



3.0 ENGLISH (101)

The English language papers test the candidates' knowledge of the language. They test the candidates' ability to comprehend the input, mainly the written word, their mastery of grammar and communicative skills as elicited in their written work as well as their ability to respond to literary cues and to express such response in writing. In addition, the papers test listening and speaking skills in written form. Pronunciation, stress and intonation, conversation and performance aspects of language are also covered as required by the new syllabus.

Three papers were offered in the year 2006 KCSE English examination. These were:-

- Paper 101/1 - Testing functional skills;
- Paper 101/2 - Testing Comprehension, Literary Appreciation and Grammar;
- Paper 101/3 - Testing Conventional Composition and Essays based on Set Texts.

3.1 GENERAL CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE

Table 3 below shows the performance of candidates in the three papers offered in the year 2006.

Table 3: Candidates' Overall Performance in English in the Year 2006

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2006	1		60	30.71	7.83
	2		80	29.88	12.66
	3		60	18.93	7.95
	Overall	241,983	200	79.53	25.00

The section that follows looks at the performance of candidates in individual papers and highlights the problems encountered by candidates in the questions that were poorly performed.

3.2 PAPER 1 (101/1)

Question 1

You are the Chairperson of your school's Wildlife Conservation Association (WICA). Your group has just come back from a visit to a national park in a neighbouring country.

Write a report to the Patron of WICA about the trip. In your report indicate what you accomplished, the problems you experienced and what cautionary measures you would take during future trips.

This question tested functional writing. It required candidates to assume the position of Chairperson of a Club in their school and write a report on a trip they had undertaken. Apart from gauging the candidate's ability to get the right report format, it also tested the candidate's ability to use the correct tone of language, accuracy of communication and integration of knowledge acquired across the curriculum.

Weaknesses

Many candidates failed to get the right format and tone of language. Majority wrote formal letters. Nevertheless, the scores for this question were good. Those who got the format right performed well on all the other aspects.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers are urged to teach all aspects of functional writing.

Question 2

Fill in each of the blank spaces in the passage below with the *most* appropriate word.

There was a time when telecommunication 1.....Africa was nearly non-existent. With the 2..... of one or two more developed nations, most African countries 3..... infrastructure and telephony was out of reach for 4..... of the population. But mobile telephony has 5..... a lot of that and has demonstrated Africa's 6..... to leap-frog older technologies with new ones more 7..... to the environment.

Telecommunication in Africa is growing, 8..... there is room for improvement and development. A number of new networks 9..... coming up all over the continent and the African telecommunication market is growing 10..... The driver of this growth? Mobile telephony.

(Adapted from African Business, May 2004)

This was a cloze text requiring a variety of integrated reading and grammatical skills. This was a very good question in discriminating the abilities of candidates. Those who were able did a good job, but many had problems with it.

Weaknesses

The major weaknesses noted in this question were candidates' inability to grasp the context, grammatical inaptitude and limitations of vocabulary.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers should impress upon the candidates the necessity to read widely. The grammar and the vocabulary they need as well as the myriad contexts are to be found in well written literature that abounds in the libraries.

Questions 3(a), (b), (c) and (d), which tested a variety of listening and performance skills of the language were based on the oral narrative below:

(a) Read the oral narrative below and then answer the questions that follow.

Nyasaye (God) wanted to put a stop to the rampages of death - death which claims the lives of everyone
young and old
boys and girls
men and women
strangers and kinsmen;
death which kills
the innocent and the guilty
chiefs and their subjects
the healthy and the sick
the wise and the foolish. 5

So one day he sent a servant to earth with a message for all his people: "Send me an offering of fresh, untainted fat," he ordered. "It should be as clean and sparkling as the moon." Hearing this, the people slaughtered a goat, removed its pure white fat, and placed it in a clay dish overspread with fine fresh leaves. 10

Now they summoned Ng'ongruok, also known as Haniafu the Chameleon, and ordered him to take their offering to Nyasaye. They also fashioned a long pole that reached up to heaven where Nyasaye dwells in his glory. This was the path Ng'ongruok would follow when carrying their offering. 15

