



THE MALAWI NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD

2024 MALAWI SCHOOL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION EXAMINATION

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

ENGLISH (M052/I, II & III)

General Comments on:

A. Quality of the paper

Paper I

The 2024 English paper 1 was not different from those in previous years. The language used was appropriate for MSCE level candidates. The multiple choice items in Section A came from various grammar components such as prepositions, register, tenses, phrasal verbs, parts of speech, order of adjectives, phrases and clauses. The same applied to the two items testing candidates' writing abilities in Section B. The items in both sections were drawn from the syllabus and they tested a wide range of skills.

Paper II

The paper was fair for MSCE level. All the items in both sections of the paper reflected the syllabus. The language used was appropriate for MSCE candidates.

Paper III

The 2024 paper was fair and comparable to the previous years' in terms of level of difficulty and skills tested. Language used in all the sections was appropriate for MSCE candidates.

B. Performance of the candidates

Paper I

Performance in the paper was mixed. While above average performance was observed in conventional secondary schools and well established private secondary schools, most candidates in Community Day Secondary schools and Open schools registered poor performance. There was no significant difference in performance between candidates from rural areas and those from urban areas.

Paper II

The overall performance in this paper was mixed. It ranged from below to above average. The majority of candidates got between twelve and twenty four marks. Few candidates managed to get above thirty marks. The overall performance in 2024 was slightly below what was observed in 2023. Candidates from national secondary schools, grant-aided secondary schools, and well established private schools performed exceptionally well as compared to those from Community Day Secondary schools. Performance in Community Day Secondary schools, District day secondary schools and some less established private secondary schools was not impressive. It was also observed that performance by Open Distance candidates was below average. This was probably because the students had limited interaction with their teachers. In addition, they did not have access to the required learning materials.

Paper III

The performance was mixed, with candidates in some schools scoring high marks while the majority still struggled. In general, candidates from national secondary schools, grant aided, district boarding secondary schools and well established private schools performed far much better than those from Community Day secondary schools. Candidates from Open and Distance Learning struggled a great deal.

C. Performance of Candidates on Individual Questions

PAPER I

Section A (Multiple Choice)

From Question 1 – 30, candidates were asked to choose the answer (**A, B, C or D**) that best completed the sentence.

Question 1 – 9: Prepositions

In the section, candidates were asked to choose the preposition that best completed each of the given sentences. Most candidates had difficulties to pick the right prepositions. For example, in Question 9, *The organisers warned the athletes ----- breaching the rules of the new competition.* Most of those that failed opted for B (for). The correct response was D (against). Correct responses for the rest of the items were as follows: 1 A (by), 2 C (in), 3 A (in), 4 A (with), 5 B (from), 6 C (from), 7 A (opposite) and 8 D (in).

Question 10 – 12 Registers

In the section, candidates were assessed on their knowledge and use of appropriate terminology. Most candidates found the section difficult. It was noted that most of their responses were a result of ‘guess work’. For example, in Question 10, *The referee ____ a penalty against the visiting team after consulting the assistant referee.* Most candidates who failed the item were torn between option A (gave) and D (offered). The correct response was B (awarded). The correct answers for the rest of the questions were as follows: 11 A (witnessed) and 12 C (earning).

Question 13 – 15: Tenses

Candidates were asked to demonstrate their knowledge and use of tenses. Most candidates’ performance in the section was good. A few, however, had challenges with question 13. *After the meal, I _____ a glass of ‘thobwa’.* Options B (will be having) and D (would have) attracted some candidates. However, the correct option was A (will have). The rest of the responses were as follows: 14 C (will) and 15 D (will go).

Question 16 -18: Phrasal Verbs

Candidates were assessed on their knowledge of phrasal verbs. It was observed that performance was below average. The most challenging item in the section was number 17, *If she doesn’t ____ at work, she will make herself ill.* Much as A (ease down) was tempting to most candidates, the correct response was D (ease off). It all boils down to how much candidates interact with the English language. **Ease off** means to reduce in intensity. The rest of the responses were as follows: 16 C (went off) and 18 B (took up).

Question 19 – 22: Parts of Speech

Candidates were tested on their knowledge of parts of speech. Most candidates gave correct responses to all the items except for number 21. In the item, *The task that Chifundo does is amazingly easy if one takes into consideration his experience,* some candidates opted for C (adjective). However, the ‘ly’ in the sentence gave it away. Therefore, the correct option was A (adverb). The rest of the responses were as follows: 19 D (adjective), 20 A (preposition) and 22 B (conjunction).

Question 23 – 26: Order of Adjectives

In the items, candidates were assessed on their knowledge of order of adjectives in a sentence. Performance was above average. It appeared that the directions contained in the 2023 Chief Examiner's report on how to prepare students in as far order of adjectives is concerned paid off. Once again, the generally accepted and correct order of adjectives is DOSASCOM. Thus, **D**eterminer being followed by **O**pinion, **S**ize, **A**ge, **S**hape, **C**olour, **O**origin and **M**aterial. Using this 'formula', for example, in question 25, *Chimwemwe has bought a _____ jersey.* the correct response is A (beautiful tight Dutch). A few candidates that failed the item opted for C (tight Dutch beautiful). The rest of the responses were as follows: 23 A (brilliant practising local), 24 D (large round blue plastic) and 26 D (huge tall old green).

Question 27 – 30: Phrases and Clauses

The items assessed candidates' knowledge on phrases and clauses. Performance was very good. A few candidates, however, had challenges with question 27, *What excited the coach most was how he scored the second goal.* The correct option was D (noun clause, complement of 'was'). Those that failed opted for B (noun clause, subject of 'was'). The rest of the responses were as follows: 28 D (adjective clause, qualifying 'tobacco'), 29 B (noun clause, subject of 'will remain') and 30 A (adverb clause, modifying 'were allowed').

Section B (Composition)

Question 31

The question demanded a candidate to imagine that the minister of Trade and Industry had planned to visit their area where most youth are jobless and do not have any access to loans to start business activities. As a concerned member of the area, the candidate was asked to write a speech to be delivered on the occasion.

The question was more popular than question 32. Most candidates' responses demonstrated that they had understood the demands of the question consequently, they got good marks. However, some candidates lost marks because they presented their answer as a report. Further to that, others lost marks because they paid more attention to one part of the question than the other. For example, some concentrated more on the

joblessness of the youth at the expense of matters of accessing business loans and vice versa. It should be made clear that both aspects of the question were equally weighted.

Common mistakes in Question 31 were:

- a. starting a speech with a report lay out
- b. starting a speech as an essay - **In this speech, I will write about or The speech below will**
- c. wrong register
 - “loss of money “ for “lack of money”
 - “luck of money” for “lack of money”
 - “shortage of loans” for “scarcity of loans”
 - “owner” for “honour”
- d. spelling errors
 - “reconise” for “recognise”
 - “imformed” for “informed”
 - “ladys” for “ladies”
 - “gentolomen” or “gentlement” for “gentlemen”
 - “geust” for “guest”
 - “susied” for “suicide”
 - “in additional” for “in addition”
 - “fevermore” for “furthermore”
- e. wrong construction(s)
 - “jobless” for “joblessness”
 - “themselves” for “themselves”
- f. miscellaneous
 - (i) Double subjects – *Many youths they -----*
 - (ii) Writing a valediction at the end of a speech
 - (iii) Unjustifiable claims – *Many youths are dying because of joblessness*

Question 32

The question demanded that a candidate write an original story entitled ‘The betrayal’. The candidate was expected to imagine a situation in which a character gets framed into trouble by his or her own trusted friend(s), family or society. The story was supposed to contain a vivid setting, characters, plot, conflict, climax and resolution.

The question came second in terms of popularity although a significant increase was observed in the year under consideration. The candidates that properly understood the demands of the question got very good marks. However, some misunderstood it as they ended up narrating the story of how Judas betrayed Jesus, as recorded in the Bible. Such candidates lost a great deal of marks as they lacked originality. Yet others completely missed the gist of the question so much so that they wrote on-and-off narratives.

Common mistakes were:

- a. wrong beginnings
 - Once upon a time
 - Long time ago
 - This short story is about
- b. lack of originality
 - writing stories based on Macbeth, the Bible and other well-known sources
- c. presenting a story as a play
 - Mother:
 - Me:
 - Father:
- d. poor verb tensing

Unless otherwise, at the MSCE level, candidates can manage to present good stories using the past tense. Switching tenses leads candidates to commit other unnecessary errors.
- e. wrong spelling
 - “Ladys” for “Ladies”
 - “Betraye” for “Betrayal”

PAPER II

Section A: Note Making

a. Providing a suitable title

Candidates were asked to provide a suitable title for the passage. Candidates performed above average on the question. It was observed that most candidates knew that in most instances, a suitable title comes from the last sentence of the first paragraph and that it must be a phrase. The title was QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PERSON. This title came from the last sentence that read: *This discussion therefore looks at the qualities of a successful business person.* For candidates to do well in such a task, teachers in schools must train them in the following areas:

- that the title comes from the last sentence of the first paragraph
- the title must be a phrase
- it must be in capital letters and not underlined
- that from where the title begins, all important words must be part of the title so that the original meaning of the sentence must be retained. For example, if one removes the word *successful* from the last sentence of the paragraph, the resultant title will lose its original meaning.
- that no word is substituted in the sentence. For example, *businessman* should not substitute *business person*
- abbreviations, contractions and symbols must not be used in the title

b. Giving the main points

Candidates were asked to provide the main points from the given passage. The performance on this question was average. Most candidates had problems in coming up with main points 2 and 4 because the sentences from which the points came were long and their main points too, were long. As such, candidates wrote incomplete main points which led them to lose marks. In addition, some candidates came up with main points drawn from the last paragraph of the passage. Candidates were expected to provide four main points only. The four main points were as follows:

- willing to take moderate risks
- ability to identify and explore opportunities in the environment
- perseverance
- flexible to the demands of the of customers

In order to obtain maximum points in extracting main points from the passage, candidates must be trained in the following areas:

- the passage has four main points
- the four main points come from the first sentences of paragraphs **2, 3, 4** and **5**
- each of the main points must be phrased in small letters, numbered and underlined
- the signaling devices such as *firstly*, *secondly*, *thirdly*, *next*, and *finally* are used in the sentences which contain the main points
- abbreviations, contractions and symbols must not be used in the main points
- notes should not be made from the very last paragraph of the passage, which is normally the summary.

c. Supplying supporting points for each main point

Candidates were asked to supply supporting points for each main point. The performance was above average. Most candidates managed to come up with standard abbreviations, contractions and symbols. However, some used abbreviations, contractions and symbols that are not standard. For example, *bus* for business, *cus* for customer *u* for you and *bcoz* for because. Still, others lost marks because of using words and items for business which were not in the passage. For example, they included *mandasi* and *mangoes*. In addition, others used helping verbs such as *must* and *should* which were not available the passage.

In order for candidates to do well in supplying supporting points, teachers should drill students in the following areas:

- (i) Supporting points should be phrases extracted from each sentence starting from the second paragraph.
- (ii) If the meaning is the same in two or more sentences, there is no need for repetition
- (iii) They should use words used in the passage, not substitutes of the words in the passage.
- (iv) Supporting points should begin with an action verb.
- (v) All the points should be numbered consistently.
- (vi) They should use standard abbreviations, contractions and symbols.
- (vii) They must come up with a minimum of 16 points from the whole passage.

- (viii) They should come up with not less than 3 symbols and not less than 3 abbreviations and contractions.
- (ix) The phrases must retain the original meanings of the sentences from which they are extracted.

Question 2 (Section B: Reading Comprehension)

Candidates were asked to read a passage carefully and then answer questions based on the passage.

Question 2a

The question asked about the district in which the fire accident took place. Performance was above average. The correct answer was Mangochi. However, some lost marks because of wrong spelling. For example, some wrote **Machochi or Machongi or Mango**. Still others wrote **mangochi** with a small **m**. Further to that, others lost marks because of writing long sentences such that the longer they wrote, the more errors they committed. Therefore, teachers should advise students that responses to comprehension questions should, unless otherwise:

- be very brief.
- be properly punctuated.
- not repeat/contain any part of the question.

Question 2b

Candidates were asked to explain how the occupants of Hotel 105 knew that there was a crowd of people outside. Performance was average. The expected response was **People outside were shouting/making noise**. Those that lost marks just lifted the response from the passage without paraphrasing it. For example, some wrote **a loud shriek in the corridor of Hotel 105**.

Question 2c

Candidates were demanded to mention three things that showed that the narrator's and Moyo's families were in good terms. Much as some candidates had some idea of the correct responses, they lost marks because they just lifted the response from the passage without saying it in their own words. For example, **His family and mine had no squabbles. His wife and mine went to church trips together. Kitchen utensils from our landlord found their way into our home and vice versa. Our children played**

together. The correct response was **The women of the two homes went to church together/ They had no disagreements/ They shared kitchen utensils/ Their children played together.** Teachers must, therefore, stress to their students the following:

- A response should be paraphrased.
- If the response is a full sentence,
 - part of the question must not be repeated in the response.
 - the sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.
- If the question demands for more than one response, then the responses should always be numbered.
- Words in the responses should be correctly spelt.
- The tense in the response should correspond to the tense in the question.

Question 2d

The question demanded candidates to provide two reasons why Chipangano travelled to the village. Most candidates lifted responses from the passage. Some candidates, for example, wrote **Her mother had been sick for quite some time**, thus copying verbatim the sentence from the passage. The correct response was **to see her mother who was sick or to visit her mother who was sick or because her mother was sick.**

Question 2e

Candidates were asked to give two reasons why it was relatively easy for the narrator and Talumba to leave Blantyre for Mangochi without the knowledge of their spouses. Most candidates failed the question because they could not identify the reasons most likely because the responses were found in two separate paragraphs of the passage. The correct responses were **Tonde's wife went to the village/ Talumba's husband travelled to Lilongwe.** Those candidates that had a hint of the correct response lost marks because they failed to state the responses in their own words. For example, some wrote **A chance had presented itself on a silver platter to me when my wife told me that she had to travel to the village the next morning.**

Question 2f

Candidates were asked to give the meaning of each of the three words (i) **reminiscing** (ii) **raked** and (iii) **squabbles** as used in the passage. The performance was above average as most candidates gave correct responses. Candidates who lost marks committed some errors some of which were as follows:

- writing a long expression instead of one word
- using wrong tense

The word **reminiscing** is in the continuous tense but some candidates wrote **remembered** which is in the past.

- starting a response with “it means” instead of just going straight to the response

The expected responses were as follows:

- (i) **remembering/ thinking/ recalling**
- (ii) **went/ ran**
- (iii) **quarrels/ disagreements/ disputes**

Question 2g

Candidates were asked to explain the meaning of each of the three expressions as used in the passage (i) **figure out**, (ii) **hill to climb** and (iii) **blurted it out**. The performance in this question was below average because candidates did **not** take into consideration that:

- a response to **an expression** should be an expression and not a word.
- the response must begin with the same part of speech as that of the question. For example, in g(ii) the expression is **hill to climb**. The correct response is **problem to solve**.
- the response is a substitute of the original expression in the passage.

The correct responses were as follows:

- (i) **think of/ think about/ come up with**
- (ii) **problem to solve/ challenge to overcome**
- (iii) **explained everything/ revealed everything/ revealed the secret**

Question 2h

Candidates were demanded to describe the character of (i) the narrator and (ii) Shumba. The performance was average. Candidates who did not do well in this question did so

majorly because they used nouns instead of adjectives. For example, some wrote **responsibility** instead of **responsible** and **unfaithfulness** instead of **unfaithful**.

Some of the correct responses were:

- (i) Narrator
 - a. Promiscuous – **He sleeps with Moyo’s wife.**
 - b. Responsible – **He pays rentals in time.**
 - c. Regretful – He wishes he had gone to the village with his wife in order to avoid the shame of being caught with another man’s wife.
- (ii) Shumba
 - a. Helpful – He assists Moyo to catch his unfaithful wife.
 - b. Informative – He provides information to Moyo on the whereabouts of his wife.

Teachers must highlight to students that the character is given as an adjective and that the justification is given using the present tense.

Question 2i

Candidates were asked to explain how the narrator’s daily fitness training benefited him during the fire accident. Performance was average. Some candidates managed to come up with good responses. Others failed because of careless lifting of responses from the passage. For example, some wrote, **I jumped up and scooped Talumba in my arms** or **I pushed through the coughing bodies of people in the corridor** or **I managed to heave myself forward with a great push just enough to land outside**. Others lost marks because of poor punctuation and wrong spelling. For example, some wrote **talumba**. The correct response was: **He was strong enough to push through the people and went outside the hotel** or: **It enabled him to save Tambala**.

Question 2j

Candidates were demanded to explain, in their own words, how Mr Moyo came to know about the master plan. The performance in the question was below average. Most candidates did not provide a full response; in so doing they lost marks. For example, some wrote, **Moyo heard from Shumba**. The expected response was **Shumba overheard Tonde talking to Talumba about the plan to Mangochi and so he informed Moyo about it**.

Question 2k

The question demanded candidates to give any two reasons why shame was written all over the narrator's face. The performance was below average. The majority could not identify the correct response from the passage. As such, most responses were a result of guess work. For example, some wrote, **Shumba killed Moyo's wife and Talumba died**. Others also lost marks because of using wrong tenses. For example, they wrote **caught or caughted**. Candidates were expected to state that **Shumba had been caught with another man's wife**.

Question 2l

Candidates were demanded to provide a suitable title for the passage. The performance was below average. Most candidates provided wrong titles such as **Secret affairs, Fire scandal, Betrayal etcetera**. Furthermore, others came up with idiomatic expressions such as **Cheating does not pay, All that glitters is not gold and There is no secret under the sun**. Expected responses included **Tonde, the promiscuous tenant/ Tonde, the unfaithful man/ Tonde, the ungrateful man/ Tonde's and Talumba's unfaithfulness**.

For candidates to come up with a good title, teachers must train students to always remember that a good title should:

1. be a phrase.
2. have the name of the main character.
3. be in small letters.

Question 2m

Candidates were asked to summarise the passage in their own words. Performance was below average as most candidates made a lot of mistakes. Some of them were as follows:

- lifting portions from the passage without rewording them
- using first personal pronouns such **I, we**; and adjectives from first personal pronouns such as **our** and **my** in the summary
- failing to include the main character of the passage
- using wrong register e.g. **doing rent** instead of **renting** and **rent person** instead of **tenant**
- interchanging the roles of characters in the passage, e.g. **Shumba was with Talumba in the hotel**

- starting a summary with **Long time ago** and **Once upon a time...**
- writing a summary of more than 100 words
- writing a summary in more than one paragraph
- mixing tenses such as the past and the present
- using wrong punctuation and wrong spellings

For candidates to do well in summary, they should be prepared to:

- identify points in the passage that are relevant to the title
- choose six points
- write the six chosen points in prose
 - in one paragraph
 - the points must not be **lifted** from the passage
 - in one tense (present or past)
 - using conjunctions to connect the points so that they flow properly and chronologically
- Names in the passage must appear in the summary. If the passage is written in the first person point of view, the candidate must use the name of the main character that is mentioned in the passage. Use of the word **narrator** as a main character causes a candidate to lose marks.

PAPER III

Section A

Question 1: Poetry - DEAD LOSS

In general, the question was poorly done by most candidates as compared to a similar question in 2023. Thus, most candidates failed to demonstrate knowledge of poetic devices and analytical skills. The majority failed to comprehend the poem. As a result, they misunderstood individual questions. The candidates' feedback portrayed lack of poetic skills. Questions a, b, d (i) and (ii) proved difficult for those who failed to understand the poem, and failed to apply appropriate poetic devices, meanings of expressions and analysis in general. More to that, it exposed some shortfalls in the way literature is taught in schools and massive reliance on memorisation of meanings of poetic devices with little understanding. Candidates lacked critical thinking skills in analyzing poems. It has also been revealed that in most schools there is less teaching of poetry as compared to the novel and drama.

Question 1 a

Candidates were asked to identify the **persona** in the poem. The performance was below average. This was so because the majority failed to understand the poem and focused mainly on characters mentioned in the poem such as barman and ‘productive youth’. This was noticed mainly among many external candidates and internal candidates from Community Day Secondary schools. Much as others failed, some candidates did very well. The correct response to the question was **an old watchman or a security officer**

Question 1 b

Candidates were asked say what was ironic about the expression, “enjoyment, a death trap sought by the youth ...” The question was poorly done by the majority of candidates. The question had two parts which contradicted each other thus ‘enjoyment’ and ‘death trap’. Some candidates were only giving one part; for example, explaining what enjoyment is all about without bridging the two parts. This exposed the fact that candidates had difficulties in understanding the meaning of the word ‘ironic’. The expected answer was **enjoyment is something that is associated with happiness and good life yet in this case it is the source of gloom and death.**

Question 1 c

In the question candidates were asked to identify any one of the following poetic devices in the poem: (i) onomatopoeia and (ii) imagery. Performance was above average. Since ‘imagery’ is an umbrella term to many poetic devices such as simile, metaphor and other expressions, there was a wide range of answers. As such, a majority of candidates did well. The expected answers for (i) were **vroom! Squashed! Crash!** