Examination Report

English Literature

120

JC

2025

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Paper 120/01

General Comments

In the year 2025, about 17 360 candidates sat for this examination. This is an increase from the previous year where the inclusion of 32 schools in the piloted four-year programme had reduced the number of those to sit for examination. Candidates did not perform very well in the subject. Out of a total of 60 marks, the highest score was 49 and the lowest score was 1. Candidates' knowledge of the texts was sometimes in doubt, so question demands were not always met.

Among the issues affecting performance was lack of appropriate vocabulary by candidates to express themselves. In addition to this, key words were ignored when responding to the questions but candidates simply summarised or paraphrased passages when responding to questions.

It was noted that rubric infringement was on the rise again. This is because candidates mostly went for the passaged-based questions, ignoring the rules of choosing questions. In the previous year, candidates seemed to favour traditional and empathy essays ignoring the passaged-based questions. However, candidates would use the given passages to respond to the traditional essays or even the empathy questions, even though the passage had very little information to assist in responding to those questions. Some, if not not most, candidates responding to empathy questions missed either the moment or voice , simply narrating events or discussing general life events associated with the scenario. Candidates would use the third person intsead of using the first person narrative.

Responses to essay questions saw candidates failing to adopt the correct approach in responding; they tended to number their responses, yet this was an essay in which paragraphs are not to be numbered. For the passage-based task they would choose one part and ignore the other part, thus rendering their work incomplete. They would maybe respond to part (a) and ignore (b) or respond to (b) and ignore (a). Alternatively they would formulate own questions to respond to.

Popular questions among candidates in this examination were:

Section A – Question 4, 6

Section B – Question 7, 9

Section C – Question 10, 12, 13, 14, 16

Least popular questions amongst candidates in this examination were:

Section A – Question 2, 3

Section B – Question 8

Section C – Question 15, 17

SECTION A: DRAMA

Candidates' performance in this section was good. Question 4 was the most popular choice. Candidates understood the question's demands but they failed to show admiration in the second part due to language constraints, that is, lack of vocabulary. Most candidates would confuse feelings with personality. Candidates did not explore the passages fully, they concentrated on one or two incidents. The popular text was *The God's are Not to Blame* as compared to *Pygmalion*.

Comments on specific questions

Pygmalion

Question 1

(a) What does the passage reveal about Higgin's personality? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was one of the most popular questions in this section and the responses were unsatisfactory. Candidates who chose this question saw Higgins as a polite man ignoring the tone of his voice in the opening statement. Other candidates simply failed to lift appropriate support. They were expected to see Higgins as rude and domineering in the way he addressed Liza, playful or creative when playing with her name, an astute businessman and a kind gentleman when he offered his handkerchief. On the other hand, others may see him as helpful for his instruction for Liza to sit and for the offer of the handkerchief.

(b) For what reason would you admire Liza as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

In this question, candidates' responses were unsatisfactory since most candidates confused her with her father. The question required candidates to

analyse Liza's responses to Higgins and company. Candidates mostly just paraphrased the passage. They were expected to admire how she stands up for herself inspite of being at a disadvantage, for being bold, how she is smart in her calculations and her ambition to learn. They could also admire how she has done her homework on possible charges for the lessons and how she asserts herself.

Question 2

How far would you consider Mr Doolittle as celf-centred in the story? Support your answer with details from the text..

This was the most unpopular question among candidates in this section and in this examination, and it was poorly done. Poor knowledge of text content was the major contributory factor. This is evident by the fact that candidates used the passage for Question 1 to respond to this question. Candidates were expected to discuss how he is an unappreciative person who looks down on his good luck, simply because it will turn him into a responsible person. They were also expected to discuss how he still tries to sell Liza and gain from Higgins using her yet he was never a responsible father. They could mention how he wants to remain in his comfort zone intsead of helping out, preferrring to leech off of others than pay for services.

Candidates failed to state exactly how they felt. This type of a question poses a challenge to candidates because responses tended to be one sided yet they are expected to demonstrate understanding of his actions, both the positive and negative, in this instance the negative.

