

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

MAY/JUNE 2010

**THEATRE ARTS
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Theatre Arts examination consists of three components. Paper 01, a short-answer paper, consists of six compulsory questions. Paper 02, the practical examination, is examined externally by the Theatre Arts teacher and a specialist in the field.

Paper 03, the School-Based Assessment, consists of two projects — a critique and a research paper. Nine hundred and ninety-seven candidates from 80 centres registered for the Theatre Arts examination in 2010 from the following territories: Antigua and Barbuda (1 centre); Barbados (7 centres); British Virgin Islands (1 centre); Guyana (2 centres); Jamaica (37 centres); St. Lucia (2 centres) and Trinidad and Tobago (30 centres). The number of candidates who registered for the Theatre Arts examination this year increased by 117 from 2009.

In October of 2009 and January of 2010, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) organised training workshops in the assessment of Paper 02 for the teachers and specialists engaged in the Theatre Arts examination. This training was conducted in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados and teachers from all the participating countries were invited to attend. These workshops were expected to positively impact the 2010 examination and those in the near future.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Short-Answer Questions

The Paper 01 examination is designed to test the objectives of the core. The basic structure of the Paper 01 examination is as follows:

| | |
|------------|--|
| Question 1 | Functions of theatre personnel |
| Question 2 | Cultural form |
| Question 3 | Reflection /Social function of theatre/ Reinforcement of work done for Paper 02 and 03 |
| Question 4 | Elements of theatre |
| Question 5 | Stimulus (This could be text or a visual, for example, a picture) |
| Question 6 | Reinforcement of work done for Paper 02 and 03 |

Most of the questions in the examination were divided into parts which span the cognitive domain. Candidates' performance on this paper was good. Performance on this paper improved over that of 2009.

Question 1

This question tested candidates' knowledge of

- functions of theatre personnel
- elements of theatre arts and
- cultural forms as contained in the syllabus.

Part (a) tested candidates' knowledge of spatial requirements for different types of performance. Part (b) tested candidates' knowledge of functions and duties of theatre personnel which is a standard question for this examination. Candidates performed less than expected on this standard question because the question was set in the context of Carifesta, the regional arts festival last held in 2008 in Guyana. Candidates were expected to apply their knowledge of the use of space and functions of the theatre arts personnel to this wider, festival context. The more able candidates were able to supply good responses to (a) (ii), the requirements of the space for a National Dance Theatre Company, (a) (iii), a Storyteller, and (b) (ii), the duties of the Public Relations Manager.

A response which gained full marks for a (iii) was *for a storyteller, two requirements of the space include proper lighting and a space embodying a proscenium stage*. Most candidates, however, seemed unable to apply basic knowledge to a particular context. The mean for this question was 4.20 out of 10.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' knowledge of

- Caribbean cultural forms
- links between cultural forms and artistic practice.

This question was generally well handled by candidates, in particular the parts which required simple factual information such as Parts (a) where the candidates had to name a cultural form and where it was practised and (c) where they had to identify two performers or choreographers or writers who use the cultural form in their work. The candidates who scored full marks were able to competently articulate the reasons why the cultural form survived (Part b), and explain one positive lesson learnt from the study of the cultural form (Part d). Except for Part (d), all other parts of this question required simple recall of information about a critical part of the syllabus — Caribbean Cultural Forms. Hence, better performance was expected. The mean for this question was 5.85 out of 10.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' knowledge of

- cultural forms and playmaking within an imaginative construct.

The question was divided into three parts. Candidates generally gave better responses to Parts (a) and (b). Part (a) simply required candidates to select a cultural form to convey the awareness of HIV/AIDS and Part (b) required them to give the storyline of the production they would create. Each part of the question was worth two marks and candidates were generally able to access these marks. Many candidates selected carnival, stick fighting and revival as the cultural form they would use. However, performance on Part (c) which assessed whether candidates could link cultural form to plot proved challenging for some candidates. The mean for this question was 4.28 out of 10. Teachers need to help students differentiate between the concepts of story and storyline as well as elements of theatre and elements of cultural form. Responses indicated many candidates could not make the distinction between these concepts.

Question 4

This question assessed candidates' ability to

- evaluate production choices.

Candidates' preparation of their School-Based Assessment (SBA) should have enabled them to do well in this question as the skills of critiquing which should have been learnt as they prepared the critique for the SBA were tested. Candidates were simply expected to recall and organise their response to elements of a show they had seen. Generally, responses were very good for Parts (a) and (c) which asked them to recall the storyline of the show or play (Part a) and to say one thing that they liked or disliked about the show (Part c). However, Part (b) which required them to produce technical information about the show/play was often too generalised and so prevented candidates from gaining full marks. Candidates showed particular weakness in the area of lighting. Teachers should give this area more attention to better prepare their students for the SBA component as well as the Paper 01 examination. The mean for this question was 6.45.

