REPORT ON CANDIDATES’ WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION®

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LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2010 revised syllabus for Literatures in English was examined for the first time in 2013. Total candidate entry was almost the same as in 2012. It was encouraging to see an improvement in candidate performance on both units. In order to continue this improved performance, candidates are encouraged to practise good time management so as to complete all tasks assigned. Additionally, candidates must continue to employ analytical and evaluative skills in their responses to the essay topics, and to be judicious, coherent and cohesive in their organization and communication of information.

In the area of knowledge, candidates should demonstrate aspects of knowledge beyond the basic features of genre — plot, theme and characterization — and should be able to demonstrate knowledge of literary devices and their functions, and knowledge of literary context. In the module on 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, some candidates fail to demonstrate knowledge of the genre beyond the basic level, that is, what the poem is about. Although attention is now being given to symbolism, imagery and diction, it is important that candidates demonstrate knowledge of the other generic aspects of poetry. Nevertheless, there is evidence that, to their credit, many more candidates 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, such as narrative technique. 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; listing the features of the genre is not sufficient. In the prose genre, some candidates are merely narrating the story or relevant sections of the story instead of producing analytic essays that engage with the stimulus provided. In all genres, candidates have expanded their range of knowledge of extra-textual information — contextual, biographical and critical — and have accordingly improved their performance on the knowledge profile. However, candidates must be encouraged to integrate extra-textual information appropriately and relevantly. 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.

There is evidence that some candidates have improved their essay writing, question analysis and argumentative skills, and as such, their grades for application and
organization improved. Candidates should be mindful of the importance of writing a good introduction; this entails more than a repeat of the question posed and a list of the books or poems that will be referenced in their discussion. The expectation is that emphasis will be placed on isolating the key terms in the question, and, if necessary, defining those key words while building an argument in which a position on the issue is taken and a clear focus is established to guide the reader. In other words, candidates must be able to write a thesis statement articulating their own position in relation to the question, to develop their supporting arguments and to marshal different kinds of evidence they will be using to support their arguments. 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 textual as well as secondary source information (from critical sources) into their discussions. Additionally, training in helping candidates to analyse examination questions must continue so that candidates will learn to strip away the trappings of a question, distil its essence, formulate an apt thesis, and effectively synthesize and marshal information (textual, literary devices/elements, and extra-textual) to address the thesis. Candidates should be given more CAPE structured practice questions to aid in their preparation for the level of analysis that is required of them in the examination. Additionally, teachers also need to engage students in more critical thinking discussions to get them to interrogate varied aspects of the text.

This year, there were many instances of illegible handwriting. Candidates are reminded to pay close attention to penmanship.

DETAILED COMMENTS

UNIT 1

Paper 01 – Short Answer Questions

On Paper 01, far too many candidates spent time rewriting the questions and far too many failed 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 the loss of 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, these were candidates who did not answer the whole question or left out parts of the 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 and second
modules and seemed to have had difficulty completing the third module. 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.

Module 1: Drama

The questions on this dramatic extract tested candidates’ ability to identify setting, character traits, and props, and to comment on the dramatic significance of props and stage directions. Candidates were also expected to explain irony and comment on its significance to the extract as a whole.

Many candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the genre of drama in their addressing of the elements of character traits, props, and stage directions. Dramatic significance, however, needed to have been comprehensively discussed, showing how props, stage directions or irony advanced the plot, developed a character, heightened conflict or created audience expectancy. Candidates must learn not to substitute a comprehensive response with one that is off-topic, unnecessarily lengthy and uninformative.

Question 1

Generally, Part (a) of this comprehension question was well answered. Candidates were able to identify setting. However, weaker candidates failed to be specific when outlining the activity taking place on stage. Part (b) posed a challenge to weaker candidates. They were unable to explain how Regine’s exit helps to advance the plot and to provide character revelation. Candidates who scored full marks on this part of the question produced answers such as:

Regine’s exit permits Pastor Manders to glance inquisitively at the books so that he becomes diverted by the titles he observes. As a result, he discusses the books and does not address the topic he supposedly came to discuss. This is important to plot development.

or

Regine’s exit allows Pastor Manders to be alone so that he can indulge his inquisitiveness.
Question 2

This application question was well handled and many candidates received full marks. Most candidates could identify one character trait for Pastor Manders and one for Mrs Alving, and they were also able to correctly cite evidence (whether a quotation, line reference, paraphrase or summary) to support their answers. Rather than highlighting a trait, weaker candidates wrote extensively about the behaviour or action of characters.

Question 3

This comprehension/analysis question required an identification of props and a commentary on their dramatic significance. Well-prepared candidates correctly identified the props — the table, the book, the chair, the sheaf of paper, and satchel while less prepared candidates confused props with stage directions. The commentaries, however, were not always insightful. An appropriate response on the dramatic significance of the books could have been: *this stage prop is significant in terms of plot development. It becomes the focus of the meeting even though that was not the original purpose of Pastor Mander’s visit.*

Question 4

This analysis type question was the least well done question in the module. As in Question 3, candidates’ commentaries on dramatic significance tended to be deficient. Candidates’ responses needed to have focused more pointedly on significance, discussing issues such as the stage directions fuelling plot development, animation of drama, or establishing setting, mood and context. A suitable answer could have been:

*The series of questions posed by Pastor Manders produces dramatic tension. The rapid succession of questions suggests that Mrs Alving is on trial for having these books in her possession and the fact that Pastor Manders stresses “these” and “here” reinforces the sense of an inquisition. The tension is further created by the accusatory tone that Pastor Manders uses with Mrs Alving, his hostess, in her own home. The audience is in suspense as to how Mrs Alving will respond. When she responds, Mrs Alving does not seem to be intimidated by his questions. This creates further dramatic tension since we fear that the conversation might disintegrate into a quarrel.*

Question 5

Generally, this two-part application/evaluation question could have been better handled. Candidates were asked to explain the irony in lines 53 to 55 and comment on the
significance of the irony to the extract as a whole. For Part (a), weaker candidates provided a summary of the part of the extract that dealt with irony rather than explaining irony in the given lines. The majority of the responses to Part (b) did not sufficiently engage with the word *significance* and/or *the extract as a whole*. A suitable answer to Part (b) would have been:

*The irony revealed in these closing lines of the extract functions significantly to reveal character traits and to demonstrate the stark differences in personality between Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving. He is a hypocrite who believes that there should be a dichotomy between the private and public self. She is honest and brave enough not to hide her views and beliefs. There is also irony in his self-revelation as someone who quite possibly (and in secret) reads forbidden material.*

Module 2: Poetry

The questions in this module tested candidates’ ability to identify the context of the poem, to correctly explain the meaning of certain phrases, to comment on the poet’s choice of words and use of line breaks, and to evaluate the effectiveness of their use. Candidates were also required to comment on the effectiveness of the last line of the poem. On this module, most candidates performed satisfactorily. However, Questions 7 and 8 posed challenges for a number of candidates.