Question 3

You are Mrs Higgins, after your son has told you about the girl he is detrmined to turn into a lady. Write your thoughts.

Again, this was another unpopular question in this section and in the examination, and it was poorly done. Candidates did not recognise the role and personality of Mrs Higgins, and they seemed to confuse the relationship between Eliza and Mr Higgins; they seemed to think they were dating or in some kind of love relationship. They confused the relationship between Liza and Mr Higgins. Mrs Higgins was seen as an excited mother, who is looking forward to her son's marriage. Others viewed her as a discontented mother who looked down on her prospective daughter-in-law.

They were expected to show excitement at grooming Liza while symphathising with how Higgins is treating her as property, frustration at Higgins' obsessive nature towards his work and arrogance. Mrs Higgins would condemn her son's behaviour and also show reluctant admiration at Eliza's grit among other thoughts and feelings.

The Gods Are Not to Blame

Question 4

(a) What does the passage reveal about Odewale's personality? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was the most popular question among candidates in this section and in this examination, and it was faily well done. Candidates were able to see Odewale as welcoming, loving, caring, respectful and considerate towards Alaka from his reaction of hugging/ embracing him and opening up his house. He is further seen as cautious when he asks if he can still trust him, trusting when he opens up about the person he killed and loyal through stating their history. Other candidates saw him as either brave or a coward for leaving after killing a man. Candidates used 'doubtful' in relationship to asking if he could still trust Alaka. A few candidates saw the humility in addressing Alaka as 'master 'yet he is a king.

(b) For what reasons would you admire Alaka as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the text.

Candidates' responses focused on analysing Alaka's character, yet the question expected them to express their feelings of admiration, then support with the passage content.

They were expected to express feelings of admiration for Alaka for being well-mannered, respectful, loyal and trustworthy. They should further admire him for his dedication, his outspoken nature and humour among other feelings.

Question 5

How far would you consider Odewale as a good leader in the story? Support your answer with details from the text.

This was a popular question among candidates and responses ranged from good to very good. Candidates exhibited good knowledge of text and leadership traits. Most did show how he was a good leader but one with flaws. His bravery, protectiveness, openness

and courageous spirit were highlighted. He was further admired for his selflessness in ensuring Adetusa's murderer was found and being a man of his word when he turned out to be the murderer by taking the punishment. The candidates did discuss how his hot temper, arrogance and lack of respect for elders did not qualify him for the position of king. Few candidates kept their responses one-sided or used the passage for their response which weakened their perfomance.

There were many candidates who relied on the passage to ctitique his leadership qualities.

Question 6

You Queen Ojuola, just after discovering that Odewale is actually your first-born son. Write your thoughts.

This was another popular question in this section among candidates. However, it was poorly done. Candidates failed to capture the moment accurately, and they seemed not to understand the significance of the discovery on the Queen. Responses were limited to shock, denial and self blame by Ojuoala. Candidates blamed Gbonka for being disloyal and Baba Fakunle for not coming forward to inform Ojuola about Odewale's origins. Other candidates did not assume the character fully, while others wanted to treat it as an argumentative, showing sympathy for the Queen and all the children especially Aderopo.

There was fear of facing Odewale, which is not in the moment. Some candidates even contemplated murdering him or ignoring the calamity. Some even celebrated the discovery. These were clear indicators of not understanding both character and the moment.

Candidates were expected to express feelings and thoughts of shock, denial, helplessness. They were expected to discuss ending her life because of the shame in being married to her biological son, having children with him and embarassment in facing the townspeople. They were further expected to discuss how one cannot escape fate, using the prophesy to show the power of the gods. There were still some candidates who wrote God/Lord instead of the gods. Some blamed the gods for being unfair and cursing Ojuola, overlooking the priest's actions and Baba Fakunle's words prior to the revelation.

SECTION B: POETRY

When Fishes Flew and Other Poems

In this section, the performance ranged from very poor to good. Candidates mostly paraphrased the poems , without applying them to the questions.

