

P310/1
LITERATURE IN
ENGLISH
Paper 1
(Prose and Poetry)
Nov./Dec. 2023
3 hours



UGANDA NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD
Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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(Prose and Poetry)

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

This paper consists of three sections; I, II and III.

All the sections are to be answered.

Candidates are advised to spend 70 minutes (1 hour 10 minutes) on section I and 55 minutes on each of the sections II and III.

Read section I twice and then answer the questions. There is no need to read the whole paper first.

Do the same for section II and then section III.

SECTION I

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly? But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you – even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent – and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connexion between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear.

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line". Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestos, White papers and the speeches of under-secretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases – *bestial atrocities, iron heel, blood-stained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder* – one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them. And this is not altogether fanciful. A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity.

In our time, political speech and writings are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square

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with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population or rectification of frontiers*. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. Consider for instance some comfortable English professor defending Russian totalitarianism. He cannot say outright, "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so." Probably, therefore, he will say something like this:

"While freely conceding that the Soviet regime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigours which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement."

The inflated style is itself a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and *exhausted idioms*, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics". All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find — this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify — that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship.

But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better. The debased language that I have been discussing is in some ways very convenient. Phrases like a not unjustifiable assumption, leaves much to be desired, would serve no good purpose, a consideration which we should do well to bear in mind, are a continuous temptation, a packet of aspirins always at one's elbow. Look back through this essay, and for certain you will find that I have again and again committed the

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very faults I am protesting against. By this morning's post I have received a pamphlet dealing with conditions in Germany. The author tells me that he "felt impelled" to write it. I open it at random, and here is almost the first sentence that I see: "(The Allies) have an opportunity not only of achieving a radical transformation of Germany's social and political structure in such a way as to avoid a nationalistic reaction in Germany itself, but at the same time of laying the foundations of a co-operative and unified Europe." You see, he "feels impelled" to write – feels, presumably, that he has something new to say – and yet his words, like cavalry horses answering the bugle, group themselves automatically into the familiar dreary pattern.

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Extracted from SELECTED WRITINGS: Politics and the English Language. pgs. 83–86.

Questions:

1. What does the passage say about a writer? (06 marks)
2. According to the passage, how similar is a political speaker to a regular church goer? (04 marks)
3. Describe the characteristics of political language as portrayed in this passage. (10 marks)
4. Explain the relationship between thought and language. (04 marks)
5. Define the following words and expressions in the context of the passage: (10 marks)

	Line
(a) shirk it	07
(b) crowing in	08
(c) debasement	12
(d) home-made turn of speech	21
(e) political conformity	37
(f) cloudy vagueness	45
(g) trudging along	49
(h) concrete achievement	63
(i) exhausted idioms	70
(j) dreary pattern	97

(10 marks)

SECTION II

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Middle-aged, Jamaican spinster Beatrice Brown demanded the title "Granny B" as a mark of respect since she could not be designated as Mrs. In her view, social respect was also due to unmarried women who reached a certain age, especially if they had offsprings. She considered herself deserving of social honour, being the grandmother of an illegitimate descendant.

According to her, grandmotherhood was a social rank, hence she insisted that anyone calling her should put a 'handle' to her name. She thought the title of 'miss' was humiliating for one past thirty.

All her workmates who broke stones in the Rock hill quarry in rural St. James, near to Montego Bay affectionately addressed her as "GB"

A fervent gambler, GB was obsessed with a lottery known as Drop pan which was very popular amongst her set. She lived in a slum area appropriately called Swine Lane, where she was tenant of one of the king-sized dustbins constructed and filled with rubbish.

A self-appointed local historian, GB knew embarrassing secrets of almost everyone in the district, her malicious knowledge being frequently sought as reference whenever verbal hostility was needed. She readily supplied oral ammunition replete with forgotten scandals and pernicious slanders to all contenders. This was only one of the many reasons why she was very popular in her social group.

All her fellow stone breakers at Rock hill quarry hated their supervisor Fano Smith, who came fortnightly to inspect and watch the measuring of the broken stones. The women nicknamed him "Pharaoh", and among themselves exchanged endless bawdy jokes about him. They claimed that he should be treated like a pair of stockings – never passing a woman's knee. His abrasive yellow skin was likened to a hedgehog afflicted with chicken-pox, while his voice was said to sound like that of a rhinoceros suffering from nasal catarrh.

It was from GB that these stone breakers learned all the unhappy facts regarding Fano's antecedents, making him the target of the women's ridicule whenever, with assumed airs and graces, he came to supervise and pretend superiority to the stone breakers.

"None of us should say anything bad about Fano," she would advise. "He came up a long way to reach low class like us. It was not the poor man's fault that his mother died of fright when she saw his colour near white. It could happen to any of us. It was just her bad luck to be living with a man that was the colour of tar."

Assuming the attitude of defending Fano, GB produced earthly chunks of slander of Fano and his family, while her companions hammered their stones and listened to her.

To Fano, GB was excessively charming, always bowing respectfully while offering him the warmest smile to light her dark, drawn face.

Impressed by GB's manner, Fano recommended other stone breakers to follow

GB's example of politeness and good breeding. GB would give a clandestine wink of the eye to her colleagues on these occasions when Fano was not looking at her.

As an unofficial midwife of the slums, GB suffered loss of fees due to Fano's promiscuity and irresponsibility. Because he was her supervisor, she received no fees for delivering babies fathered by him, and knowing her operation to be illegal, she could not make loud claims for payment. Because Fano was in her debt many times over, she hated him. However, she flattered him although everyone but himself knew she was insincere. To her co-workers she expressed her diplomatic policy thus: "if you hand in tiger's mouth take time to draw it out ... otherwise!"

Fano was always glad to hear her speaking of the nice man he was and how handsome and important was his father. No sooner was he at a safe distance, than GB would say: "Me can't stand ugly brute. His mout' resemble crocodile with yaws. De father stole from de mother, and that's how Fano came to be born, and he just like his pa: a criminal."

(Alvin Bennet: *God the Stonebreaker*)

Questions:

1. Suggest a suitable title for the passage and give a reason for your suggestion. (02 marks)
2. Describe the character of GB as portrayed in the passage. (08 marks)
3. Describe GB's attitude towards Fano. (08 marks)
4. Discuss the techniques used in the passage. (15 marks)

SECTION III

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

BREAD AND A PENSION

It was not our duty to question but to guard,
maintaining order; see that none escaped
who may be required for questioning by the State.
The price was bread and a pension and not a hard
life on the whole. Some even scraped
enough on the side to build up a fairish estate

for the day of retirement. I never could
understand the complaints of the restless ones
who found the hours long, time dragging;
it always does. The old hands knew how good
the guardroom fire could be, the guns
gleaming against the wall and the nagging
wind like a wife – outside. There were cards
for such occasions and good companions

who truly were more than home since they shared
one's working life without difference or hard words,
aimed at much the same thing, and shared opinions
on news they read. If they cared

much it was for the quiet life. You cannot hold
that against them, since it's roundly human
and any decent man would want it the same.
For these were decent: did as they were told,
fed prisoners, buried the dead, and, on occasion,
loaded the deathcart with those who were sent to the flames.

Louis Johnson (New Zealand)

Questions:

1. What is the subject matter of this poem? (08 marks)
2. Comment on the poet's use of;
(i) imagery. (06 marks)
(ii) symbolism. (08 marks)
3. Comment on the speaker's;
(i) attitude towards his job. (04 marks)
(ii) tone. (03 marks)
4. What lessons do you learn about human nature from this poem? (04 marks)