Question 6

This comprehension question required candidates to identify the context of the poem, and to identify actions which indicate parental protectiveness. Weaker candidates were uncertain as to the meaning of context and produced answers such as ‘The context of the poem is free verse.’ An appropriate answer would have been one that identified the literal, symbolic or psychological context of the poem: a parent teaching a child to ride a bicycle, a parent reflecting on the growth of a daughter, or a daughter’s movement towards independence. Candidates did a commendable job in answering the second part of this question.

Question 7

This question required candidates to demonstrate understanding of diction. For the most part, the commentaries on effectiveness tended to be limited and not sufficiently convincing. An appropriate response could have been: *The poet, by establishing that the child “pulled / ahead”, signals to the reader that the child is growing up, developing her skills, and establishing independence, rather than being dependent on the parent (hence, the pull).*
Question 8

This question, which required candidates to comment on the significance of the line break, proved to be very challenging to most. The few candidates who were able to establish a connection between enjambment and meaning produced answers such as:

_Falling off the bicycle, however, is symbolic of the moments in life that the daughter will experience other falls and/or crashes, and will need the helping hands of a supportive parent, who is likely to be always waiting in the background to pick her up and restore her to rightness, again. The line break after the word ‘waiting’ forces the reader to pause momentarily, and to also experience the act of waiting. Even though the pause is for just a moment, parents have experienced that within the blink-of-an-eye moment, a number of things can happen, such as the child falling (“thud”) or “crash[ing]”. The severity of the fall or crash is reinforced by the heavy “thud” sound at the end of the line, which magnifies the “crash”, making the impact of the line break even greater and more effective._

or

_At the literal level, the phrase means that as the daughter rides further, and further away, the distance between her and the parent increases, and visually, the daughter becomes smaller and smaller. The line break is skilfully positioned to reiterate the contrast, the disjunction, the opposition inherent in the claim “grew / smaller”. Typically, someone does not grow smaller. In fact, you grow bigger, an expectation that is not met when the reader encounters the word “smaller” in the next line. This wonder and puzzlement experienced by the reader is possibly shared by the parent watching how quickly the child has grown up and questioning where the years have gone._

Question 9

Candidates performed well on the first part of this question. While many candidates were able to identify auditory images they were not always able to comment on the effectiveness and the mood created by the image. An appropriate answer would have been:

_The sound effect of “screaming” — and especially since the word is positioned at the end of a line (forcing one to pause) — creates a suspenseful moment in the poem. This suspense creates a mood of anxiety and apprehensiveness, two sentiments that are shared by the parent_
throughout the poem as s/he watches the daughter learning to ride and venturing out/off on her own.

Question 10

All candidates were able to connect the poem’s ending to its theme(s). However weaker candidates, in linking the image of a farewell to the title of the poem, were unable to explain the effectiveness of the image. An appropriate response to this question would have been:

Handkerchiefs are often associated with goodbyes because they wipe the tears that are occasioned by departure. The image of the handkerchief takes us back to the title of the poem, reminding us that the poem, although on the surface is about a daughter learning to ride a bicycle, is really, thematically, about a daughter growing up and about a daughter leaving home.

Module 3: Prose Fiction

Candidates understood the extract and performed fairly well on this module. The questions here tested candidates’ knowledge of characterization, craft, and narrative point of view. Candidates were required to assess the effectiveness of the use of certain phrases, as well as provide commentary on the significance of the ending of the extract.

Question 11

Candidates’ responses to this comprehension question were generally accurate and precise in identifying two aspects of Mr Doran’s character. Responses ranged from Mr Doran is insensitive to Mr Doran is anxious by nature to Mr Doran is prone to wildness to Mr Doran has a strong sense of social propriety. Less prepared candidates were unable to match the appropriate textual support to the character trait identified.

Question 12

This question, requiring candidates to demonstrate understanding of the writer’s craft, was generally well done. While most candidates were able to offer examples of Mr Doran’s anxiety, the less prepared candidates were unable to explain how the writer highlights this anxiety. Better prepared candidates produced answers such as:

The writer highlights Mr Doran’s anxiety by giving the reader access to Mr Doran’s constant reflections and introspection.
**Question 13**

The first part of this question posed some challenge to many candidates who seemed only able to focus on one word in the phrase. An appropriate explanation would have been one that focused on both loophole and reparation: *The phrase refers to marriage as the way to atone for the sinful act.*

The second part of the question was better handled and most candidates were able to identify two different impressions of marriage held by Mr Doran. Overall performance on this question was fair.

**Question 14**

This question posed the greatest challenge to candidates doing this module. Most candidates limited their responses to a description of the woman’s character and were unable to explain how her entrance gives the reader insight into her character that is unmediated by Mr Doran and how it not only propels the plot, but also creates suspense, humour and irony.

**Question 15**

Part (a) elicited full, clear commentaries on the appropriateness of the ending. In Part (b) however, most candidates struggled with *significance* and resorted to personal opinions on the character of Mr Doran and/or the woman. Like Question 14, *significance* could have been discussed in terms of thematic and structural development. Appropriate responses could have been:

*The extract begins and ends on a note of anxiety. At the start, Mr Doran’s anxiety is reflected in his unsteady hand movements, while at the end, the woman’s anxiety and fears are reflected in the rapid beating of her heart. This underscores for readers that the anxiety is a shared one.*

or

*The extract begins and ends on a note of anxiety and fear, two of the thematic concerns of the extract. There is also the need to seek comfort in an external source; for Mr Doran, it is the confession that is extracted by the priest, while for the woman, it is Mr Doran’s feeble, comforting and reassuring words that all would be alright.*
Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

At this second sitting of the 2010 revised syllabus, many candidates demonstrated a wide range of knowledge and were able to capitalize on the opportunity to score high marks. Although more candidates are referring to the writer’s biographical, historical and social contexts in their answers, many of them are still not synthesizing this information into a strong argument in response to the questions.

