

3.0 ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

The English examination consisted of two sections:

Section A – Objective items; **Section B** – Composition writing.



3.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

Table 6 below shows the performance of candidates in English in the 2015 KCPE examination. Similar data for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 is also provided for comparison.

Table 7: General performance in English for the last four years.

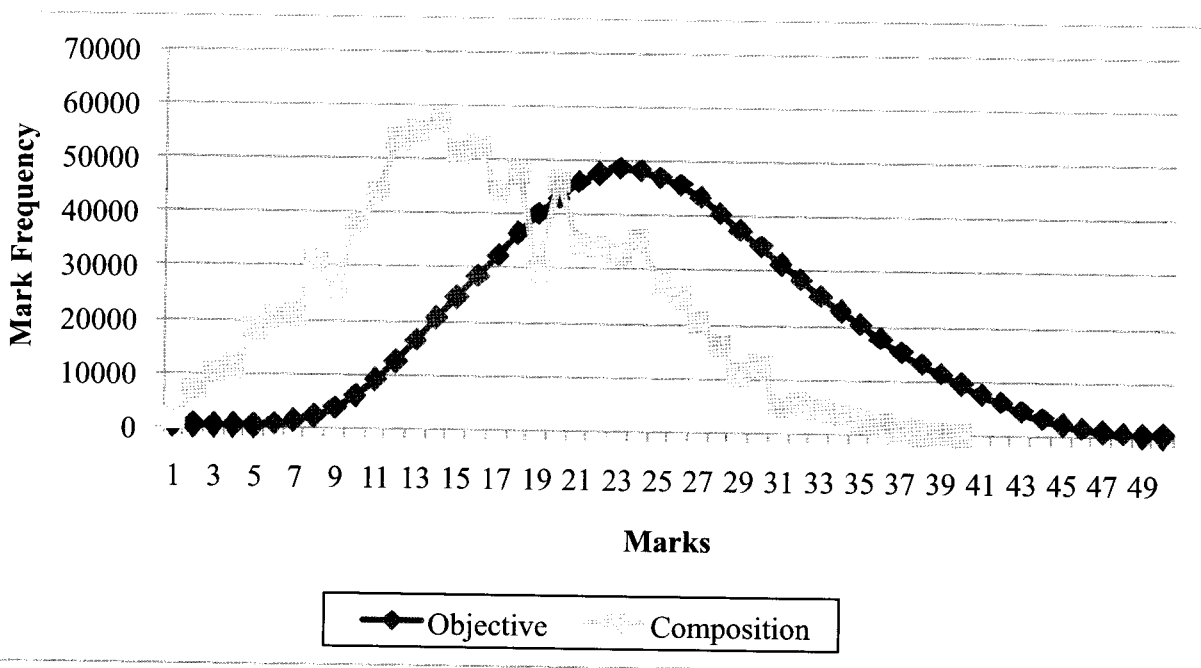
Year	2012		2013		2014		2015	
Paper	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp
% Mean	49.88	42.43	53.06	41.90	47.64	41.45	49.98	41.38

From **Table 7** above, the following can be deduced:

- (i) That the percentage mean for the objective paper improved by **0.07** points from **47.64** in 2014 to **49.98** in 2015;
- (ii) That the percentage mean for the composition paper dropped slightly by **0.07** points from **41.45** in the year 2014 to **41.38** in 2015.

Figure 1 below shows the performance pattern in the two papers graphically.

