

English B

SECTION C – PROSE FICTION

Answer ONE question in this section.

You MUST state the title of any books you refer to in your answer.

EITHER

7. ‘Writers encourage their readers to empathise with their MAJOR characters – that is, to feel with them and to see things from their point of view.’

To what extent can this statement be applied to the MAJOR character in ONE West Indian and ONE non-West Indian novel you have studied?

(25 marks)

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Section C - Prose Fiction

In the latest Indian novel, Beka Lamb written by Zee Edgell and the New latest Indian novel A Kestrel for a Knave written by Barry Hines, we are introduced to a major character who we are encouraged to empathise with. In A Kestrel for a Knave, this character is Billy, and in Beka Lamb; ^{Togole} ~~Beka~~. The writers use their attention related to home, school, environment among other factors to in helping readers to see them as deserving of our empathy; for us to feel with them and to see things from their point of view.

When given a description of Togole's home and family history, we are urged to empathise with her. Her father left before she was born and her mother left her in Miss Eibu's care and went off to Panama and married to a man who ~~doesn't~~ doesn't even know that Togole exists. Living with Eita in a 'dang-sidang' hut, ^{not} ~~and~~ having much to meet her needs, and having a friend who ~~he~~ does and also has a good family must have caused her to feel inferior and long for the day when she would be elevated. This is supposed to be why she clings to Emilio as her lover, because he represents this type of elevation and makes her promises that she would like to be fulfilled. ✓

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Having no one to educate her about her sexuality, led to her getting pregnant. Unfortunately when she
Getting love and attention from Emilio that she
wanted repeat to experience repeatedly led to her
getting pregnant. She suffers, as she had no one to educate
about her sexuality before this happens. Unfortunately,
when this pregnancy causes her to be expelled from
school and Emilio rejects her, she is left to
sympathise and empathise with her. If she had
known better, maybe this pregnancy would be avoided
and she would have completed her studies and achieve
her goals that she had in life.

She is left in even greater despair when she
goes insane and seems to be gone forever. No hope
was left for her. The baby died and she no longer
had a boyfriend, she had no chance to complete
school. Her life just ~~just~~ ^{crushed} ~~crashed~~, and later on she
goes through a period of psychosis and later
on dies. This appears to be very unfortunate as
this was not what was expected of this
in bright young lady who had a promising future.

In A Heartbeat for a Kisser, we are introduced
to Billy a fourteen-year-old boy by the name
of Billy. He belongs to a dysfunctional family in
which his brother who works at the coal mine
bullies him, and he gets no attention from his

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promiscuous mother. This setting lays the foundation of a hopeless future for Billy. At school he struggles to meet his needs, as he seems to be left alone to live his life.

At school, he is seen as a clown and is an outcast. He is always ridiculed by teachers and he does not agree with his peers; he has no friends, is hated and hates them. As a result of all this, we see why he resorts to a headmaster's house for his best friend. The school system does not interest him, and we see where he often strays from the activities that are done at his single-sex school and thinks reminiscence on his father. His need for a father figure is highlighted when Mr. Farthing, his English teacher, shows some interest in him as a student.

We are led to empathise with him when he is ridiculed by Mr. Crowley and Mr. Sledge at different points in the novel. The problem lies within the school system with teachers being subject-centred and not student-centred, but Billy gets the blame and the wrong for the least that he does. When Ted kills his hawk, the Billy goes through his mental state of psychosis too. We see where his only friend is taken away from him merely just because he did not cost a bet.

Billy wants to make better of himself, as he states

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that he does not want to work down the
coal mine. When he goes through encounters
the loss of his health and seeks closure to their
friendship, we are urged as readers to show some
empathy. We see where he wants to be better,
but obstacles that he faces prevent them.

These two major characters are desiring
of our empathy. We see where they try to
escape the roles that their lives take, but
because of their situations that present
challenges, they are unable to shine. But Togoia
wanted to live in Fort George, get a good job
to help Mr. Eto and make her proud. Billy
wanted to be accepted and be pleased with
himself with the help of his bank. They
were also both challenged, but were unable
to overcome because of situations beyond
their control.

Question 7 – Prose-Fiction

This is a Type B question which requires candidates to compare two novels (one West Indian and one non-West Indian). This is a question that broadly demands that a candidate demonstrates a comfortable level of synthesis. This means that the candidate's response is expected to demonstrate that he/she understands well the notion of empathy and is able to not only identify instances of empathy but recognise the writer's technique to evoke this feeling of empathy. In addition, the candidate is expected to offer appropriate examples of situations in which the reader is drawn into such empathy and draw on his/her argumentative skills to ascertain how limited or extensively such empathy is evoked. Very importantly too, this question asks candidates to compare/contrast the use of techniques in evoking empathy and how the novelists treat the issue in terms of the nature of the empathy explored.