To reiterate a point made earlier, 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. More attention needs to be given to Objectives 1 and 5. Candidates’ ability to discuss the relationship between the elements of sound and sense, and to assess the relationship between structure and meaning, are the skills being assessed in this examination. 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. Close attention must be given to Objective 4. Candidates’ ability to assess the relationship between structure and meaning, and to discuss how the author specifically shapes the novel to obtain desired meaning, are skills being assessed in this examination. 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. Many candidates are confusing narrative structure with narrative technique. This area of weakness needs immediate attention.
Module 1: Drama

Question 1

This text-specific question was designed to test candidates’ ability to critically assess the theatrical impact of Shakespeare’s utilization of contrast in the play, *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will*. Weaker candidates tended to limit their analysis of contrast to a discussion on characterization and were unable to make a connection between contrast and theatrical appeal. For example, they were unable to show how the playwright generates audience interest through the visual and structural juxtaposition of Olivia and Viola, women who have both lost brothers yet choose to mourn them in vastly different ways. Candidates for the most part did not engage the word *primarily* and missed out on the opportunity to argue that there are other themes which produce theatrical appeal. Many candidates did not take advantage of the opportunity to engage with the various dynamics of theatrical appeal for audience entertainment or engagement. Although some candidates disagreed that contrast is the primary source of theatrical appeal, they were not able to provide a convincing argument that there are other features of the play that generate dramatic appeal. Better prepared candidates were able to argue that while contrast propels the plot, hence stimulating audience interest, theatrical appeal is derived from sources such as the public spectacle of the cross-gartered Malvolio, the bantering wit of Maria, Feste and Sir Toby, or the music, bonhomie and singing which characterizes this play.

It remains a grave concern that some candidates are still unfamiliar with the unique characteristics and elements of drama. Teachers need to facilitate more critical thinking discussions that are geared at using and sensitizing students to the conventions, elements, and features used to communicate meaning in the genre of drama. The mean for this question was 21.33 out of a total of 40.

Question 2

Although this question was more popular, candidate performance was slightly lower than on Question 1. This question required candidates to assess whether or not the play’s title with its promise of joy and festivity, fulfils audience expectation. Weaker candidates devoted their attention to a discussion of plot and theme and offered these as examples of festivity. Stronger candidates were able to provide contextual explanation of the Twelfth Night of Christmas as a time of music, laughter, revelry, bonhomie and went on to show how Shakespeare creates a drama wherein audience expectations are fulfilled, partially or fully through: the singing and music of Orsino’s court; the themes of courtship, flirting and love-making; the spectacle of lighthearted revelry in Olivia’s kitchen; the farcical duel between Cesario and Sir Andrew, then Sir Andrew and Sebastian, then Sebastian and Sir Toby, each set of opponents having different perceptions of their adversaries; and
the laughable spectacle of a grinning, cross-gartered Malvolio who has put aside both his puritanical beliefs and his sober clothing for the sake of personal ambition and promise of self-elevation. The mean for this question was 20.15 out of a total of 40.

**Question 3**

This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which they agree with the statement that *Richard III* is more memorable for its language than for its stage action and spectacle. Many candidates while sufficiently analysing the ways in which language is a very powerful instrument of persuasion, manipulation and control, and revelation of character did not engage with stage action and spectacle. Stronger candidates were able to argue that although through language, Gloucester dominates the play and holds the audience captive, their interest was sustained through Shakespeare’s presentation of war, the coronation and the ghostly spectacles.

Generally, there were fewer cases of storytelling as well as the propensity to focus mainly on plot. This is a marked improvement when compared to the previous year. The mean for this question was 20.87 out of a total of 40.

**Question 4**

This question was the more popular of the two *Richard III* questions and candidates’ performance was slightly better. Candidates were required to discuss the extent to which they agreed with the statement that the dramatic appeal of Richard III lies in Shakespeare’s skilful use of irony. Generally, the scripts were interesting to read, demonstrating sound textual knowledge and insight. Candidates who agreed that irony provides appeal focused predominantly on verbal, situational and dramatic irony. Better prepared candidates were able to argue that the dramatic appeal of the play comes from sources other than irony. They went on to make the case that dramatic appeal comes instead from the playwright’s weaving of themes, dramatic action, language, characterization, structure and setting. Through the sustained use of textual support, these candidates went on to argue that the success of any play lies not only in its structure but equally in the issues presented; these issues are presented in a variety of ways which often work in combination. Irony does not operate independent of the issues themselves. The mean for this question was 20.62 out of a total of 40.

**Module 2: Poetry**

**Question 5**

This question was the more popular of the two set in this section of the paper. Candidates were required to discuss the validity of the statement that the enjoyment of poetry
depends on the range of techniques deployed in representing the human condition. Generally, candidates did not engage with the word *enjoyment* and, in their responses, tended to limit their discussion to an exploration of poetic techniques, primarily visual imagery. Only a minority chose to include the poet’s use of figurative devices — form, metre, tone and mood — in the representation of the human condition. With this in mind, teachers, in preparing students for this exam, need to place greater emphasis on the interpretation of questions and on synthesizing a range of techniques in treating with the question. On the positive side, many candidates included in their discussions the background of poets and historical contexts of the poems. The mean for this question was 20.63 out of a total of 40.

**Question 6**

Performance on this question was not as good as performance on Question 5. Many candidates limited their interpretation to a narrow exploration of language, ignoring other literary devices that can contribute to making a poem memorable. Stronger candidates were able to sustain a discussion of the effectiveness of various poetic techniques and poetic craft in providing reader enjoyment. A discussion of a wide range of poetic devices is expected for all the questions and in order to gain high marks candidates should endeavour to showcase this range of knowledge. Candidates must avoid a mere listing of generic features; they must be able to engage in detailed analysis of the effectiveness of devices. Additionally, although the question required reference to a minimum of three poems, candidates ought to be encouraged to reference more than the minimum and to also cross reference for similarities and differences in themes and techniques in poems by the same writer. However, only poems from the prescribed list should be used to answer examination questions. The mean for this question was 20.03 out of a total of 40.