Figure 1: Frequency of marks in the two English papers



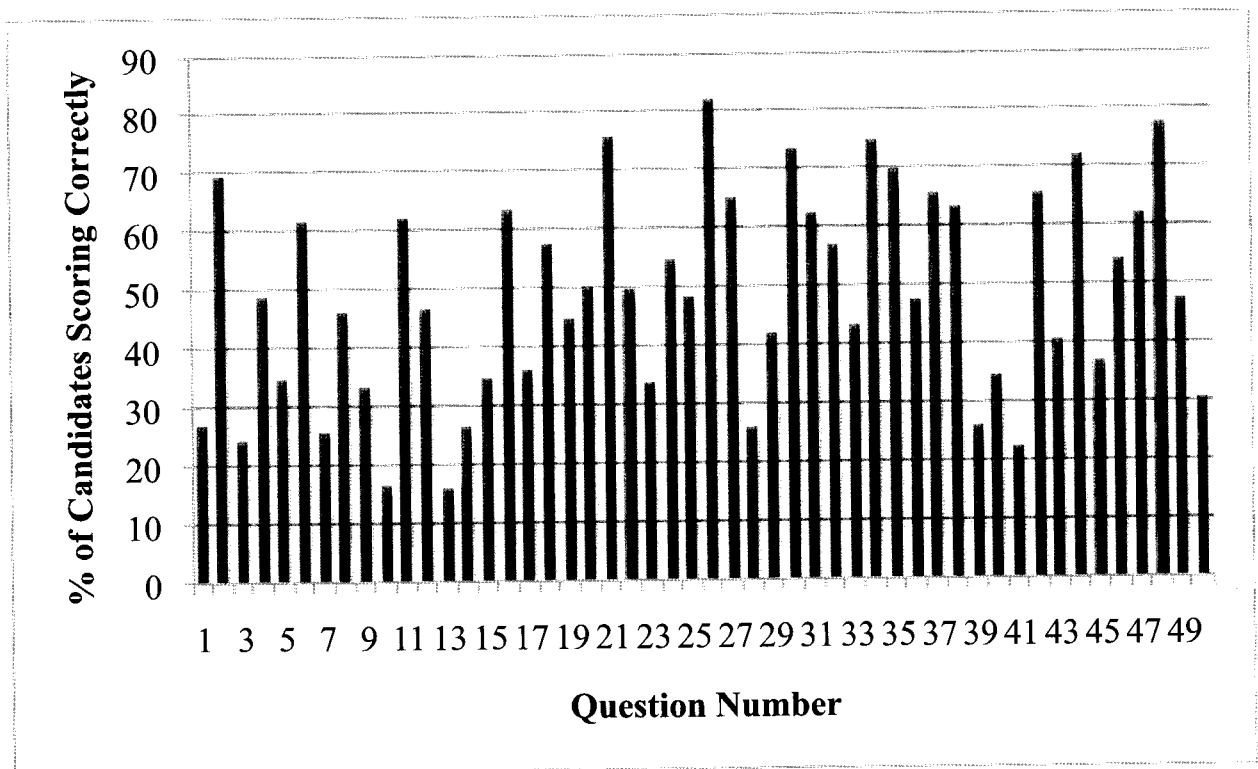
3.2 SECTION A: OBJECTIVE PAPER

The percentage mean for the paper rose to **49.98**, and is comparable to the 2012 level when it was 49.88. This mean approximates the optimum mean of 50.00, and is therefore commendable.

3.2.1 Analysis of Selected Items

Figure 2 below shows the pattern of performance per item in the objective paper for a sample of **927,103** candidates whose average mark was 24.99 out of 50 (a percentage mean of **49.98**), with a standard deviation of 7.51.

Figure 2



From **Figure 2** above, it can be observed that there were nine (09) questions in the year 2015 KCPE English Objective paper in which only 30% or less of the candidates scored correctly. These questions, together with the percentage of candidates scoring on them correctly, are shown in **Table 7**.

Table 8: Questions with a facility index of 30% and below.

Question Number	3	7	10	13	14	28	39	41	50
% Scoring Correctly	23.83	25.27	15.96	15.49	25.95	25.58	25.63	22.08	30.44

Questions 3, 7, 10, 13 and 14 were based on the cloze passage below. Five out of fifteen items in the cloze passage gave candidates problems.

Questions 1 to 15

Read the passage below. It contains blank spaces numbered 1 to 15. For each blank space, choose the best alternative from the choices given.

Some people are able to 1 worry quite easily. Others, 2, are like sponges. They soak it up and 3 time, worrying becomes a habit that they find difficult to break. Of course we all tend to worry about 4. It could be money, safety, appearance, performance, friends, family 5 a thousand other things. But it is 6 to realise that worry accomplishes nothing positive. It lets air out of all you do, draining fun and excitement 7 everything.

Worry makes us miserable, impatient and forgetful. It can keep you 8 at night or make your stomach ache. It can make it hard to concentrate. Constant worry can lead to 9 stress, panic attacks or other 10. What most people do not realise is that it is 11 a waste of time and the more you worry the 12 you achieve. So, let go 13 your worries. After all, many of 14 things that you worry about 15 never happen.

Question 3

- A. in B. on C. by D. over

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C	D*
% Choosing the option	21.51	31.73	21.43	23.83
Mean mark in other questions	25.72	22.62	25.95	26.75

This question required candidates to choose a suitable preposition for attaching to the noun 'time' to deliver the meaning of something happening continuously and spanning some duration. The only preposition that could do this is 'over' (option D). The brighter candidates were able to pick the correct option. However, the fact that so many of the candidates went for the incorrect options almost in equal proportions indicates that teachers must focus on the use of prepositions to deliver specific meaning more seriously.

Question 7

- A. from B. in C. of D. for

Response Pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing the option	25.27	29.33	16.46	27.42
Mean mark in other questions	28.22	26.36	24.48	20.96

Once again, this question required the candidates to choose a preposition that would collocate with the verb 'drain'. The only fitting preposition was 'from' (option A). Again, it is the brighter cohort that managed to get the correct option. Teachers must not neglect the teaching of the use of prepositions in various contexts as this is central to the study of the grammar of English.

