The interpretive interventions (reflections) of the writer must be relevant to the purely descriptive elements. Choice of features to be described must be clearly motivated and must effectively contribute to the whole picture. Description, even if imaginative, must be consistent within itself. Any change in perspective (e.g. visual, mood, tone, etc.) must be clearly established. If characters are being described, they must be sufficiently developed. Dialogue, when used, should be functional (e.g. to develop character, atmosphere, mood, etc.) There should be varied and lively use of language to create picture elements as well as appropriate choice of words to create characters, moods, tones, atmosphere and setting.

A specific problem which arose this year is that a vast number of candidates did not seem to be aware of the change made to Section 3, which now asked for a description in Question 6. Since this may not have been the fault of the candidates themselves and it is possible that in spite of the long lead time given they were not informed and prepared by their teachers, it was decided not to penalise candidates who wrote a story in answer to Question 6. **This concession will not be repeated next year.**

There were not many problems with Question 4. It produced a range of responses with several that were mainly descriptions. However, most candidates were able to integrate the picture into a story. Most candidates wrote stories with a theme of a lost son or daughter. Several stories described the old woman, her condition and circumstances and then developed the plot.

Question 5 was a popular choice, but it produced a preponderance of mediocre stories with hardly any superior writing. It encouraged candidates to create humour which sometimes was not more than simplistic. Many responses to Question 5 merely had the stimulus quotation tacked on and not satisfactorily integrated into the plot.

In the case of Question 6, a great number of candidates proceeded to write a response without reading the instructions carefully. In the relevant responses to this question, various situations were created – a person returning home from abroad, a person returning after many years, a person coming to the scene after a disaster and many others. The good responses to this question used details to create pictures of the environment, made comparisons or reflections that justified the comment “... she felt like she was in another country” and expressed

thoughts and feelings suited to the situation. Although the question itself assisted with what should be described – “what she saw and her thoughts and feelings”, many students did not follow the instructions of the question.

### **Advice**

Use more and varied pictures to help stimulate and guide writing. This would help to stimulate classroom writing e.g. help students focus on use of details to create character, emotion, atmosphere, etc. The creation of humour in writing is something that students might enjoy doing in their writing classes – how to tell a joke, how to write a joke, how to hold back the punch line are part of story-writing that might interest even reluctant writers. How to use language effectively to do all this e.g. use of short sentences and exclamation marks for effect could be a natural way of calling attention to form.

In relation to integrating the given quotation into the story, teachers are advised to work more on logical development of plot, integration of story elements, along with the other story writing elements. A lot more story reading in preference to talking about story-writing elements. Candidates whose stories are impressive are those who use relevant details to create atmosphere, mood and feelings. Training in short story writing must always stress the process – thinking, drafting, editing and proof reading.

## **SECTION FOUR** (Expression)

### Questions 7 & 8

A majority of the candidates chose Question 8, while Question 7 was challenging for many who did it. In relation to the former, some candidates lambasted the Minister of Education instead of taking a stance, giving solid and strong arguments, expanding the arguments, sustaining a position and employing argumentative techniques. In relation to Question 7, too many responses lacked substance and information from which candidates could argue. Those who performed well on this topic most likely had the advantage of knowledge from Social Studies and were current with topical issues such as C(aribbean) S(ingle) M(arket) and E(conomy). Unfortunately, many candidates had no knowledge of Caricom as a regional institution and thus could not argue about what the ‘movement of skilled professionals’ could mean for the region.

In general, candidates who displayed superiority understood the demands of the topic, identified their audience, cogently presented their points and argued effectively using appropriate devices. Competent candidates demonstrated some ability to raise points, but faltered on argumentation. Weak responses came from candidates who had little or only vague knowledge of the topic and lacked the skills of argumentation.

### **Advice**

Students need to be guided about the difference between ‘arguing’ and ‘quarrelling’. Students should be warned against making unsubstantiated, partisan political statements in an essay that requires logical arguments illustrated with relevant examples.

## **Basic Proficiency**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The examination in 2005 followed the format used in previous years. Paper 01, the multiple choice paper, tested most of the Understanding component of the syllabus and Paper 02, the free response paper, tested the Expression component of the syllabus as well as part of the Understanding of literary and persuasive writing. The distribution of marks for the two profiles (Understanding and Expression) across the two papers is as follows:-

	<b>PAPER 01 Multiple Choice</b>	<b>PAPER 02 Essay</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Understanding	60	37	97 = 60%
Expression	–	65	65 = 40%

There was a decrease in the number of candidates taking the examination in 2006:

4,502(2001) 3,792(2002) 3,777 (2003) 3,063 (2004) 3,063 (2005) 3,089 (2006).

There was a decrease in the percentage of candidates attaining Grade III and above in 2006:

16.20%(2003) 16.78%(2004) 29.42%(2005) 26.51%(2006).

The performance mean over the last nine years has been up and down, but in 2006 it was better than most of the previous years:

(1998) 53.13 – (1999) 51.32 – (2000) 56.57 – (2001) 55.08 – (2002) 49.57 – (2003) 47.17 (2004) 49.62 (2005) 52.28 (2006) 56.13 [actually 60.14 out of 150].