**Question 7**

This question was the more popular of the two. It required candidates to assess the extent to which they agree that the novelist is not limited to characterization in the exploration of social issues. Too many candidates were unable to discern the difference between social issues and personal problems. Weaknesses in answering this question surfaced in the form of candidates not using the correct literary jargon and producing essays that focused on plot details and on characterization. Candidates should be encouraged to see how themes are developed by way of the resources of the prose genre. The explicit reference to *narrative techniques* enabled some of the stronger candidates who attempted this question to readily identify and discuss a wide range of narrative strategies. The mean for this question was 22.65 out of a total of 40.
Question 8

This question required candidates to assess the validity of the assertion that prose writers use narrative techniques to illustrate their preoccupation with human relations. Generally, candidates were able to sustain a convincing discussion on the writer’s choice of narrative strategies to explore human relations. Although weaker candidates tended to confuse sexual relations with human relations, most candidates provided detailed evidence of the literary and structural devices that are deployed in the exploration of this theme. Stronger candidates were able to make the point that narrative technique is not limited to exploration of one specific theme but can be deployed in the treatment of other specific concerns.

Candidates are again reminded that the ability to discuss the relationship between theme and narrative technique is absolutely crucial for doing well on these questions. Additionally, 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 form and content. In addition, in responding to the question, candidates need to engage with words such as carefully and problematic so as to produce in-depth responses.

In answering Questions 7 and 8, 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. In addition, candidates need to develop their writing skills, paying attention to diction, syntax and the use of transitions to connect their ideas.

On a general note, on this section of the examination, 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 School-Based Assessment (SBA) provide 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. The mean for Question 8 was 22.89 out of a total of 40.
UNIT 2

Paper 01 – Short Answer Questions

Module 1: Drama

Candidates found this extract entertaining and responded enthusiastically to the questions. The questions on this module tested candidates’ ability to explain the ways in which meaning is conveyed through the playwright’s use of structural elements such as characterization and use of features of drama such as asides and stage directions. However, the ability to explain the dramatic significance of stage entrances and asides is not always evident in candidates’ responses. The ability to see relationships between stage action, dialogue, and the way in which the entire drama is being developed continues to require attention. Teachers need to devote more time to cultivating their students’ 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 developing audience engagement).

Candidates should also pay attention to mark allocation for questions. Where a question is worth two marks, it is unwise to write a page-long response, especially as this tends to leave limited time to answer questions that are worth six marks. Overall performance on this module was satisfactory.

Question 1

This question was well done. Most candidates could identify character traits. Weaker candidates tended to confuse character with situation, or gave explanations of Stepán’s behaviour without going on to say what the behaviour reveals about his personality.

Question 2

This question was well done. Most candidates were able to explain that in his conversation with Ivan, Stepán uses the word “boy” for different purposes and went on to comment on how the use of the word helps to evoke the close and perhaps long-term relationship between Stepán and Iván. The word suggests closeness and familiarity; it is as if Stepán sees Iván as a member of the family. Other strong responses connected the word use to Stepán’s playful, informal way of speaking and the function it serves in giving us a sense of his exuberant personality.
Question 3

This question required candidates to comment on the dramatic significance of stage directions. It was satisfactorily done. Most candidates were able to explain how the first stage direction reinforces Iván’s nervousness. He has already admitted to being nervous and to needing the drink of water to calm himself. The stage direction therefore helps to illuminate his character. Stronger candidates were able to explain the dramatic significance of this stage direction in terms of how it allows for a stage prop to be used and explained how the act of using this prop draws the audience’s attention to the fact that Iván’s action on stage creates a break in the dialogue, slows down the plot and creates suspense because the audience does not know the reason for his nervousness.

Weaker candidates had difficulty explaining the dramatic significance of the aside. They tended to focus on what was being said in the aside rather than on the way this stage direction allows for the revelation of Stepán’s suspicious nature — he assumes, without evidence, that Iván is there to borrow money. Stronger candidates were able to discuss the aside in terms of its thematic significance. Stepán’s public/social self masks his shrewd and cynical interior self.

Question 4

This two-part question required candidates to identify examples of humour and suspense and to comment on the effectiveness of each dramatic device. Candidates were able to correctly identify examples of suspense and humour. Generally, they were better able to explain the effectiveness of suspense as a dramatic device and produced answers such as: The playwright creates and maintains audience interest in the reason for Iván’s visit, his marriage proposal, and Stepán’s and Natásha’s varied reactions to his visit. Stronger candidates were able to explain how suspense creates tension because the audience is uncertain of the outcome of the proposal. Candidates were less able to comment on the dramatic effectiveness of humour. Many were unable to discuss the effectiveness of this device in terms of how the playwright uses it to not only highlight the relations between characters but also to showcase their differences. An example of an appropriate response could have been: We laugh when Iván inadvertently makes a potentially sexual remark (“when I do it”) and becomes flustered while trying to take it back. Or:

We laugh when Ivan is trying so hard not to be indelicate. This example of humour is effective in not only revealing Iván’s nervousness about proposing marriage, and about marriage in general, but also because the use of language, whether absurd or sexual, introduces a farcical tone in a situation that is typically considered serious.
Question 5

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this two-part question. They were required to explain the dramatic significance of Natásha’s entrance on stage and to explain two ways in which her statement is dramatically significant. Generally, candidates were able to explain that her entrance on stage allows the audience to meet her firsthand and to form their own opinion of her. The audience has heard about Natásha and now we get to see the ‘object of Iván’s desire’. We have been told by Stepán that she will be happy to say yes to Iván’s offer of marriage and we are curious to find out if this is so. We wonder at what will happen next.

The second part of the question posed a challenge to weaker candidates who had difficulty distinguishing the character’s action from the character’s speech. They were unable to show how the reductiveness of Natásha’s comment occasions surprise in the reader. It is assumed, based on Stepán’s comments, that Natásha will be impressed by Iván — his good looks, his physique, his dress — yet when she sees him, her first words are not enthusiastic or welcoming. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the way in which the extract begins with a conversation between men and ends with a woman having the last word. This allows for a power shift especially when we consider her father’s enthusiastic acceptance of Iván’s proposal on Natásha’s behalf. Her statement, lacking her father’s exuberance, suggests that she may not be as amenable to the proposal as her father suggested.