Question 5

This question tested candidates' ability to

- observe detail in reading a script
- imaginatively interpret action in a script to make production choices.

This question proved challenging. Most candidates were able to respond to Part (a) and gained the two marks for suggesting a title for the script. Candidates experienced some difficulty in identifying moods and the appropriate movement that would reflect this mood (Part b). Like Question 4, many of the candidates were unable to produce the technical requirements of theatre, notably lighting. Candidates should be taught how to transfer knowledge and skills across the subject areas and not simply learn discrete bits of knowledge. Mood is a concept which is taught in the humanities; hence, candidates should experience no difficulty in identifying mood in an excerpt as it is done in English A as well as English B. Teachers should assist students in textual analysis. They should also encourage field trips to theatre venues to study lighting, especially when none exists in the school.

Question 6

This question was intended to assess candidates' ability to

- reflect on their own progress and personal growth through the study of Theatre Arts.

This question attempted to reinforce candidates' learning in the areas of Playmaking, Dancemaking, and Stage Crafts. Responses were generally good. Generally, the students who were able to competently handle Part (a) did well on Parts (b) and (c). Part (a) required that candidates recall four activities that they engaged in to prepare for the final examination in Playmaking or Dancemaking or Stage Crafts. The weaker candidates scored very few marks on this question as it required them to reflect on the activities they did in the classroom and to indicate what they learnt from these activities. However, the better candidates were able to do very well. Of the six questions on the paper, this question had the highest mean. The mean was 6.84 out of 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAPER 01

- Candidates need to allocate time wisely in the examination in order to answer all the questions. It was noted this year that many candidates did not complete the paper.
- Teachers should utilise teaching methodologies to assist students in developing skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis. It was noted that candidates were able to respond adequately to questions which required basic recall, but experienced difficulty when greater cognitive demands were required.
- Teachers should make use of correct technical terms in their correct contexts in spite of local peculiarities and usage to assist students in learning the terms.
- Students need to be taught to read and interpret questions carefully.
- Students need more practice in text analysis.
- Teachers need to point out distinguishing features of formal and non-formal spaces.
- Field trips should be organised to theatre venues so that technical equipment can be observed backstage as well as in practice. Generally, candidates need more knowledge of the technical aspects of theatre in **all three options**.

- Teachers need to involve their students directly or otherwise in arts festivals and other arts-related opportunities presented in the region from time to time. These are occasions for participation as performers, production crew and audience or, secondarily, through research and information-gathering.
- Students need to reflect on the meaning and value of their experiences within the study of Theatre Arts. This must be built into the teaching activities.

Paper 02 – Practical Examination

Candidates' performance on the Paper 02 for the Drama option was extremely consistent with the past two years while performance in the Dance option showed improvement. It was envisaged that with the workshops conducted greater improvement would have been seen in candidates' performance on Paper 02.

Paper 03 – School-Based Assessment

Eighty samples were received and moderated this year. Candidates' performance declined considerably this year. The quality of the work submitted was below that of previous years. Additionally, it was noted that many candidates were guilty of plagiarism. Candidates copied work directly from the Internet and from each other. Some even submitted inauthentic interviews, that is, interviews they indicated they conducted were with interviewees who have been dead for quite some time! It must be pointed out that teachers, in many of these instances, awarded very high marks to these samples.

Some of the weaknesses noted in the SBA are as follows:

- Research projects were presented as loosely structured pieces of work rather than as a cohesive whole in essay format.
- The subjects for the research papers were unsuitable. The subject of the research paper, as specified in the syllabus, must be a theatre arts specialist or a cultural practitioner, not cultural forms.
- Candidates presented research papers and interviews of the **same** practitioner. This can hardly be called 'research'; candidates did not choose subjects of their own interest; and questions were formatted and repetitive.
- Inappropriate movement vocabulary in writing critiques of dance productions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAPER 03

- Teachers need to apply CXC criteria strictly when marking SBAs. Where this happens, there is commendable conformity with CXC marking. Some teachers either do not comprehend or choose to disregard the stated criteria to the detriment of the candidates' work.
- Every effort should be made to have candidates see live theatre. This is a challenge in smaller territories or situations where not much live theatre is presented. Recorded works are acceptable for the syllabus and will not be discounted, but there is no substitute for the experience of live theatre as being of value in itself.
- Where options for viewing live theatre are available, students should critique work outside of their own school in which they are not involved. It is difficult for the student to avoid bias when so linked to the work.
- Teachers are reminded that the research paper should be presented in essay format. The essay is informed by the interview and other sources of information (e.g. bibliographical) on the practitioner. These sources are to be submitted in accordance with the stated guidelines.