But Ng'ongruok accidentally soiled the fat with his clumsy feet, and on his arrival before Nyasaye, presented a dirty and unsightly offering. Nyasaye was furious and rejected it, shouting: "Tell the people of earth that because of this insult they must continue to die, just as their ancestors have done!" 20

Ng'ongruok descended from heaven, delivered Nyasaye's message, and returned the offering to the people. Ever since then, alas death has continued to ravage human beings. For his clumsiness, Ng'ongruok was cursed by the people. Hence, he must always walk on all fours, and his steps must be hesitant and slow. That is why you will always see him carrying one leg raised from the ground as he tries to decide exactly where to tread. 25

(Adapted from: *Keep My Words* by B. Onyango-Ogutu and A. A. Roscoe)

Question 3 (a)

- (i) What would you do in order to capture the audience's attention before you begin to tell this story?
- (ii) Explain two ways in which you would make the narration of lines 20 to 23 of the story effective.
- iii) Mention two ways in which you would know that your audience in this story is fully participating in the performance.

The sub-section 3(a) tested performance aspects of an oral narrative: capturing and retaining the attention of the audience, oral delivery and audience participation.

Weaknesses

Most candidates gave stock answers to the questions, answers that did not pinpoint nor illustrate the features in the story at hand.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers should desist from giving notes which do not relate to specific genres to students before the students understand the principles involved. Study guides should be discouraged until the students can do their own interpretation and analysis of a piece of literary genre.

Question 3(b)

For each of the words below write another word that is pronounced in the same way.

heir
weather
base
mourning

This sub-section tested pronunciation and the candidate's ability to provide words with similar pronunciation. This was very well done.

Question 3(c)

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

Isatou died

Isatou died
When she was only five
And full of pride
Just before she knew
5 How small a loss
It brought to such a few.
Her mother wept
Half grateful
To be so early bereft.
10 And did not see the smile
As tender as the root
Of the emerging plant
Which sealed her eyes.
The neighbours wailed
15 As they were paid to do
And thought how big a spread
Might be her wedding too.
The father looked at her
Through marble eyes and said;
20 "Who spilt the perfume
Mixed with morning dew?"

Lenrie Peters

(From: *The Earth Is Ours*. Edited by Ian Gordon)

- (i) Identify any **two** pairs of rhyming words in this poem.
- (ii) Which words would you stress in line 2 of this poem, and why?
- (iii) How would you say the last two lines of this poem?

This question tested auditory aspects of poetry and emphasis creation in oral delivery of the poem as poetry is written to be recited or sung.

Weaknesses

It was noted that a problem still exists with this genre. Even obvious aspects such as rhyme eluded some candidates.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers need to dispel the myth that poetry is difficult and do their best to teach it. The teacher’s attitude has a lot to do with the response of the student. If they are encouraged and put through enough practice they will gain confidence and improve their performance.

Question 3(d)

You have lost your luggage on your way back to school. You decide to report the matter to the nearest police station. Below is part of the conversation between you and the police officer at the reporting desk. Fill in the other part. (Read through the conversation first before writing your responses).

You:

Police officer: (Interrupting) Easy. Easy. I am sorry about what happened but before you go into the lost items, please give me your full name and address.

You:

Police officer: That is good. Now go ahead and tell me what happened, without leaving out any important detail.

You:

Police officer: From which schools are the students who alighted before you? You see, it is possible that your box was off loaded from the bus by mistake especially because another box that nearly resembles yours was left behind.

You:

Police officer: Good. At least that is a starting point. First, we will get the box from the bus crew and then go to that school to make enquiries.

You:

This sub-section tested both interlocation and etiquette. The candidate was not only expected to provide appropriate responses in line with the context given, but also to say it in a polite and respectful manner.

Weaknesses

Most candidates gave appropriate responses but aspects of etiquette were lacking in majority of their responses.

Advice to Teachers

Etiquette is key in interpersonal relations and needs to be inculcated in the students as early as possible. The syllabus lays emphasis on this and teachers should teach and reinforce it.