Module 2: Poetry

The questions in this module tested candidates’ ability to understand context and to support impressions, to correctly identify literary devices and to evaluate the effectiveness of their use. Candidates were also required to comment on the significance of the poet’s word choice and to explain the effectiveness of the poet’s use of a particular phrase at the end of the poem. There was improved performance on the poetry module this year, and overall candidate performance was satisfactory. Generally, candidates understood the poem. However, the inability of many of them to evaluate 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. It is important that students learn how a specific choice of literary device contributes to the interpretations we arrive at in reading poetry.
Question 6

This comprehension-type question was well done. The majority of candidates scored full marks because they were able to provide and support with evidence from the poem, four things we learn about the old women. The evidence given was in the form of a direct quote, a summary, a paraphrase or a reference to a specific line. Weaker candidates tended to ignore the prompt that evidence was restricted to the first stanza.

Question 7

This question required candidates to identify literary devices and to provide a clear explanation of the effectiveness of the writer’s use of literary devices. This question was satisfactorily done. Generally, candidates were able to identify metaphor, imagery and alliteration. However, it is important that candidates pay more attention to the correct spelling of these literary devices. Weaker candidates, while able to correctly identify the devices, were not always able to comment on the effectiveness of these devices. They tended to comment on effectiveness by explaining the literary device. For example, ‘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. Teachers should give students opportunities to practise explaining how the association of one thing helps us to understand another. 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, or how it relates to poetic structure or how it helps create mood or atmosphere.

Candidates had less difficulty answering Part (a) than Part (b). Stronger candidates were able to explain the simile in “frail as antique earthenware” in terms of how it allows readers to compare the fragility of these old women to clay pots that are easily broken. Candidates went on to explain that the poet reinforces this fragility by describing the pots as antique so as to suggest that in the same way that age may have weakened the strength of these pots, so too has time weakened these women. In the instance of Part (b), candidates were unable to link the use of the device (be it personification, metaphor, alliteration, consonance or imagery) or to communicate how it was being used to reinforce theme, tone, mood, atmosphere or structure. This is an example of the type of answer we expected from candidates.

“Needles knit” is an example of personification. Knitting is a human activity that is now transferred to the needles. The needles are portrayed as doing the knitting rather than as instruments controlled by someone. In so doing, the poet is able to suggest that the old women are so tired or so frail, that they are not up to the task of knitting and the needles therefore take over. This personification is
effective because it serves to reinforce the fact that old age has rendered these women useless.

Question 8

This question about the meaning of phrases produced responses that were unsatisfactory. Many candidates merely explained the meaning of the phrase and did not go on to indicate what idea is being reinforced by the use of the literary device — this may be either a specific idea at that point in the poem or a larger idea throughout the rest of the poem. It is disappointing that, at this level, candidates were unable to show how these phrases were effective in conveying theme, mood and atmosphere. Only the very strong candidates were able to explain “sharded in black” beyond the literal ‘The women were wearing black clothes’. It was expected that, at this level, candidates would have been able to explain that in using the word “black”, the poet allows us to have a visual image of the gloom, funereal appearance of these black-garbed old women. Also, that the word “sharded” sounds very close to the word “shrouded” and as such we are therefore reminded, through the word “shroud”, usually associated with death, that these funereal clothes foreshadow the women’s death.

The phrase “distant and cold as photos” posed considerable difficulty to candidates. While many candidates were able to recognize that the phrase describes family relations, they were unable to explain why this phrase was effective in creating mood. The poet chooses to represent the children of these old women as distant and cold because they do not visit their mothers, but instead send photographs of themselves and of the grandchildren that the old women have never met. The loneliness that these old women feel, by virtue of not having physical contact with their family, is captured in the poet’s use of the words “cold” and “distant”. Here is another example of an appropriate response, one that explained effectiveness in terms of the reinforcement of theme:

This phrase conveys the notion that life interaction with family and friends is now replaced with impersonal contact created by modernity and technologies. Photographs replace face-to-face contact. These old women yearn for the immediacy of human contact and therefore see these compensatory technologies as cold and distant.

The phrase “owl-call” seemed to be one with which most candidates were unfamiliar. Accordingly, very few candidates were able to explain how “owl-call” is effective in creating atmosphere. Candidates were unaware that the noise that owls make is an eerie one and were unable to explain how the reference to the call of owls produces a sense of dark foreboding. Only very strong candidates were able to explain how owls are associated with the night or darkness, and how this contributes to a sense of foreboding as the hooting of the owl is seen in some cultures as a precursor to death. By her use of
these words, the poet is able to evoke the sense of the old women as being called to their death.

Question 9

This question, requiring candidates to comment on the symbolism of “boxed-in” and “Death, that bald-head buzzard” was generally well done, although Part (b) posed a serious challenge to weaker candidates who did not know the meaning of “buzzard”. Candidates were able to read beyond the literal meaning of “boxed-in” and offered comments that explained the symbolism of the phrase in terms of how it reinforces the theme:

“Boxed-in” describes the restricted bed space the old women occupy — the beds are packed close together, or the beds are all very narrow. The poet is deliberate in his choice of this adjective because it conveys the notion that the narrow beds may well become the coffin boxes (housing the dead) — given that the old women may die in their sleep. This choice of adjective allows the poet to reinforce the theme of imminent death.

Where candidates knew the meaning of the word “buzzard”, they explained effectiveness in terms of the poet’s portrayal of death as a carrion crow/vulture — known to feed on the dying or the dead — in order to reinforce the imminence of the old women’s death. Candidates were able to explain that in the same way that buzzards circle dying animals/humans, death is on standby, waiting to claim its prey — the old dying women. Overall, performance on this question was unsatisfactory.