They were able to recall the poems but failed to utilise them in response to questions, particularly in Question 7 and 8. Poems were used interchangeably amongst the questions, which negatively affected performance in this section. Language was often inappropriately used for analysis intsead of addressing questions.

Question 7

How does the poet portray the speaker's frustration and helplessness in the following poem?

This was the most popular question in this section among candidates. However, the performance was below average. Candidates failed to show the feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Instead, they paraphrased the poem giving a general analysis of the poem. Furthermore , the two feelings were not separated but discussed as a unit. One point seemed to support both feelings, waiting for the bell to ring. Candidates demontrated lack of understanding to the reasons behind the speaker's emotions.Some candidates even identified the speaker as a student. Candidates who analysed language mainly listed the devices without applying them to the questions.

The question required the candidates to identify how, as a result of the frustration of uncooperative and lazy students, the speaker has been driven to helplessness, motivating him to give up on trying to improve the lives of these learners at the expense of his own. They failed to realise his attitude towards the students' written work but stated that he was insulted by them.

Question 8

With close reference to *The Morning Sun is Shining* by Olive Schreiner, explore the speaker's attitude towards nature.

This was a very unpopular question amongst the candidates with performances scoring below average. Canditates discussed the beauty of morning and the vibrant colours only. They did not feature the human factor of wanting or needing to share such, as felt by the speaker. Candidates were expected to identify the loneliness of the speaker in the last

few lines as the true reflection of appreciation. They failed to do justice to even the use of language, yet poem had a lot to offer. They gave a general description or comment on nature without discussing the content of the poem. Recall was generally about a sunny morning.

Question 9

Choose one of the following poems and discuss the challenges human beings sometimes go through as shown in the poems.

An Abandoned Bundle : **Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali**

The Grass Shall Grow : **Jonathan Kariara**

This was a popular question among the candidates but the performance was slightly below average. Both poems were equally popular among those who chose this question. Candidates exhibited good memory of the poems especially *The Abandoned Bundle.* Unfortunately, they did not address the question demands, but rather tended to narrate the poems.

In the poem *The Abandoned Bundle,* the poem was not fully explored and responses were not rooted in the poem. The challenges of moral decay in society, hunger, poverty, financial problems and pollution were not really identified. Most candidates discussed apartheid/colonisation, abortion, rape and abandonment/dessertion by a partner as the challenges. These fell outside the poem content or were not the core challenges. A good number of candidates discussed general behaviour of young girls forced into prostitution by hunger, leading to unplanned pregnancies and the fear of being judged by society.

In the poem *The Grass Will Grow*, candidates tended to give general commentary how after loss, there is still hope. This was contrary to question expectation i.e. the challenges faced by human beings. The sadness of the speaker is not really explored as candidates addressed the growth after the loss, symbolising hope.

Candidates failed to do justice to the question because most only saw the loss of the son, not the loss of the home providing security and the devastating loss of self through madness. They also failed to realise how not having control over life and death is a human challenge.

Candidates need to understand key words in a question for improvement in their responses.

SECTION C: PROSE

In this section candidates' performance was found wanting as they tended to respond to one part of the question, especially in the passage based questions. The question demands for traditional and empathy questions were not fully met. The most popular text was *The Amaryllis* and the least popular was *Africa Kills Her Sun*.

The Amaryllis

Question 10

(a) What does the passage reveal about the relationship between Tana's parents? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was one of the popular questions in this section and the performance was average. Candidates' responses were mostly one-sided as they only saw how the nurse helped the patient instead of seeing how the male also appreciated having a caring friend. Some candidates thought parents were already married instead of meeting for the first time. There was a lot of lifting and little analysis.

They were expected to see Tana's parents as honest, kind and hardworking people with a potential to be good partners, as Babe Mdluli implies at the end of the passage. They were expected to view the relationship as an innocent, compassionate and open interaction where two people built up trust and a solid foundation for friendship or a relationship. Candidates also discussed the relationship between Tana and parents intsead of responding to question demands.

