

Exemplar responses to CXC CSEC English B Paper 020, 2012

Question 1

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

In short students are expected to:

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

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

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

For each question in Sections A, B and C, in addition to the 25 marks indicated for content and argument, a maximum of 10 marks is allocated for structure, development and competence in the mechanics of writing.

SECTION A – DRAMA

Answer ONE question in this section.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM – William Shakespeare

EITHER

1. (a) Describe TWO of the following sets of minor characters:
- Theseus and Hippolyta
 - The Fairies
 - The Actors/Clowns
- (8 marks)**
- (b) Outline ONE dramatic situation in which the two sets of characters described in (a) above are involved.
- (8 marks)**
- (c) Discuss the dramatic function of ONE set of the characters described in (a) above.
- (9 marks)**

Total 25 marks

Example # 1

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Question 1 Candidate Number
Write on both sides of the paper and start each answer on a new page.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

In the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream", among the major characters, Shakespeare integrates numerous minor characters for example the fairies and the actors/clowns. The portrayal of these minor characters, however, is significant and they add to the enjoyment of the play. These two ^{sets of} minor characters do become involved in many dramatic situations, however this essay will only outline one such situation, and will discuss the dramatic function of one set of characters.

Two sets of minor characters in the play are the fairies and the actors/clowns. The fairies are presented by Shakespeare as lyrical creatures who dwell in the woods. They are lyrical in their language and this shows that they are of a higher class. They are also erotic beings who strongly believe in the expression of love through their sexuality. Evidence of this is seen when Puck ~~assumes~~ assumes that it is Demetrius lying next to Helena on the ground when it is actually Hermia and Demetrius. Puck assumes that they are the lovers which Oberon has told him about, because of the physical separation which he observes. The fairies are also mischievous at times as seen when Puck decides to play a prank on the "rude ~~and~~ mechanicals" after he observes their strange rehearsal of the play called "The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby;" he gives Bottom an ~~axe~~ ass' head - very fitting with Bottom's asinine character. Furthermore, the fairies are also very merry and move about in swift motions for example when Titania requests a "roundel" from her fairies in order to fall asleep and when Puck says "I'll put a

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Question 1 Candidate Number
Write on both sides of the paper and start each answer on a new page.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

girdle about the Earth in forty minutes." respectively.

The Actors/ Clowns, on the other hand, are a bunch of rude and unrefined characters who add a touch of comedy to the play. Their lower class is evident in the play as portrayed in their numerous malpropisms, Bottom mistakes the word "odious" for "odorous." They are also very ignorant, as seen in their assumption that the audience will not be able to differentiate fantasy from reality and that they should write a prologue "in eight and eight" to explain the things on stage.

One dramatic situation in which the fairies and clowns are involved occurs in the woods where the clowns decide to rehearse for their play. Puck observes this comical and grotesque representation of Pyramus and he decides to become an actor as well as the director in the play, "sometimes a horse, a bear or a fox I'll be."

Puck rightly says, "What hempen-homespuns have we swaggering here!" to account for his disgust. As Pyramus, portrayed by the assine Bottom goes off the scene and wait for his ~~own~~ cue from Thisby, Puck decides to play his role as an actor. He casts Bottom as an ass, and gives him an ass' head. Bottom's new "role" is very fitting since it so perfectly matches his character. When he walks back into the scene all the other craftsmen flee. Puck ^{later} describes their flight as that of wild geese at the sound of a gun. "Bottom ~~that~~ then act translated!" they cry and are so terrified ~~that~~ their fear affects their imagination as Puck puts it and they mistake bush and branches for bears or wild animals.

Bottom mean while "knows they knavery" and that they are "trying to make an an of [him]." To the audience, the dramatic irony is poignant.

The clowns play an important role in contributing to the ~~dramatic function~~ nature of the play. Their dramatic function is to add comedy to the play, and lighten the mood at times when it becomes heavy. For instance in Act 1 Scene 2, Shakespeare introduces the craftsmen very skillfully into the play in order to create a more liberal atmosphere after the Egus-Heremia story unfolds. Bottom's and Quince's malpropisms also add to the established blend of comedy. Shakespeare could also have included the clowns in order to ~~criticize~~ satirize the lower class actors and laugh at their insufficiency in the art of performance. Another dramatic function of the clowns is to create an element of realism to the play. The classes of society were reflected in the play - the Nobles, the Gentry and the Yeomen or the lower class. By placing these clowns in the play allowed the audience to better relate to the themes which Shakespeare wanted to convey.

These two groups of characters, the fairies and the clowns, although minor characters, add significantly to the drama of the play. This is seen in the involvement of these two sets of characters in the woods ~~in the~~ where Puck gives Bottom an an' head. The dramatic functions ~~are~~ ^{clowns} cover a wide array ~~but~~ for instance the ~~fairies~~ contribute to the light-hearted nature of the play.

write on both sides of the paper and start each answer on a new page.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Example #2

Do not
write
in this
margin.