Question 10

This evaluation question required candidates to engage the words and images of the comparison. Additionally, candidates were required to discuss the effectiveness of the comparison at the end of the poem and to comment on its structural relationship in terms of development, reinforcement of theme, structure, mood and atmosphere. 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 weaker candidates. In most cases, candidates were unable to identify the symbolic association of the light imagery, and to see the connection between the specific moment and the overall development of theme or the careful creation of poetic structure. Here is an answer that sees some symbolic association with the light imagery and also sees the role of this imagery in the larger thematic patterning of the poem:
Light represents life and the image of the lamp with its wick going down suggests that these women are themselves close to death — that, with each breath they take, their light of life is closer to going out. The poem starts with the women seeking sunlight (the natural and eternal light which allows things to grow, the warmth that will keep death at bay) and ends with them having to settle for artificial and transient light. The shortening of the wick means that the lamp no longer burns as brightly and that the time is approaching when the lamp will no longer light.

Candidates are reminded that the evaluation of appropriateness could be connected to thematic development, structural arrangement or contribution to atmosphere. Here is a possible answer that discusses the phrase in terms of its structural symmetry:

The last line is an effective conclusion because in the first stanza and final stanza of the poem there are images of light. The poet is juxtaposing with sunlight — natural light of the first stanza — the lamp light of the final stanza to suggest that with old age, these women, in spite of their desire for sunlight, are in the evening of their lives, cooped up inside without ready access to the sun.

Overall, performance on this question was satisfactory.

**Module 3: Prose Fiction**

The questions on this module tested candidates’ knowledge of character traits, imagery, and other literary devices. Candidates were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the reference to hands as an ending to the passage. Many candidates were unable to answer all questions because of poor time management. Weaker candidates struggled with the questions that required analytical skills.

**Question 11**

This comprehension question was very well done. Weaker candidates described characters’ reactions rather than identifying what character trait is suggested by their behaviour. For example, ‘Tan Cee did not speak much’ rather than the more appropriate use of adjectives like *Tan Cee is focused/Tan Cee is determined,* or *Tan Cee cares for the boy,* rather than ‘Tan Cee is nurturing’. Additionally, some candidates misread the question and provided character traits that related to the young boy rather than to Tan Cee.
Question 12

This comprehension/analysis question required candidates to identify the literary device used in each of two lines and to comment on the effectiveness of each device. Some candidates confused ‘figure of speech’ with ‘part of speech’. Most candidates could correctly identify a literary device, but, as is typical of such questions, weaker candidates struggled to effectively comment on the effectiveness of the use of the literary device. Typically, candidates provided the incomplete response ‘The imagery in the line is effective because it provides readers with a clear picture of how hot the sun was’. Here is an example of an answer produced by stronger candidates:

“The sun was a hot sheet” is an example of a metaphor. The poet compares the sun to a sheet. This image allows the reader to envisage the sun’s light and heat. This conveys the totality of the enveloping heat of the sun, like a sheet covering a bed, the sun’s heat covers everything. Whereas, literally sheets provide comfort, in this instance the sun is uncomfortable — it is burning Pynter. Thus, the writer in adding the qualifying adjective ‘hot’ to ‘sun’ is able to reinforce Pynter’s sense of discomfort / abuse.

Part (b) posed a challenge to most candidates who, while able to explain that needles prick, could not link needles to the pungency of the herbs. Here is an example of an appropriate answer:

The poet compares the effects of the herbs’ aroma on the boy’s nose to the assault of needles. The use of the word “prickles” relates to thorns and connects to the florals that are part of the scene. This simile is structurally appropriate in an extract that represents nature as violent, where, for example, the sun is a hot sheet.

Overall, performance on this question was good.

Question 13

This question was not well handled. Candidates tended to focus solely on explaining the meaning of the line rather than moving on to a commentary on effectiveness. This was particularly problematic in Part (i) where candidates resorted to lengthy explanations of the sound of a beating heart. They were unable to show how the phrase is effective because it plays imagistically between Pynter’s own heartbeat resonating naturally in him and through his bare feet touching the earth; the earth’s own metaphorical heartbeat giving lifeblood to all that is nurtured and sustained by nature, including Pynter himself. Part (ii) produced more insightful commentaries. Some candidates were
able to explain that the women are a tight, close-knit community — whatever happens among them stays there. The reader gets a sense of a sisterhood of secrets, and the consequences of violating that bond are dire. These candidates then went on to show how the phrase is effective in conveying an atmosphere of dread which permeates the scene. Pynter has been thrust into a group of teasing, chuckling, cursing women, but is alienated from their boisterous conversation. When the women go silent, the change in the atmosphere is dramatic and frightening to Pynter who feels doubly alone — he is as fearful of his Auntie as these women now are.

Question 14

This question was poorly answered. Candidates had difficulty explaining that Pynter is so transfixed in fear, so overwhelmed by the situation that when Tan Cee finally undresses him to bathe him, he feels no embarrassment about being naked in front of all these eyes. Moreover, candidates were distracted by Pynter’s nakedness and digressed into lengthy discussions about his anatomy rather than offering a commentary on how Pynter’s body becomes an object from which he disassociates himself. Tan Cee has reduced him to an object by not taking his sense of personhood and shame into account. He has no say or control over his body. Others choose to unclothe him without him having a say in that act. Candidates failed to connect this point to the dominant theme of a lack of agency — Pynter is passive, and now in his nakedness that passivity is fully realized.

Question 15

This question posed considerable difficulty for most of the candidates. Many candidates drew on cultural experience and explained this ending in terms of obeah and superstition. Others explained it in terms of child molestation and sexual abuse. Some candidates noted that the passage began with the mention of feet and ended with the reference to hands. However, they were unable to develop this notion to explain effectiveness in terms of structural symmetry. Stronger candidates scored marks for making points such as

*Typically, hands convey the sense of support, security. The author uses the images of hands, specifically women’s hands to convey that sense of support and security. The reference to hands is an effective way of achieving thematic significance. The writer is able to convey through the image of hands, the sense of work and industry that in turn produce security and support. These are by no means soft hands, instead they are rough working hands which labour to provide and to nurture. This theme is consistently presented throughout the extract — be it in the*
women washing their families’ clothes, or Tan Cee mashing herbs with her hands so as to bathe Pynter.

Paper 02 – Extended Essay Questions

The performance on Unit 2, Paper 02 was not as good as performance on Unit 1, Paper 02. However, this year there was an overall improvement over last year. Generally, performance was impacted by candidates’ tendency to limit their responses to a thematic exploration without engaging with the features of the specific genre.