(b) What are your feelings towards Tana's father as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This part of the question was was very well done. Candidates were able to express admiration towards Tana's father for having dreams and not allowing his background to determine who he becomes. They were impressed that he stood up for himself, when he ventured to find a job at an early age.they were happy for him that he met a kind and supportive nurse. The candidates also sympathised and pitied him for losing his mother at birth and having abusive uncaring parents, especially the stepmother who did not care where he slept. Some candidates felt sorry for him getting hurt while others lacked symphathy because he was showing

off when he fell off the bus. Higher level candidates identified the hospital stay as God's way of providing an opportunity for him to meet a good wife.

Question 11

For what reasons would you consider Tana a good role model to her younger siblings? Support your answer with details from the text.

This was a popular question among the candidates in this section. Responses were fair to excellent as candidates addressed the question's demands. Responses cited reasons why Tana is a good role model. The text was well understood and quoted. A major challenge for most candidates was that they either made sweeping statements due to language inadequacy or narrated what she did intsead of addressing the question.

Candidates were expected to highlight how, because parents trusted her as a responsible child, she was given the responsibility of looking after her siblings when they travelled. Furthermore , she was focused on her studies, as a result excelled and was admitted at university . They discussed how she maintained her virtue and principles even while at university by not having an intimate relationship with her boyfiend Reuben. She was further lauded for being protective to her siblings and never jugding their bad decisions, instead would offer advise to them or parents on how to keep them safe. This was supported by stating how she interacted with Zakhe before and after her abortion. She was also helpful around the house, relieving her mother of some responsibilities, unlike Zakhe. Candidates had other examples which supported how Tana is a good role model.

Question 12

You are Zakhe's father, on the way to Botswana to bring her back to Swaziland. Write your thoughts.

This was another popular question among candidates, yet it was poorly done. The moment was not accurately captured, candidates forgot about the letter asking for forgiveness and Babe Mdluli's change of heart. Character was not accurately captured as some candidates felt father was still angry and unforgiving.

Candidates were expected to express feelings and thoughts of relief for the safe return of Zakhe as it would relieve Make Mdluli, empathy for what she and her children have been through and sadness for Zakhe having to learn the hard way. Furthermore he should question how she is surviving without a husband and being far from home,

Candidates would also highlight forgiveness and a commitment to provide a good home for her and the children. Candidates would include how she can be assisted to intergrate back into their family and community. Lastly they should also have reflected on how Tana will feel on receiving the news of her sister's return.

The Mending Season

Question13

(a) What does the passage reveal about Tshidiso's relationship with the her aunts? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was a popular question in this section and in the examination, however, it was poorly done. This question demanded that learners explore the aunt's relationship with Tshidiso using the passage.

Candidates were expected to reveal them as having a close and loving relationship; Tshidiso could imagine how each of them was behaving. She even knew how they would react to her rude behaviour which further demonstrated them as strict parents. They were protective and caring of Tshidiso by first ensuring she eats, has the best jewellery they own and by acompanying her to the taxi. They were also almost always in agreement as they presented a united front to Tshidiso. Canditates could add to these as some felt aunts were controlling and overprotective. Open was also a term favoured by most candidates without strong support.

(b) What are your feelings towards Tshidiso as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This question was also poorly answered as learners mainly assessed her character and overlooked own feelings towards her situation and behaviour. Relevant feelings included being upset at her rude response, shock at her unappreciative response to being handed a valued treasure by her mother and empathy when being accompanied to the taxi rank. Candidates could relate to overbearing parents who can choose your clothes and friends. Candidates also felt that Tshidiso was lucky to have such caring parents and envied their loving relationship.

Question 14

For what reasons would you believe that the black girls were treated unfairly at Ascension Convent School. Support your answer with details from the text.