The candidate is expected to use relevant and adequate content and relevant and accurate examples to support his/her argument. It is also expected that the essay will be organized in coherent paragraphs that fluently transition from one idea to the next, with appropriately written introduction and conclusion, and that the appropriate grammatical and mechanical conventions are observed.

Candidate's Response to Question 7

In this response the candidate uses Zee Edgell's Beka Lamb and Barry Hines' A Kestrel for a Knave. This candidate demonstrates a good grasp of the question and brings together both texts well by affirming in the opening paragraph of the essay that empathy is evoked for both Toycie and Billy, given the situation (settings) of home and school that both characters have to confront. Immediately, the candidate's ability to insightfully spot similarities is evident. These situations among other factors are introduced to us as the basis on which the candidate argues that readers are drawn to empathise with both characters.

The first character dealt with is Toycie whose situation the candidate effectively outlines. Details of her family history such as her being without parents, her physical conditions at home, and her situation in relation to Beka's, which was much better, are argued to possibly lead Toycie to feeling inferior. By doing this the candidate does two important things. First, the basis of the empathy is established through drawing on accurate examples/descriptions from the text. The candidate then draws on these details to establish a reasonable basis for Toycie's future actions. This allows us to recognise the insight of the candidate who is taking us through a process of reasoning which will allow us to understand why Toycie is deserving of empathy.

The candidate continues by suggesting that Toycie could have been left with feelings of inferiority given her home situation, to be in a relationship with Emilio whom the candidate argues is supposed to represent some "type of elevation". The candidate argues that Emilio gives her love and attention and this leads her to becoming pregnant. It is evident that the candidate

engages in a coherent process of reasoning and progressively builds an argument for empathy. The candidate focuses us on her unstable home environment which leads to her feeling inferior, her involvement with Emilio who exploits her, her subsequent pregnancy, then her failure to cope with the pregnancy because of lack of support and previous education and preparation for life, her expulsion from school and finally, her resulting death. These details are discussed not simply as a string of events in the text but are insightfully and deliberately positioned to build an argument for empathy for Toycie. The candidate does very well to draw our attention to the fact that Toycie's situation continues to worsen and argues that readers "are left in greater despair" when she goes insane. So far this candidate has demonstrated a clear understanding of the text, the basis of human empathy which is an understanding of life and how as humans we are drawn into understanding and sharing with others because of these experiences. More importantly, this candidate has demonstrated a capacity to synthesise his/her understanding of life with the experiences of characters in a novel to meaningfully respond to a question in such a mature way.

The candidate does much of the same in responding to Billy in *A Kestrel for a Knave*. He is described as a boy of fourteen in a dysfunctional family. This situation is argued by the candidate to lay the foundation for "a hopeless future for Billy". In the first paragraph which deals with A Kestrel for a Knave, the candidate establishes an appropriate basis for empathy with Billy and goes on to include relevant details to support this position. This certainly prepares us for empathy as the groundwork is very well laid. By further outlining details of mostly uncaring teachers and a generally hostile school environment which does not cater to his needs, the candidate affirms that "we see why he resorts to a kestrel hawk for his best friend". By drawing on a string of relevant details, the candidate leads us to understand why empathy is in order for Billy who, like Toycie, is argued to experience a state of psychosis when his best friend, the hawk is killed by his brother.

In response to both texts, the candidate highlights and describes the situations of the two characters as presented by the authors and by so doing argues that the presentation of details of the authors allows the reader to empathise with both characters. Similarities are highlighted in the use of detailed descriptions, the hopelessness of both characters, the state of hopelessness and psychosis experienced by both characters and ultimately the evoking of a similar response of empathy for these characters given the difficult circumstances they faced as teenagers.

In a well-argued summary that explicitly brings both characters together, the candidate appropriately concludes that both characters aspired for better but were hindered by the circumstances of their situations which understandably overwhelmed them both. Drawing on details from the text, this candidate used relevant and accurate examples to support his/her use of adequate and relevant content to respond well to this question. The clear and logical flow of the argument developed by this candidate is exemplary and is indicative of one who knows how to build and sustain an argument. The essay is well organized, the language used is very good and the mechanics of writing, sound.