Question 10

- A. problems B. disorders C. issues D. challenges

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing the option	56.03	15.96	10.55	15.97
Mean mark in other questions	24.52	29.62	22.22	24.03

This question required candidates to choose a noun that would consolidate physical conditions affecting the body such as stress and panic attacks. The correct option was 'disorders' (option **B**). Although the brighter cohort was able to pick the correct option, majority of the candidates chose 'problems' (options **A**), a term that is too general as it can be used to describe any difficulty or challenge.

Question 13

- A. out B. of C. off D. away

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing the option	15.42	15.49	49.10	18.42
Mean mark in other questions	21.79	29.65	25.89	21.51

The candidates were required to choose a particle to complete a common English idiom 'let go of' which means 'to relinquish or release'. Although the brighter candidates were able to pick the correct option (**B**), majority of the candidates went for the word 'off', which indicates that they may have heard the expression being used verbally but had not experienced it meaningfully in its written form.

Question 14

- A. the B. such C. these D. those

Response Pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing the option	25.95	20.82	25.91	25.77
Mean mark in other questions	27.56	23.16	25.39	23.60

This question tested the candidates' ability to use a suitable determiner to precede a noun and deliver intended meaning. It must be noted that the passage does not mention the 'things' to be worried about. As such, options **B**, **C** and **D** are obviously incorrect. This leaves option **A** as the only plausible choice.

Read the passage below and then answer questions 26 to 38.

When Kalulu was young, he lived with his family next to a national park. There was an electric fence separating the park from people's homes. Kalulu and the other children knew some animals could be dangerous but they were not afraid. The fence and the game wardens stopped the animals from attacking them.

Kalulu loved watching the animals as they grazed near the fence. He even composed a poem about some of the animals that he saw day after day:

I love you Giraffe because
You are so tall and graceful.
You eat the freshest of leaves
And you don't bother anyone.
You don't look like any other creature.
Oh, Giraffe, will I grow tall like you?

I pity you little Dik Dik because
you are so tiny and helpless.
You keep your distance and are so fearful,
But I'm so happy when you pass by.
If I could hold you in my arms,
Would you allow me to stroke you, gently?

I don't know what to think of you, Warthog;
You are small and not so good-looking.
But you don't make me feel frightened.
You run around and I don't know why and
You speak a language I don't understand.
Oh, Warthog, why don't you ever look at me?

When he was not in school, Kalulu would stand near the fence and admire the animals as they grazed or passed by. He kept a safe distance because he had been warned never to go too near the fence. It was dangerous.

One day, he saw a man walking towards him. Kalulu thought the man was too near the fence. When he got closer, he realized it was Juma, a neighbour he liked very much. Whenever he found children in a group, Juma would tell them stories and sing for them.

Juma was now very close; Kalulu noticed that he was not walking straight. "Perhaps he has come from the local bar," Kalulu said to himself. He watched him keenly, wondering why he was walking so close to the fence. Kalulu wanted to warn him but before he could do so, Juma staggered. What happened next made Kalulu **tremble with fear**. He saw Juma fly in the air before he fell to the ground with a thud. He groaned once then went still. Kalulu began crying and shouting for help at the same time. Juma must have touched the wires.

Kalulu could not move from where he stood. It was as if he had been planted on the spot. People heard the shouting and came running. No one dared touch Juma. They merely stood there and stared. Then his daughter who was about ten years old pushed her way through the crowd and fell on her father, sobbing and calling him. Her voice worked like magic. He stirred a little, then opened his eyes. "He's alive!" someone shouted excitedly.

"That fence is dangerous!" another added.

The crowd that had been so silent grew noisy. Everybody was mumbling something. "Dad, let's go home," said the little girl. "Leave these people alone. None of them was willing to help you."

With his daughter's help, Juma tried to stand up. The crowd cheered. "They say **a cat has nine lives**," someone commented.

(Adapted from *Kalulu and the Animals* by C.M. Gecaga, 2013)

Question 28

What can we tell about Kalulu from the first stanza of the poem?

- A. He was very observant.
- B. He did not want to be bothered.
- C. He liked composing poems.
- D. He desired to be like a giraffe.