Not enough students are demonstrating competence in Profile II (expression). Students seem oblivious to spelling rules and their spelling is particularly weak and increasingly phonetic. The concept of paragraphing is ignored and, generally, punctuation is limited to full stops and commas.

There is increasing evidence that some candidates are short of ideas or material. For instance, some candidates used the passage in Question 1 as a response to Question 7 or in support of the moot in Question 8 and some candidates used Question 2 as material to answer Section III.

### **Detailed Comments**

#### **Paper 01 - Multiple Choice**

Candidates' performance in Paper 01 in 2006 showed an upward change over 2005. The mean score in 2005, out of a possible 60, was 27.84 and this moved to 28.14 in 2006.

### Paper 02 - Free Response

Average performance in the component sections of Paper 02 was as follows:

	2004	2005	2006
Section 1 Summary skills (20 marks)	5.06	5.56	4.78/7.17 (30)
Section 2 Comprehension (24 marks)	9.87	9.93	10.99/12.36 (27)
Section 3 Story Writing/Description (16 marks)	5.17	5.14	5.32/6.65 (20)
Section 4 Argument (20 marks)	5.62	6.9	6.90/8.62 (25)

\* Under 2006 the mark given first is for purposes of comparison with previous years and the second mark given is the actual average of out the 2006 totals for each section.

#### SECTION ONE (Understanding & Expression)

Question 1 tested the candidates' ability to summarise a passage written in continuous prose taken from the San Juan Star newspaper. The passage examined the link between media violence and children's behaviour. Following are three excellent summaries of the passage which give some idea of how candidates may differ but still give the critical information needed:

- 1. Studies show that violence in the electronic media is linked to violence in society. Children exposed to such violence may imitate the acts and the actors who commit them. Consequently, their minds are becoming seriously affected as they begin to see life as an exciting game, not as reality. Parents do not always fully understand how damaging these violent acts are. Parents, therefore, should be more attentive to these shows and discuss them with their children. [76 words]*
- 2. Studies show a link between children's behaviours and the violence and aggression they are exposed to via television, movies and video games. These studies are important because, to deal effectively with the problem, we have to understand it thoroughly. Constant exposure to violence and aggression causes children to imitate these behaviours and view them as normal – even exciting! Parents don't realize how awful some video games are. They need to be more vigilant and talk to their children, many of whom see life as a game. Some don't even know what is real and what is not. [97 words]*
- 3. Studies show a link between children's behaviours and the violence and aggression they are exposed to via audio-visual and interactive media. This exposure causes children to admire and imitate acts of aggression and violence. In fact, it makes them see life as a game and some cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality. Parents and adults do not realise how awful video games are. They need to be more aware and discuss the negative content with their children. We need to understand the problem thoroughly so that we can deal with it effectively. [94 words]*

Too many students exceeded the word limit. Too many students were unable to use their own words in their attempt to summarise the passage. Many merely lifted parts of the passage and combined these to form a summary. A few candidates responded to the topic at an emotional level and were very forthright in expressing their views. The result was more an argument than a summary and therefore provided no basis for assessment of summary skills.

## Advice

Exercises in summary writing should include passages that are contentious in their subject matter. In such cases, students should be taught to remain calm in the face of arguments they do not agree with and to summarise the argument given rather than to respond to it.

In order to help students express themselves logically and concisely, teachers should provide students with ample exercises in making construction shifts and in recognising and writing equivalent sentences. Students should be encouraged to constantly review the collective nouns they have learnt from primary school and to enrich their vocabulary by regular reading of good literature. One way of doing this would be to have a classroom book club.

## SECTION TWO (Understanding)

### Question 2

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand a prose passage written in Standard English taken from Nailah Folami Imoja's *Pick of the Crop*. It assessed their ability to use interpretative and analytical skills. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) Leroi had to stay humble because his mother reprimanded him if he wasn't.
- (b) Ma regarded him as his own man; she stopped sitting by the door; she stopped waiting up for him when he went out.
- (c) Her reward was that he could stay at home for as long as he chose.
- (d) Ma lay in bed awake at night because she was waiting for Leroi to come home.
- (e) The phrase tells us that he was respectful towards his mother and didn't want to offend her.
- (f) Her opinion was that he was a good boy – he wouldn't curse for her to hear.

The overall performance on this question was encouraging. Students performed well on questions which required a grasp of explicit statements made in the passage (a, b, c, d), but showed some difficulty with questions which required them to draw conclusions or make inferences (e, f) about opinions and attitudes.

- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (b) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (c) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (d) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
- (e) Many candidates had difficulty understanding and explaining 'attitude'.
- (f) Many candidates had difficulty formulating a response to the question of 'opinion of'.

## Advice

It is recommended that teachers concentrate on teaching comprehension skills, especially inference, with particular reference to reading material. Students need more practice in answering the kinds of questions set on the paper, questions requiring precise answers. In preparing for these questions teachers should make sure that students read questions a number of times before they attempt to write their answers. After reading the whole passage, students should also re-read the section of the passage relevant to each specific question to make sure that what they are thinking of writing is what the passage says. Students should be advised to re-read what they have written to make sure that it makes sense to someone reading it.