Candidates are again reminded that they 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. Too many candidates’ knowledge of the writer’s craft was in name only. In many instances, 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 was insufficient 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. Candidates should by now be aware that 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 are 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: Drama

This year there was marked improvement in the use of extra-textual (contextual, biographical and critical) material. Fewer candidates are restricting their responses to a discussion of plot, theme and characterization.
Question 1

This question required candidates to assess the success of the playwright’s use of conflict in holding audience attention. This question was by far the more popular choice. However, performance was not as satisfactory as performance on Question 2. Weaker candidates tended to list in their introductions passing reference to the various features of drama without developing these ideas in the body of the essay, while others remained narrowly focused on conflict and did not connect it to the ways the playwright manipulates this theme in order to maintain audience attention. They tended to discuss at length conflict as seen in character interaction on stage and did not engage with the other features of drama such as dialogue, soliloquies, the importance of entrances, exits, asides. While the question required discussion of elements of drama, candidates should recognize that the syllabus for this subject identifies a host of other literary devices deployed by playwrights and as such a stronger response would be one that demonstrates knowledge of these devices. These types of debatable statements provide room for candidates to establish various responses that can incorporate their informed personal response. This year, there was a tendency to resort to the use of poetry or novels to answer questions on this module and candidates were penalized accordingly. The mean for this question was 19.62 out of a total of 40.

Question 2

Based on the plays they prepared and their own evaluation of the plays, candidates were required to discuss the extent to which language makes a play riveting. They argued that it is primarily through the use of stage conventions that dramatists are able to explore the relationship between past and present. While the question required discussion of stage conventions, candidates should recognize that the syllabus for this subject identifies a host of other dramatic techniques deployed by playwrights and as such a stronger response would be one that demonstrated knowledge of these other dramatic techniques. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. Stronger candidates were able to focus closely on riveting as it relates to audience response and to make the case that, along with language, dramatists deploy other dramatic conventions to maintain audience interest. This attention to question analysis and to the significant features and elements of drama helped these candidates to respond more effectively to this question. The mean for this question was 22.03 out of a total of 40.

Module 2: Poetry

More candidates attempted the questions on Olive Senior than on Kendel Hippolyte. However, performance on the Hippolyte questions was better than performance on the questions on Olive Senior. Candidates are again reminded that they must avoid mere listing of generic features; they must be able to engage in detailed analysis of the
effectiveness of devices. Many candidates 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 needs to be emphasized. In order to maximize marks, the student must demonstrate the ability to explain how meaning is expressed through the poet’s choice of language, literary devices, and the structural elements commonly found in poetry such as imagery, symbol, alliteration, assonance, metre, lineation and rhyme.

Additionally, although the question required reference to a minimum of three prescribed poems, candidates ought to be encouraged to reference more than the minimum and to also cross reference for similarities and differences in themes and techniques in poems by the same writer. The mean for this question was 18.35 out of a total of 40.

Question 3

Few candidates attempted this question and performance on it was the lowest for the entire paper. The question required candidates to assess whether or not tradition influenced the style and structure of Senior’s *Gardening in the Tropics*. Candidates could read traditions in terms of culture and/or poetic forms. Regardless of what aspect of tradition was chosen, candidates were required to provide detailed examples of how Senior uses these traditions to inform the style and structure of her poetry. It was expected that candidates would recognize that the prompt discuss the extent required them to either make the point that while Senior respects some conventions she is also dismantling others.

Alternatively, candidates who chose to disagree could have argued that Senior does not see tradition as important and that Senior does not dismantle poetic structures. They could also have argued that although Senior’s poetry does not emphasize the importance of tradition, it does not dismantle conventional structures, or although Senior’s poetry emphasizes the importance of tradition, it does not dismantle conventional structures. Generally, the interpretation of the question proved challenging to most candidates. Weaker candidates focused primarily on the identification of cultural practices in the poems. Very few candidates were able to show how cultural traditions, specifically oral traditions, are linked to Senior’s manipulation of poetic genre and to draw on her use of motifs, symbolism, puns, repetition and enjambment along with other poetic devices so
as to support their analysis of Senior’s poetry. The mean for this question was 19.93 out of a total of 40.

**Question 4**

This question required candidates to assess whether it was theme or craft that made Senior’s poetry memorable. This question was a very popular one. In discussing the validity of the claim, candidates needed to discuss both theme and craft and to argue that one took precedence over the other. Alternatively, candidates could have made the case that they were both important thus rejecting the dichotomy set up by the question. Weaker candidates limited themselves exclusively to a discussion of themes in Senior’s poetry, and in arguing for the memorability of themes did not pay any attention to Senior’s craft.

Candidates are reminded that there are different ways of approaching the question. A valid argument could be made by suggesting that Senior’s poetry resonates with its readers because of her crafting of themes. Some of the best essays argued that Senior’s deployment of poetic language, her manipulation of tone, symbolism, diction, imagery, oxymoron, repetition, puns, motifs and exaggeration were the artistic choices which informed thematic development in her poetry. These essays demonstrated confidence in using the language of the genre and in weaving contextual and extra-textual knowledge to buttress their argument. It cannot be over-emphasized that an informed personal response can allow candidates to receive optimum returns in the awarding of marks for application of knowledge. Overall candidate performance, though better than Question 3, was disappointing. The mean for this question was 19.93 out of a total of 40.

**Question 5**

This question required that candidates examine the validity of the statement that the appeal of Kendel Hippolyte’s *Night Vision* derives primarily from his depiction of Caribbean reality. This question, in making a link between appeal and the rendering of Caribbean reality, required candidates to establish what they mean by Caribbean reality and to proceed with a discussion on how Hippolyte’s depiction of Caribbean reality — the themes he explores and the poetic devices he deploys in that exploration — make his poems memorable. It was expected that candidates would have taken issue with the word *primarily* and would argue that appeal can come from a variety of things. Candidates performed well on this question. The mean for this question was 22.17 out of a total of 40.
**Question 6**

This question required that candidates discuss the extent to which they agreed with the statement that Kendel Hippolyte’s preoccupation with social disorder shapes the structural composition of his poetry. Weaker candidates limited their responses to the discussion of social disorder, and in many cases they did not define what they meant by social disorder. Stronger candidates agreed that Hippolyte is preoccupied with social disorder and then went on to show the ways in which this preoccupation impacts on the form and language of his poetry. There were candidates who argued that the structural composition of Hippolyte’s poems is shaped by other imperatives/other concerns, and provided very insightful essays on Hippolyte’s mastery of poetic form. These candidates were able to discuss aspects of Hippolyte’s poetic language such as tone, symbolism, diction, imagery, oxymoron, repetition, puns, motifs and allusion. While some candidates argued that there is no relationship between Hippolyte’s craft and his politics, they were unfortunately unable to sustain an argument to prove that position. Overall, candidate performance on this question was good. The mean for this question was 21.17 out of a total of 40.