On the whole, the performance in this paper was average. It is envisaged that as the teachers and students become more familiar with the demands of the new paper formats, performance will improve.

3.3 PAPER 2 (101/2)

This paper tested comprehension, both conventional and that based on compulsory set texts. It tested summary and note-making skills as well as literary aspects of poetry and grammar. This is the paper in which the integration operated at its best. Not only did the paper integrate the genres but note-making was based on both the conventional and literary passages. The paper mean was 29.88 which represents 37.35% of the total mark.

Question one was based on the comprehension passage below.

Read the passage below and then answer the questions that follow.

During the last couple of decades, the developing world has made enormous economic progress. This can be seen most clearly in the rising trend of incomes and consumption: between 1965 and 1985 consumption per capita in the developing world went up by almost 70 percent. Broader measures of well-being confirm this picture - life expectancy, child mortality, and educational attainment have all improved markedly.

Against that background of achievement, it is all the more **staggering** - and all the more shameful - that more than one billion people in the developing world are living in poverty. Progress in raising average incomes, however welcome, must not distract attention from this massive and continuing burden of poverty.

The same is true of the broader measures of well-being. Life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is just 50 years; in Japan it is almost 80. More than 110 million children in the developing world lack access even to primary education while in the developed world, anything less than universal enrollment would rightly be regarded as unacceptable. The starkness of these contrasts attests to the continuing toll of human deprivation.

It should be noted that even in the developing world, poverty levels differ from region to region, country to country and even location to location within the same country. For example, nearly half of the world's poor live in South Asia, a region that accounts for less than one third of the world's population. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for a smaller, but still highly disproportionate share of global poverty. Within regions and countries, the poor are often concentrated in certain places: in rural areas with high population densities. Often, the problems of poverty, population, and the environment are intertwined; earlier patterns of development and pressure of rapidly expanding populations mean that many of the poor live in areas of acute environmental degradation.

It is also true that the weight of poverty falls most heavily on certain groups. Women in general are disadvantaged. This is because in poor households, they often shoulder more of the workload than men, are less educated, and have less access to remunerative activities. Children, too, suffer disproportionately, and the future quality of their lives is **compromised** by inadequate nutrition, health care, and education. This is especially true for girls, for their primary school enrollment rates are less than 50 percent in many African countries.

Obviously, reducing poverty is the fundamental objective of economic development in any country. It is estimated that in 1985, more than one billion people in the developing world lived in absolute poverty. Clearly then, economic development has a long way to go. Knowledge about the poor is essential if governments are to adopt sound development strategies and more effective policies for attacking poverty. How many poor are there? Where do they live? What are their precise economic circumstances? Answering these questions is the first step toward understanding the impact of economic policies on the poor.

(Adapted from *Thinking Globally* by Andrew E. Robson, New York; McGraw-Hill (1997))

Question 1(a)

What evidence does the author give to show that incomes and consumption trends are rising in the developing world?

This question tested recall of facts mentioned in the passage: the fact of per capital rising and standing nearly at 70% and life expectancy having improved significantly. Most candidates scored correctly in this question.

Question 1(b)

How does the author feel about the progress made so far by the developing world?

This question required candidates to infer the author's attitude to the progress the developing countries had made from the information provided. The author does not seem impressed by the progress recorded in the first paragraph as he immediately sets about assenting it in the succeeding paragraphs. Many candidates scored correctly in this question, the majority of who relied solely on the use of the phrases "**more staggering**" and "**all the more shameful**" to support their claims. The entire passage deals with the author's dissatisfaction with the status quo and makes proposals on how to change the situation.

Question 1(c)

Why does the author mention Japan?

This question proved tricky to the weaker candidates. The juxtaposition of Japan with sub-Saharan Africa was meant to provide the contrast and the magnitude of the contrast. Less discerning candidates simply saw additional information, at best a comparison, without the implication. Luckily, the mark award at stake was not significant.

Question 1(d)

What is odd about the poverty situation in South Asia?

This question required candidates to notice the disparity between population and poverty levels in South Asia. While the region has a population of one third of the world; their poverty level is much more, because of the fact that half the world's poor live there. The concentration of the poor is what is odd/striking. Majority of the candidates were able to see this connection.