### Question 3

This question tested the candidates' ability to read and understand an argumentative passage written in Standard English published in The *Barbados Advocate* newspaper. The following were deemed to be the correct answers to the questions asked:

- (a) The writer makes the comment because of the variety and quantity of cell phones available and abused in public.
  - (b) The writer's view of such people is that they are inconsiderate.
  - (c) The writer's opinion is that people use cell phones in public to show off.
  - (d) The writer makes the comment because nowadays everybody has a cell phone.
  - (e) He refers to them as culprits because their cell phones rang at inappropriate moments and they answered them.
  - (f) Two developments the writer is predicting are that new annoying traits will emerge and that the situation will get even worse.
  - (g) The effect that the writer expects it to have is to cause the person not to use the cell phone inappropriately in public.
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- (a) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (b) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (c) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (d) Candidates had little difficulty here because they could quote the answer from the text.
  - (e) The word 'culprit' was not generally understood. Many answers failed to mention the idea of 'inappropriate moments'.
  - (f) This proved a little more difficult than the first four because the answer was not restricted to one sentence.
  - (g) Many answers did not deal with the writer's expectation or intention.

## **Advice**

In order to master this section, students should be given practice in being specific when answering questions. There is no need to write an answer of half a page for a question that is worth two marks. Various strategies should be employed to develop analytical skills in order to answer questions which require more than just quoting from the passage. Teachers need to get students to understand what is meant by the writer's expectation, intention, opinion and attitude and to realise that responses of this type require more than quoting from the passage, they require summarising and explanation.

## **SECTION THREE** (Expression)

### Questions 4, 5 & 6

This section tested the candidates' ability to express themselves creatively in continuous prose. Instead of all of the questions requiring a story, this year this section included a question (Question 5) which tested candidates' ability to write a descriptive essay.

Question 6 was the most popular choice. In Question 4 many candidates simply described the picture while others wrote stories which had a tenuous link with the picture. Question 5 posed the greatest challenge with respect to interpretation. In several 'descriptions' 'Al' appeared only at the end, while in others he was nowhere in the scene.

An appreciable number of students demonstrated competence in employing all the elements of story writing: strong plots, good use of imagination, well-rounded characterization, appropriate resolution of conflict, satisfactory conclusion of action, skilful selection of details and effective use of dialogue. There were a few superior scripts. However, the majority of students continue to find this section a major challenge and some do not even attempt any of the three questions. Weak responses included unimaginative 'stories' which were a mere relation of loosely connected incidents. Other weaknesses included the following:

- Shift in perspective from first to third person and vice versa.
- Lack of or inadequate characterization
- Sudden appearance of characters; change of main character
- Underdeveloped stories
- Restricted vocabulary, faulty syntax and weak mechanics
- Stories far in excess of or below the suggested word limit.

## **Advice**

Students should be provided with copious models of good short stories and should be taught the elements of story writing in a systematic way. After this they should be given regular practice in writing short stories using various stimuli. Students should be encouraged to read more widely in order to develop a more varied vocabulary. They should be given more exposure to figurative expressions. They need more practice in incorporating dialogue in story writing. Students should be encouraged to edit their work before they write the final draft.

## **SECTION FOUR**(Expression)

### Questions 7 & 8

This section tested the candidates' ability to express their views persuasively using various techniques of argument. Question 7 required students to state their views on a given topic while Question 8 required them to defend a position.

Candidates seemed to have no particular difficulty relating to the topics given. Generally the supporting details were pertinent to the topics. For example, candidates showed a clear understanding of the academic underachievement of Caribbean male youth (Question 7) as well as an awareness of the sometimes harsh realities of parenting (Question 8). Responses to Question 8, which was the more frequently answered question, focussed on either the negative socio-economic challenges of having more than two children or the sanction from God to "be fruitful and multiply". Because both Question 7 and Question 8 were in two parts, in responding, some candidates lost sight of the full argument and addressed only one part of the issue.

Weak responses ignored the use of punctuation and/or paragraphing, listed points rather than explain, expand or illustrate them, did not adhere to logical sequencing and used transitional words and phrases inappropriately. Some otherwise competent responses included slang words and expressions and MSN (computer) spellings.

### **Advice**

Teachers are encouraged to continue to provide classroom activities for students to practice persuasive skills orally. They should encourage students to 'translate' popular slang expressions and should use 'teachable moments' to underscore the concept of appropriate use of language. They should also reinforce the conventions of writing Standard English. Interesting newspaper editorials could be used for class discussions. This would also help to develop students' analytical thinking and ability to respond concisely to higher order questions posed in Section 2. Students need more practice in logical development of argument, use of rhetorical questions and appropriate use of figurative language. Students need to be given many opportunities to write. Students need more practice in the use of topic sentences and paragraphs. Students would benefit from timed practice exercises in preparation for the examination.