**Module 3: Prose Fiction**

More candidates are integrating contextual and extra-textual knowledge into their answers. However, there continues to be limited engagement with the question posed and candidates still tend to limit their responses to a discussion of plot and themes. When other narrative techniques are mentioned, there is no full discussion, nor is the vocabulary of the genre deployed. Moreover, many candidates seemed unfamiliar with the text set for this module and used novels that are not on the CAPE Literatures in English syllabus. Many candidates resorted to the use of poetry or drama to answer questions on this module and were penalized accordingly.

**Question 7**

Candidate performance on this question was satisfactory. The question required candidates to discuss whether setting is the primary vehicle used by the author to explore family relationships. Many candidates did not focus on all the key words of the question — some devoted their attention to a discussion of setting, others to a discussion of family relations. Only the very strong candidates connected setting to family relationships. Moreover, in their discussion of setting, candidates tended to limit their analysis to physical setting and ignored the social and historical dimensions of setting. Stronger candidates tended to limit their responses to the discussion of setting and its showcasing of family relationships without taking issue with the word *primarily*. Very few candidates were able to link the various elements of craft to the theme of family relationships and to make judgements on whether the statement provides a valid account...
of their experience of the novel. The mean for this question was 20.64 out of a total of 40.

Question 8

Performance on this question was better than performance on Question 7. The question required that candidates discuss the extent to which literary devices make a novel memorable. The term *literary devices* was often confused with ‘structural devices’. Additionally, where candidates were able to name the literary devices, they were unable to effectively demonstrate how these devices were being deployed by the writer so as to affect the reader’s response to the novel under discussion. The mean for this question was 23.38 out of a total of 40.

On a general note, on this section of the examination, 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 School-Based Assessment (SBA) 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.

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**Paper 03 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)**

Students’ performance on the SBA this year reflected a continued improvement. It was heartening to note the sustained interest in the range of activities offered in the syllabus. Varied creative approaches to the broad spectrum of tasks were informed by a more secure grasp of the requirements outlined in the syllabus. At the higher end of the performance scale, students demonstrated accurate and adequate critical awareness of generic features which enabled them to engage in meaningful, vigorous analysis.

This year, with varying degrees of success, the most popular types of SBA choices were reviews of film adaptations of a play/dramatic text and students’ lively interest was evident in their enthusiastic engagement with this dramatic form. Outstanding submissions were those that identified and mounted a sustained discussion of the impact of generic features highlighted in both the film and the text. These close readings of textual features were typically combined with interpretive commentary on audience impact. The best responses for the film adaptations were presented as comparative analyses of the characteristic features of both modes, that is, the dramatic text and the film version of the dramatic text. In the instance of weaker students, while it was apparent that they enjoyed the performance/film, they lacked specific knowledge and
skills for comparative analysis and resorted to a description or narration of events, sometimes relieved by very occasional commentary.

While there was a significant reduction in creative literary and artistic pieces in the form of an adaptation or reinterpretation, the quality of these submissions was commendable. The better students produced critical essays which offered incisive analyses of generic features, while stating their choices with sound justification. Evidence of weaker responses was seen in contracted essays, amounting to a brief statement or descriptions of the created pieces. Some responses merely identified and discussed features of the adaptation or reinterpretation, to the exclusion of any analytical insight and discussion of characteristic features of the original genre.

The word limit does not include the reinterpretation or the adaptation. More importantly, no marks are awarded for only the reinterpretation or the adaptation; it is the accompanying commentary, which critiques and validates the choices made in the reinterpretation or the adaptation, for which marks are awarded.

By far the most popular type of submission — the critical response of a creditable review of a prescribed text — continues to be a most challenging task for students. Except for a few cases, many students failed to demonstrate mastery of the skills of comprehension, analysis and argument. Weaker students tended to repeat the language of the review without deploying a personal informed opinion to balance their intervention. Excellent student reviews displayed acute sensitivity to ideas and techniques of the critic’s review, while simultaneously confirming and/or challenging the arguments, using appropriate illustrations in the form of close textual references to generic features and concepts. Poor performance on this task often betrayed lack of understanding of the issues raised or stylistic strategies employed. This was also evident in extensive copying and pasting of quotations from critics, or an over-reliance on the critics’ vocabulary.

Essays ranged from excellent, to very poor, to incomplete. This was because not all the students conformed to the requirements established for the essay. Some deficiencies were:

- The absence of continuous essay or prose style of writing
- Essays falling too short or grossly exceeding the word limit requirement
- Lack of proper sequencing of ideas within and across paragraphs
- Poor sentence structuring, faulty expression and pervasive grammatical errors
- Abrupt ending of essays or repetitious essays, or inappropriate style
- Plagiarism.
Some schools/teachers are not paying enough attention to the requirements of the syllabus. Here are a few reminders:

- Students are reminded that the syllabus stipulates the use of *prescribed* texts for assignments.

- Students will be severely penalized for plagiarism. Where critical sources are used, it is expected that students will provide a *Works Cited* page.

- Students registered for one particular unit should do assignments based on that unit. Students are required to do a single text and are not awarded additional points for comparing two texts.

- 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.

- 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.

- Assignments should be identified by name.

- It is the detailed commentary (1500–2000 words) that is marked out of 48 *not* the reinterpretation or other creative pieces.

- Teachers should ensure that, if students are given the highest marks in each category, their assignments are excellent in nature.

Teachers must adhere to the stipulation of sending five samples. If there are fewer than five students, *all* samples should be submitted.