Question 1(e)

Explain the relationship between poverty and a high population.

This question required candidates to explain the relationship that exists between poverty and high population according to the passage. The author traces the incidence of poverty to areas of high population density as well as gross environmental degradation. Population explosion leads to environmental degradation and results in low per capita and hence poverty. Only above average candidates were able to see the connection. The signal word "*intertwined*" was lost to many.

Question 1(f)

Rewrite the following sentence in the singular.

"They are also less educated, and have less access to remunerative activity."

This question tested the candidates' ability to change a sentence in the plural to one in singular. The test was in maintaining the subject - verb agreement in the entire sentence. Besides, candidates had to infer the gender to attach from the passage.

Weaknesses

Most candidates did not carry out the three step changes in the sentence to get the full marks.

Question 1(g)

Why is a girl doubly disadvantaged in a poor country?

This question required candidates to read and find information scattered over the fifth paragraph. They were to show how the girl is much more disadvantaged. The author addressed such reasons as their limited access to education, their shouldering more responsibilities at home and their inability to access gainful employment.

Weaknesses

Candidates lifted sentences from the passage which did not respond to the question adequately.

Question 1 (h)

In about 55 words, summarise the main argument of the author.

This question required candidates to summarize the authors' main argument in fifty five (55) words. The candidates not only needed to have followed and completely understood and be able to identify the main arguments, they also had to have the skill to express such understanding in as concise and precise a manner as is possible.

Weaknesses

Majority of the candidates were able to identify the main issues but they simply lifted chunks and almost always exceeded the word limits. Some candidates were therefore penalised as marks were awarded up to the required word limit and the rest was ignored.

Question 1 (i)

Explain the meaning of the following words as used in the passage.

staggering

compromised

This question required candidates to explain the meaning of the given words as they were used in the passage. Dictionary or general knowledge definitions, which some candidates gave, did not count as only the context within which the word was used was able to give its correct interpretation.

Question 2

Questions in this section were based on the comprehension extract from the compulsory set text, the novel, *“Coming to birth”* by *Marjorie Oludhe Maclinger*. The questions required candidates not only to use the information in the extract given but also to use their knowledge of the novel.

Weaknesses

Apart from the fact that some candidates displayed little knowledge of the text, others, especially those from the immediate social setting of the novel went beyond the text to present long answers especially for questions 2 (d) and (f). Performance was however above average in this section.

Question 3

Questions in this section were based on the poem *“Touch”* by *Hugh Lewin*.

Weaknesses

Poetry continues to elicit poor performance. Majority of the candidates took the literal meaning of the poem and saw the whole poem as being about a person that was longing to have a sexual experience! Most of the answers were inadequate and earned few or no marks.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers should take interest in poetry and subsequently interest their students in poetry. Only then will there be meaningful and sustainable improvement in performance in this area.

Question 4

This question has been the traditional darling of candidates. It tested conditional tenses, gender sensitive sentence construction, spelling, paraphrases and punctuation. As expected, performance in this section was very good.

3.4 PAPER 3 (101/3)

The mean for the paper was *18.93*, which represents a percentage mean of *31.55* of the total mark for the paper. Performance in this paper was therefore quite low, a fact that can be attributed partly to the fact that many candidates misunderstood the term ‘composition’ to imply that even questions 2 and 3 had to elicit imaginative pieces of writing. Such candidates ignored the texts and wrote on imaginary situations and characters and missed the point altogether. There were also cases of rubric contravention, where candidates answered on all the options which was quite

regrettable because the pieces produced for each option did not do justice to the topic and yet only one of them counted.

Question 1(a)

Write a composition ending with the words: "It then dawned on me that perhaps this is why I had been born."

This question required candidates to write an imaginative composition taking into account the leads provided by the ending sentence given. The situation and events of the story were expected to naturally lead to the realization and conclusion given by the protagonist. It evokes repulsive circumstances that have persisted till the person comes to the place when they can put up with and even take advantage of the situation for their own or other's benefit.

Weaknesses

Most candidates did not have any idea what the term "*dawned on me*" meant or what implication it evoked. The majority of candidates who chose this composition wrote just about anything and just tugged the ending on.

Question 1(b)

Write a composition agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, "A good name is better than riches."

This question required candidates to either agree with or disagree with the statement: "*A good name is better than riches*". This was the more popular of the two compositions and gave good pieces of composition. However, there were those who misinterpreted the question and wrote on both sides - first agreeing and then disagreeing as if they had been asked to write a discussion. They wrote long pieces which did not give them any advantage.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers are urged to train candidates in examination techniques including the language of examinations. Candidates should ascertain that they have understood the question before attempting it.

Question 2

William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice

"Racial and religious prejudice only cause misery in society." Write a composition in support of this statement, drawing your illustrations from The Merchant of Venice.

This was another compulsory question. It was based on the compulsory play "*Merchant of Venice*" by *Shakespeare*. The candidates were required to discuss how racial and religious prejudice can cause misery in society, with special reference to the play. Apart from relating the issues in the play to the real world, the question tested the candidates' understanding of the racial issues and prejudices on which the play is based. Those who had read, discussed and fully understood the play were able to answer the question very well. The majority just tumbled as some imagined they were the characters in the play and wrote on what they suffered individually as a result of the racialism and prejudices.

Question 3

This question was based on the optional set texts, the short story (*Half a Day and other Stories* by *Macmillan*), drama (*Shreds of Tenderness* by *John Ruganda*) and the novel (*Homestretch* by *Velma Pollard*). Candidates were expected to choose only one question on the text they had

prepared on. It seems that schools exposed candidates to more than one text in this question as part of covering the syllabus. This is all very well if there is adequate time as it can afford the candidates more choice. But such election should also be accompanied with proper guidance on how to treat the choices. When confronted with two equally difficult or easy questions, it presents quite a challenge to misguided candidates who attempt both questions. This leads to poor scoring in the questions as the candidate may not then have adequate time to exhaustively handle either. This does not advantage them in any way as only one; the one that appears first is marked and scored. Candidates should be advised to read and stick to the instructions given as they form part of the test.

Question 3(a)

The Short Story

Macmillan (Ed.) Half a Day and other Stories

Using illustrations from Nawal El Saadawi's "Solitude" write a composition about dehumanizing prison conditions.

Candidates were expected to write an essay on dehumanizing prison conditions with reference to the short story '*Solitude*' by *Nawal El Saadawi*. Candidates were expected to demonstrate knowledge, even define, the term dehumanizing and what it constitutes and demonstrate how this is typified in "*Solitude*". This was the most popular of the choices, but the candidates had very little to say which was an indication that they did not quite comprehend the task.

Question 3(b)

Drama

John Ruganda, Shreds of Tenderness

Write a composition on the problems of jealousy among siblings. Draw your illustrations from John Ruganda's Shreds of Tenderness.

The question expected candidates to discuss problems jealousy among siblings can cause with illustrations based on the play "*Shreds of Tenderness*" by *John Ruganda*. Most candidates discussed '*jealousy*' as a problem generally and did not relate it to the play, yet much of the friction and conflict in the play between *Odie* and *Wak*, *Odie* and *Stella* have their genesis in jealousy and sibling rivalry.

Question 3(c)

The Novel

Velma Pollard, Homestretch

Write a composition on the causes and effects of migration from developing to developed countries. Refer to Velma Pollard's Homestretch for your illustrations.

This was the least popular of the options yet it was the most direct and hence easier option. Those who selected it did not display mastery of the text and their scores were low. It is not clear whether the teaching was not done properly or whether the text was ignored or whether it had to do with the foreign dialect. Whatever caused this poor performance, more work needs to be done in this area.

Advice to Teachers

Teachers are advised to prepare candidates adequately on all aspects of the prescribed texts. Teaching should aim at enabling the candidates to make their own reader response to the text with the teacher guiding, clarifying and explaining the difficult points. The method of the teacher reading and appreciating a text and imposing his/ her interpretation on the students, including giving of notes or using study commercial guides should be discouraged.