The Shakespearean play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' explores the trials of love and attaining love with a humorous story to convey such a message. Moreover, three different situations simultaneously occur throughout this play: the disorder in the fairy world due to Oberon and Titania's disagreement, the royal court in which Hermia faces her fate and the play in which the mechanicals act out the play 'The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe'. However, the world of the fairies and clowns does result in comedy and mayhem. To observe this one must describe the fairies and the clowns, relay the dramatic situation occurring and the dramatic function of one of these sets of characters.

Moreover, the world of the fairies is governed by the hands of both Oberon, the king of the fairies, and Titania, the queen of the fairies. The whole kingdom is separated due to the dispute which arises between Oberon and Titania. In addition, Titania has acquired a changeling boy who Oberon wishes to have possession of. Yet his queen, Titania, refuses him to grant him ownership of the child. This ultimately causes a fierce dispute between the two, it is obvious as

write on both sides of the paper and start each answer on a new page.

Do not
write
in this
margin.Do not
write
in this
margin

When Oberon meets with Titania he remarks scornfully, 'I'll met by moon light, proud Titania' and, equally indignant, Titania replies 'What foolish Oberon! Fairies, skip hence, I have forsworn his bed and company'. Thus, Titania is shown to be a headstrong woman as she refuses to be subservient to her husband's demands and boldly insults him. However, Oberon, after Titania has left, says to himself 'I will punish thee for this injury' and ~~revel~~ reveals his more devious nature and, also, power hungry intentions. The fairies, however, heed the orders of the king or queen, leaving the kingdom separated as in the ~~beginning~~ beginning of Act II: Scene 1. A fairy comes before Puck and exclaims 'Do my eyes deceive or are you not the knavish sprite, Robin Good fellow' and Puck relays the tale of the dispute between the king and queen. It is clear that he works for the king as he remarks 'Here comes my lord, Oberon'. However, the Quins are a group of common men and consist of Flute, the bellows mender. Snout, Dog, Peter Quince, Starveling and Nicholas Bottom. The group devise a plan to gain popularity by presenting play to the Queen and King, Hippolyta and Theseus, on their wedding day.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

However, they are disorganized as Nicholas Bottom, being a very arrogant man, insist to play every role even saying 'let me play the lion' and 'The Duke will say let him roar again; let him roar again'. Furthermore, the group are humorous and provide comic relief as one instance, Flute, the youngest craftsman, remarks 'May faith let me not play the woman, I have a ~~too~~ beard coming!' and Snout, who plays the lion, 'There are not much lines for I am slow of study'. Moreover, Peter Quince is the eldest of the mechanicals and appears to quell Bottom's arrogance as when Bottom inquires 'Is he a lover or a tyrant?' and Quince replies 'he is a lover who dies as a tyrant'. However, these two worlds subsequently meet in a strange situation.

One dramatic situation in which the two sets of characters described as (a) above are involved is that of Oberon's plot with the 'love-in-idleness' flower. Moreover after Titania allows her fairies to lull her to sleep, Oberon comes upon her and remarks 'when she awakes, let her fall in love with the first beast she lays eyes upon... be it a mischievous monkey' implying his desire to embarrass her. However, after Puck is sent to lay the juice of the flower, ~~he~~

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

upon Demetrius' eyes (whom he mistakes for
Hyperion). He comes upon the clowns practicing
their play in the woods and remarks 'what happens
homoespum's ~~and~~ swaggering here?' and also
says 'I may be an actor too' and Puck ultimately
stirs up trouble. Moreover, as Bottom goes off
to practice, Puck transforms his head into that
of an ass and when Bottom returns, the other
mechanicals flee with Snout saying 'Bottom, what
is this you have in place of your head'. Iron-
ically enough, Bottom replies 'you see an ass
head gawn on'. As Bottom leaves his friends,
his ~~song~~ singing ultimately awakes nearby
asleep Titania who falls in love with him.
Bottom, however, is blissfully unaware of his
state. Using her love-sick trance as an
opportunity, Oberon acquires the changeling and
uses the juice of a herb to awaken Titania
who remarks 'Oberon' 'What vision have I seen
my dear Oberon. He thought I was enamoured
of an ass!'. Oberon replies 'There lies your love'.
However, the two reconcile and Bottom awakes
in his normal form and ponders if all that
occurred was indeed a dream even saying 'He-
thought I had - but man, is but a patched
fool to tell me what me thought I saw and me

Do not
write
in this
margin.

Do not
write
in this
margin.

me thought I did!'

One dramatic function of the mechanicals is comical relief. Moreover, ~~this~~ the scenes with the mechanicals are always present after any serious dilemma as in Act I, in which Permia is given her fate by the duke, Theseus 'Either to for ever abjure the society of men or die the death'; the mechanicals follow in the next scene and Bottom is a malaprop thus creating more comedy by saying 'Phibbus' chariot' and Flute remarks 'Nay faith, let me not play the woman, I have a beard coming!'. Moreover, they appear again in Act II after Oberon's fight with Titania in which Puck comes upon them practicing and explains 'What, hempen chomains swaggering ~~here~~ here?' and Puck ~~and~~ proceeds to give Bottom the head of an ass. Ultimately, Titania falls in love with the ass headed Bottom.

Overall, the Clowns and the Fairies help make play humorous and exciting.

Questions 1 (Drama) on the 2012 CSEC English B paper will be analyzed in the context outlined above.

Question 1 – Drama

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

The question asks for candidates to describe two sets of minor characters, outline a dramatic situation which involves both sets of characters and discuss the dramatic function in the play of one set of the characters involved. This question gave candidates a chance to both demonstrate knowledge of the play by asking for some details of characters and to also show knowledge of what is a dramatic situation. Very importantly, it seeks to have students demonstrate meaningful engagement with the play by discussing the dramatic function of one set of these characters.

The question is truly one for students who have a clear understanding of dramatic situation and dramatic function of characters. It is one which distinguishes between candidates who have merely glossed over the details of a play and those who have studied it as a unique genre. The candidate's ability to outline relevant content, recognise a writer's craft and recognise characters as not only people who dramatise feelings but also function as technique are all skills assessed by this question. It is a question meant to engage students about how a playwright uses even minor characters to effectively dramatise his/her ideas.

The response will be analysed on the following bases:

1. Relevance and adequacy of content
2. Relevance and accuracy of examples
3. Organisation of response
4. Quality of language
5. Clear understanding of drama as a unique genre

The introduction of this essay highlights the candidate's ability to relevantly focus on the question at hand. This candidate outlines very well the issues to be addressed in the body of the essay by drawing attention to three situations which occur in the play and focusing us on the significance of the fairies and clowns in these situations. As the question requires, the candidate draws attention to the role of the minor characters in the infusion of comedy and complication (which this candidate refers to as chaos) in the play, thus importantly demonstrating intent to deal with drama as a unique genre. The last sentence of the opening paragraph is explicit in this regard.

The opening paragraph demonstrates the grasp the candidate has of the requirement to draw on relevant details from a text to meaningfully focus on a question that seeks to assess a particular feature of a work. It is a focused introduction.

A requirement of the question is for the candidate to describe two sets of characters given. This is done by the candidate in the second paragraph. This candidate however, does not limit a description of the characters to telling us who they are but seeks to have us understand the conflict they are involved in (e.g. Oberon and Titania's dispute). Before concluding that Titania is a "headstrong woman" the candidate gives details of the dispute in which Titania refuses to give Oberon the changeling and a conversation in which Titania responds with disgust to Oberon. In addition this candidate not only highlights the fairies but highlights the connection between their actions and the dispute between Oberon and Titania.

There is also a sense that this candidate sees a link between the conflict between Oberon and Titania and the impending chaos caused by the fairies. While this link might have been more explicitly made, the candidate's attempt to do so is recognised. Importantly, this candidate draws on two situations that significantly enhance the dramatic quality of the play by contributing meaningfully to the plot and, in the case of the fairies, add comic relief to the drama.

This candidate's description demonstrates his/her capacity not only to select relevant details but to insightfully read these descriptions as important elements of drama that contribute to the dramatic quality of a play. Highlighting the conflict between characters and pointing to the comic effect of their roles reflect the kind of insights expected of a good student of drama.

Part B of this question is open to at least two interpretations. The first is to outline a single situation in which the characters described are involved and the second, to describe two separate situations in which each set of characters described is involved.

In responding to section B of the question, the candidate again demonstrates an understanding of what outlining is. The candidate is clearly one that is comfortable with the text and gives a comprehensive yet relevant account of the dramatic situation in which both sets of characters are involved. The choice of the situation in which Oberon masterminds the criss-crossing of lovers which results in confusion is an excellent one. Quotations from the text not only highlight the candidate's knowledge of the text but underscore the candidate's ability to draw on relevant details from the text to answer a particular question.

The final body paragraph highlights the clear understanding of dramatic function as it is quickly established as "comic relief". The candidate points out that the examples of comic relief adduced are scenes which "are always present after any serious dilemma as in Act I, in which Hermia is given her fate by ... Theseus". This candidate very clearly demonstrates an understanding of comic relief and more importantly demonstrates that he/she is clear about how comic relief functions.

This response to the final part of the question, by adducing four examples of comic relief, establishes the candidate as not only one who knows the text but as one who is able to adduce adequate and relevant examples in responding to a question. By first naming comic relief as the technique, second outlining how and when instances of comic relief occur, then finally giving

adequate examples of the technique being effectively used, this candidate allows us to enjoy the clarity with which the argument is presented and recognise easily a competent handling of the question. An argument could be reasonably made that the paragraph ends very abruptly but it cannot be argued that this candidate did not provide a sound basis for us to conclude that he/she understood and responded to the question well.

The organisation of this essay is good as it deals well with each section of the question in well-structured paragraphs. The candidate also demonstrates an understanding of good organisation in the sense that an introduction which gives an overview of the approach being taken to the question does well to give a context for understanding this response. In addition each paragraph builds the candidates argument and provides the kind of insights and information which elucidates the points outlined in the opening paragraph. In relation to grammar and sentence structure there is very little to quarrel with in this essay.

This candidate has done well to demonstrate that he/she has a good grasp of the text and its dramatic qualities and importantly knows how to demonstrate this in writing. It is a response which represents a good example of one who has been well orientated in reading, writing and responding to drama as a unique genre of literature.