

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper was comparable with that of the previous years. The questions were clear, within the scope of the syllabus, and at the level of the candidates. The Candidates' performance showed very little improvement over that of the past year.

The paper consisted of three parts. Part A comprises three essay questions of which candidates were required to answer only one in not fewer than 250 words. Part B was on comprehension wherein candidates were given a passage to read and answer questions based on it. Part C (Literature) was made up of compulsory questions based on extracts from the book *The Cockcrow* compiled by Darmani L. and Sackey J.A. The excerpts were specifically taken from Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Home Sweet Home*, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo and *Makola* by Theresa Ennin.

2. SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

Some candidates did remarkably well in a number of areas. Under Content, a good number of them who answered Question 1 were able to mention the types of games that should be encouraged in their schools while many who answered Question 2 stated the importance of being computer-literate. Many candidates who answered Question 3 were also able to end their stories with the given words.

In respect of Expression and Organisation respectively, many of them made judicious use of the language and displayed a remarkable degree of knowledge of the formal features of the essays they wrote. The paragraphs were well-developed and logically linked.

Some of the candidates seemed to be adept at answering questions on the comprehension and literature aspects of the paper, as their works in these parts were good.

3. SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

Some of the candidates seemed to have lost focus of the requirements of the essay questions. Even where relevant points were raised, they were left unexplained.

Again, there were others who displayed a lack of appropriate vocabulary items and this hindered their ability to express themselves clearly and meaningfully.

Grammatical/ syntactical errors marred the quality of the answers of almost all the candidates, thereby significantly diminishing their marks.

It seemed some of the candidates did not read the comprehension passage before proceeding to answer the questions on it, as their answers were completely unrelated to the given passage. There were others who simply copied portions of the passage and

passed them off as answers without caring about whether they were appropriate responses to the questions.

Again, some candidates did not number their answers, or used a form of numbering different from the one used in the question paper. This practice should be avoided as it makes candidates' work difficult to mark.

In part C (Literature), many of the candidates displayed very little acquaintance with the set texts from *The Cockcrow* and obtained appallingly low marks. Questions on figures of speech posed great difficulty to most of the candidates. In addition, some candidates wrote wrong/ meaningless/ irrelevant answers while others wrote no answers at all.

4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- (1) Candidates should pay more attention to the study of the grammar and structure of the English language.
- (2) They should be helped to distinguish between the form/format of the various types of essays.
- (3) They should read widely and also use the dictionary often so as to improve upon their stock of vocabulary and power of expression.
- (4) They should be made to do a lot of exercises on essay writing.
- (5) They should be encouraged to diligently read the texts in *The Cockcrow*.
- (6) They should study literary devices in order that they would be able to identify them in texts.
- (7) They should read the questions carefully for thorough understanding before proceeding to answer them.
- (8) They should be helped to learn the techniques of answering the various types of questions on comprehension passages, especially the wh-questions.

5. DETAILED COMMENTS ON CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE

Part A

The essay questions are as follows:

Question 1

Write a letter to your Headteacher, discussing two games that should be encouraged among the students in your school.

Question 2

Write an article for publication in your school magazine on why every student should be computer-literate.

Question 3

Write an interesting story which ends with the words *It pays to be kind to strangers.*

Question 1

This was a popular question wherein the candidates were required to write a letter to their Headteacher discussing two games that should be encouraged among the students in their school. They were expected to mention the two games and explain the importance/benefits of playing them.

Most of the candidates who answered this question mentioned some games such as football, netball, volley ball, and athletics. A good number of them did well as, in addition to mentioning the two games, they discussed how they are played and explained the importance of playing them. However, some of the candidates only mentioned one game and gave two reasons for suggesting the game or they mentioned two games and gave one or no reasons for their suggestions. The performance of such candidates was average or below average.

Question 2

In this question, the candidates were required to write an article for publication in their school magazine on why every student should be computer-literate. This question was well answered as the candidates were able to give a number of reasons for, or benefits of, being computer-literate. They mentioned reasons such as research, employment, entertainment and so on.

Question 3

Here, the candidates were required to write an interesting story ending with the words *It pays to be kind to strangers.* Some candidates did well by narrating stories about people who helped strangers and were later rewarded or people who refused/failed to help strangers and regretted their actions later. However, quite good a number of candidates wrote fables (stories with animal main characters) and ended up scoring very low marks under Content. Others simply copied the comprehension passage and presented it as answers.

PART B — COMPREHENSION

Question 4

This was a mandatory question wherein the candidates were required to read a passage and answer the questions based on it. It was meant to assess the candidates' ability to read and understand passages.

The answers provided by many of the candidates exposed their weaknesses in understanding the passage and providing the expected responses. Many of them simply copied parts of the passage and presented them as answers. It was also evident that a large number of the candidates had difficulty with answering wh-questions. In some instances, the candidates had the expected information but wrongly framed the answers. This caused them to lose a lot of marks or score zero in these questions.

The questions were based on the passage but some candidates wrote answers that did not correctly answer the questions or were not found in the passage.

For example, Question 4(a)ii was 'How can friendships get destroyed?' The expected answer was 'By friends being suspicious of each other' or 'By friends distrusting /not trusting each other'. However, some candidates wrote 'because of suspicion/lack of trust' as if the question word were 'why'. The use of 'because' in answering a question that begins with 'how' is wrong. Others provided wrong answers such as 'When one does not respect the other'; 'When one is cheating the other'. While some of these answers may be true for the real world, they are wrong because they are not found in the passage.

Question 4(b) was 'Why do people go to school?' One of the expected answers was 'To acquire knowledge/ skills'. However, some candidates simply wrote 'for employment'. This answer was wrong because that was not the information in the passage.

In Question 4(f), the candidates were required to provide synonymous and fitting substitutes for some words underlined in the passage. Some of the candidates answered this question well. There were, however, some who provided two or more answers, with one or more being incorrect. Such candidates ended up losing all the mark allocated to the question.

Candidates are advised to follow instructions and be sure that the words/ or phrases they provide fit into the passage. Since no additional mark is awarded for providing two or more correct answers to the same vocabulary question, it is advisable for candidates to provide only one answer that they are sure of. They should also pay attention to the spelling/form/tense of the words they provide. For example, the word tested in question 4(f)iii was 'acquire'. The expected answer was any one of the following words: get/obtain/receive/gain. However, some candidates wrote 'get/got'; 'obtained/obtains', etc. These answers were wrong because they could not fit into the passage.

PART C — LITERATURE

Question 5

This question consisted of sub-questions based on extracts from the set book *The Cockcrow* compiled by Darmani L. and Sackey J.A. The excerpts were specifically taken from ‘Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *Home Sweet Home*, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo and *Makola* by Theresa Ennin.

Some candidates exhibited familiarity with the set texts as they scored very good marks in this part of the paper. Others, however, displayed very little acquaintance with the texts by writing answers that were either meaningless or completely irrelevant and ended up obtaining abysmally low marks. To cite an instance, Question 5(b) was ‘Why did the young man with purple lips and red sores all over his hands want to harm Oliver?’

The expected answer was ‘He wanted to keep all their father’s wealth/So that Oliver would dishonor the family name/So that Oliver would lose his inheritance. However, some candidates wrote ‘Because he thought Oliver was a thief/ Because he thought Oliver had robbed him’.