This was one of the least popular question in this section and in the examination. The performance was average. Candidates supported that the black girls were not treated fairly by drawing attention to seating arrangement (division within the classroom set-up and in the school transport), biased treatment of the minority group during the netball court incident when the real culprit was not suspended, always being accused of noise-making, being labelled a 'Kaffir' – a derogatory term used in apartheid South Africa among others. Most candidates stated that being forced to speak English and not their language was also another form of illtreatment and they overlooked that this was an English Medium school, just because the whites were using theirs. Hairstyles also formed part of the illtreatment as they were forced to conform to school rules.

Question 15

You are Mrs Allison just after hearing about the netball court incident between Veronica and Elizabeth . Write your thoughts.

This was an unpopular question among candidates in this section. The moment was not fully captured as candidates failed to express valid thoughts of the principal. The character was accurately shown regretting the opportunity granted to Matshidiso and other black girls because of its potential impact to distabilise the school and resentment at the new democratic reforms, yet some showed her willingness to hear both sides of the story, a thought very far from Mrs Allison.

Candidates were expected to show how anxious Mrs Allison is about the white parents' reactions, media coverage and disciplining the black student. She should also show anger at being forced to conform because of the new democracy and worry about how relations will be amongst the black girls and the white girls, including some other teachers.

Canditates still failed to use the appropriate register.

Africa Kills Her Sun

Question 16

(a) What does the passage reveal about Sukey de Jager and her relationship with her family? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This was a popular question among candidates in this section, the performance was slightly below average. They failed to see that it was a two pronged question asking for personality and relationship, instead they focused on discussing Sukey's relationship with family fully as exposed in the passage. They described her love and protectiveness towards her sister Marta. Her relationship with her father was downplayed intsead it was her interaction with Jan Redlinghuis which was assessed.

Candidates were expected to see Sukey as loving to Marta as she appreciates her vulnerability, a reason compelling her to sacrifice herself to the evil Jan as his wife, but angry or bitter towards her father who sees nothing wrong with his actions as long as they have water.

(b) What feelings do you have towards Jan Redlinghuis as you read the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

This question was also ranged from poorly done to well done. Candidates described Jan Redlinghuis as a bitter and jealous man who did not deserve sympathy. They continually referred to him marrying a young wife, which is outside the passage. Feelings of hatred and anger were evident, however.

Candidates were expected to express feelings of anger at his insistance on marrying Marta, disappointment at his unneighbourly behaviour and disgust at parading his wife around their neighbourhood. Candidates also felt he was unreasonable and cruel thus they were expected to be upset, shocked and filled with hatred, among other feelings.

Question 17

For what reasons would you consider the narrator in the story *Me and the Fish God* to be unlucky? Support your answer with details from the text.

This was amongst the least popular questions in this section but candidates provided fair to good knowledge of the text content. Candidates could narrate the story and identify instances where the narrator was unlucky.

Candidates were expected to state how the narrator was not loved by his mother because she wanted a girl child. As a result, she bought him a doll on his birthday. His father on the other hand used his birthday as an excuse to share alcoholic beverages with his friends, there was no sign of a child's birthday on the day. No one sang happy birthday for him except his drunk uncle. Furthermore, they should recall how he received an oversized t-shirt from his father and found his only gift,a fishing rod from his uncle under the chair, but incidentally spilt his alcohol. Candidates should mention how the uncle made him drink alcohol. Later, they should recall how he caught a fish (the fish god) which gave him an electric shock and, lastly, how the fishing rod got his family to be expelled from the village because the fish god died.

Question 18

You are Thandile, just after being beaten by your stepmother in the story *The First Christmas Without My Mother* by Lucy Dlamini. Write your thoughts.

This was a popular question among candidates in this section, and it was poorly done. Candidates failed to capture the character fully. In their responses, Thandile was very upset and angry. They mostly allowed their personal experiences or knowledge of stepmothers interfere with their responses. The candidates ignored text context and focused on their negative knowledge of stepmothers. They went as far as wanting to report her to the police and father for abuse.

Candidates were expected to express feelings and thoughts of regret at losing her mother and missing both the brother and late mother's love. They were to recall the dream and wonder where mother has gone with her presents. They may have recalled how this is a season to be happy and realise that it was the first christmas without mother. Their disappointment should have also been expressed as they question why the stepmother is being so harsh, even calling her mother a ghost. Candidates could also

be upset at abuse but appreciate Sheshile as a good support system, among other thoughts they may have.

Recommendations

- Teachers are advised to cover all texts as required by the syllabus, as poor knowledge of the texts' content becomes the major contributory factor to poor performance in the examination.
- Teachers are requested to advise and train candidates to follow the requirements of the examination in choosing questions. The requirement is that candidates should choose a question from each section and of these there should be a passage-based question and an essay question. It can be two passage-based questions and one essay question **OR** it can be one passage-based question and two essay questions.
- Candidates should be trained on correct question selection; adhering to the instructions of the component, as failure to do so results in rubric infringement, which greatly disadvantages some of the candidates in the examination. Rubric infringement is when a candidate chooses to respond to three passage based or essay questions ignoring the expectation that responses should cover all three sections and different types of questions. For instance, a candidate answers essay questions only and ignores the passage based questions.
- In the traditional essays, candidates should demonstrate knowledge of text and understanding of the question by supporting responses with references across the text.
- Poetry continues to be a major challenge for candidates. Teachers are commended for the continual improvement of candidates' performance and are encouraged to continue to give focus to the language and its effect, not on the mere interpretation of the poems. Teachers are urged to be careful when interpreting poems as some then tend to be vague and out of context and misleading. Also, learners have to be trained to use the whole poem when giving support.
- Teachers are also advised to give candidates ample time to practise the different types of questions so that they can respond accurately to the

different genres. A good training technique could be giving candidates some of the stories or poems to work on as unseen texts so they become more critical without relying on teacher's interpretations.

- It is also a concern that candidates do not understand key words in the questions thus they resort to narration or creating own question. Teachers are urged to pay attention to vocabulary defining feelings and personality and their application since they disadvantage candidate performance.
- To reduce the anxiety of seeing new and seemingly challenging texts and questions as they sit for the final examination, teachers are urged to expose candidates to the full paper long before they sit for the final examination. This will enable candidates to get used to the different questions.

Paper 120/02

General comments

The candidature was less than the previous year this time around. The performance unfortunately declined significantly this year. This may be due to the fact that in question one candidates listed feelings instead of explaining how the stated feelings are evoked in them as they read the passage. In their quest to respond to the set task, most candidates were tempted to narrate, paraphrase, use bullet points or create their own questions. For question two, where they were expected to discuss the speaker's memories, they discussed a variety of feelings, which was regrettably not the requirement here. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to expose candidates to this kind of paper as early as possible and give as much practice as possible. Candidates need more practice in text appreciation, question analysis and essay writing skills.

Structure of the paper

The paper had two questions. Question 1 was a prose question; question 2 was a poem. Candidates were required to respond to **one** question, either question one or question two, in 1 hour 30 minutes. Each question carried 20 marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Explore how the writer's use of language makes you emotional as you read the passage?

Candidates who performed well are those who clearly named or stated the specific feeling to show how emotional they are, quoted relevant evidence from the text, and explained how the selected moment (example) evokes the stated feelings. Candidates were expected to also name a variety of emotions and be able to demonstrate that they are heightening. These feelings may be worry, pity, disappointment, admiration, annoyance, shock etc. Better responses were even able to discuss the characters' feelings and how they made candidates feel as readers.

Candidates were expected to show a clear and sustained understanding of the passage and task through their in-depth understanding and awareness of emotional moments and situations. Their discussions would not just pick relevant examples from the text, but

they were expected to clearly explain how the teacher, Zani, the drunkards, the men before the holes, Busi, Mimi and MaButhelezi ignite the feelings mentioned. All this was expected to be done with sensitivity to the writer's choice of words. Weak responses were those that showed a vague or elementary understanding of the passage. Narrations, paraphrases, lifting and a variety of feelings with irrelevant examples also did not score much. Responses that were a mere appreciation of language and ignored the main task of feelings also did not earn high marks.

Factors Affecting Performance

- Not writing one whole essay instead they addressed the bullet points in isolation. Such a method of responding limits the flow of ideas, hence affecting the candidate's development of the response.
- Some candidates were clearly unfamiliar with the key word 'emotional'.
- Responses narrating Zani's story instead of engaging with the task.
- Discussing irrelevant feelings.
- Some candidates wrote lengthy responses which resulted in generalisations.
- Naming feelings, quoting examples but failing to develop them into meaningful and persuasive paragraphs through explaining the stated points convincingly.
- Naming feelings and quoting irrelevant examples.
- Focusing on Zani and the teacher, yet there are other characters in the story.
- Repeating one feeling throughout the essay.
- Failure to understand the plot of the story, which resulted in flawed responses.
- Candidates often misunderstood who Zani was and what the teacher did.
- Misconceptions about the characters involved in the passage.

Question 2

Explore how the speaker expresses memories of his home.

A great improvement was noted in the number of candidates who chose this question. The manner in which the poetry question was handled showed that teachers have put a lot of effort into training candidates. However, it was poorly done by a majority of our candidates.

Candidates who performed well in this question were able to state and clearly explain the memories of the speaker and give relevant examples to support their claims. As they discussed the speaker's memories, they would also comment on the use of language.
Weaker responses were those that displayed a vague or little understanding of the poem. A majority narrated the story of the poem without stating specific memories. Others discussed emotions evoked in them as they read the passage and totally ignored the set task. A few focussed on merely identifying figures of speech. Sadly, others incorrectly quoted them. For example, they would quote: '… like some old bachelor' as a metaphor, yet it is a simile. Another challenge was that some candidates failed to understand that the speaker is no longer in exile. Candidates also misunderstood and misinterpreted some aspects of the poem and some words. For example, the phrase '…poor nurse' was interpreted as showing the speaker's poverty-stricken background. Others assumed that the speaker was in exile because his family disowned him, thus, he was prohibited from coming home, hence he started a new life in another country. Another common flaw was the presumption asserting that the speaker was stressed and depressed therefore, sitting by the sea contemplating committing suicide. Gross irrelevance was noted where some candidates shared their personal experiences of being suspended or expelled from school.

Factors Affecting Performance

- Not writing one whole essay instead they addressed the bullet points in isolation.
- Lack of question analysis skills
- Responses merely analysing the poem instead of real engagement with the task.
- Discussing feelings instead of memories.
- Some candidates wrote lengthy responses which resulted in generalisations.
- Stating memories, paraphrasing details from the poem but failing to develop them into meaningful and persuasive paragraphs.
- Assuming that the speaker is still in exile
- Wrongly identifying literary devices
- Making unfounded assumptions
- Flawed understanding of key moments

Expectations

- The expectation is that the memory or what the speaker remembers is stated or named. It should be accompanied by a relevant example and clear explanations; why, how, and what makes the speaker remember this event, place, sound, scenery etc. Close reference should be made to the texts to justify or exemplify the moments or situations that are the reason for such.
- Explanations for claims should be related to the claim mentioned.
- Echoing question in every paragraph instead of mere narrations or lifting from text.
- Literary devices should be identified, and their effect explained in relation to the set task.

Recommendations

It is recommended that teachers:

- Teach question analysis skills to help learners to focus on the task or question requirements.
- Teach candidates how to develop responses, i.e. paragraph development.
- Expose learners to different question types.
- Teach text analysis and how emotions are evoked as opposed to giving learners lists of feelings which they will merely regurgitate and use out of context. Learners should be able to give appropriate feelings and support them with relevant examples as well as explain how the selected example evokes the said feeling. In the case of personal responses, learners need to know that they are required to respond effectively to the set question first before giving their opinions.
- Explain to candidates the purpose of the synopsis, bullet points and glossary.
- Encourage candidates to echo the question in each and every paragraph.
- Encourage candidates to respond to **one** not two questions.
- Encourage candidates to explain the effect of literary devices instead of merely identifying them from the text.





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