Response Pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing the option	25.58	5.03	6.46	61.42
Mean mark in other questions	28.58	20.06	19.38	24.54

This item tested identification of character attribute or trait. It is important to remember that character attributes are descriptive and are arrived at after carefully considering various aspects of a character in a story. We usually use adjectives for such description. The correct option was A. Although majority of the candidates went for option D, nothing tells us expressly that Kalulu wished to be like a giraffe; he only wondered if he could ever be as tall. We also cannot tell for sure if Kalulu liked composing poems since we are only told of this poem he composed. As such, option C would be a blind generalization. When Kalulu observes that the giraffe doesn't bother anyone, he does not necessarily mean he didn't want to be bothered. As such, option B is an incorrect assertion. It is important that teachers train pupils to reason through options in comprehension questions and not hurry through them.

Read the following passage and then answer questions 39 to 50.

Many people in the world are lonely today. Since people are getting busier and busier, they have little time to build relationships with one another. In the past, most people lived close to their families and relatives. This made interaction easy because everyone knew everyone else in the neighbourhood. In addition, there were many communal activities. It is not like that any longer, especially in the urban areas. Some people do not know those who live next to them. Each minds his or her own business.

Recently, a man called Bonuke died in his house but his neighbours only began to suspect that something had gone wrong when his decomposing body began to smell. That was two weeks after he had passed on. One wonders: didn't anyone miss him? Didn't he have relatives or friends or workmates?

Loneliness is real and it makes people feel unwanted and miserable. **Yet we continue to build walls instead of bridges between us.** Nowadays, some of us use newspapers or radio to look for friends. Notices like the one below are common:

A young, beautiful, honest and financially stable lady is lonely, so lonely. If you are a single gentleman, rich and handsome and not more than thirty-five years old, please contact me. I promise to make you happy. Together we will build a little heaven here on earth.

A message like this shows that people are so desperate for friendship that they will even try to connect with strangers. But one must be very careful. **Wicked** people can and do take advantage of innocent people. Friendship should develop naturally as we relate with others in school, in the neighbourhood or at the place of work. We all need friends and it is not a weakness to admit it. Life is much more exciting when we are surrounded by people who care about us and accept us just the way we are.

If we want to get along with others, there are things we need to do. First of all, we must recognise that every person is important. We should treat everyone with respect. Respect means that we value others and listen to them without judging them. We also demonstrate respect for others by the way we talk about them when they are not around. Nothing destroys relationships faster than gossip. Instead of listening to and spreading rumours, we should protect the reputation of others. Let's treat others the way we would want to be treated.

Secondly, we should be gentle and patient with one another. No one is perfect. So, when our friends or relatives make mistakes and disappoint us, we should remember that we, too, have weaknesses and often let others down. Whenever we are wronged, we should be willing to forgive.

Lastly, we ought to support one another at all times. We should celebrate the achievements of others and also share in their sorrows. People who are mean and selfish are rarely happy. True happiness is experienced when people help one another. Getting along well with others is the solution to loneliness.

Question 39

Why are many people lonely?

- A. They are becoming busier and busier.
- B. They have very little time available.
- C. They have not developed relationships with others.
- D. They are living far away from their families and relatives.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C*	D
% Choosing the option	49.17	18.91	25.63	4.74
Mean mark in other questions	23.96	25.64	27.26	21.47

This question required the candidates to tell why, according to the passage, many people are lonely. The passage is very clear in the first paragraph that the remedy to loneliness is building relationships with others. As such, the correct option was C. the passage does not indicate that people are lonely because they are busier or have little time available or live far from relatives. The fact that majority of the candidates went for option A shows that pupils need to be trained to read keenly for logical connections and meaning in a story.

Question 41

According to the passage, which of the following **best** describes how people live in urban areas?

- A. People are busy working in their businesses.
- B. People do not love their neighbours.
- C. People do not show much interest in others.
- D. People do not get along with one another.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C*	D
% Choosing the option	55.63	6.32	22.08	14.45
Mean mark in other questions	23.69	19.58	29.80	25.22

Once again, candidates were required to keenly read through the options and pick the best. The passage is clear that people in urban areas (as exemplified in the case of Bonuke) have little interest in one another. Nowhere in the passage are we told that people are busy working in their businesses (as opposed to minding their own businesses), or not loving their neighbours, or not getting along with others. The only correct assertion is that people have little interest in one another (option C).

Question 50

Which of the following **best** summarizes the passage?

- A. People in urban areas are lonelier than others.
- B. Loneliness can be solved through healthy relationships.
- C. We should always respect and help one another.
- D. We should not develop friendships with strangers.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing the option	5.69	30.44	55.81	6.56
Mean mark in other questions	20.84	28.95	23.76	21.10

In this item, candidates were required to pick the option that would summarize the passage. A summary statement is realized as a generalization from the content or subject matter as passed to the reader by the writer. In this passage, the writer wished to answer the question: How can people solve the problem of loneliness? The answer: By building healthy relationships. This was captured aptly in option B.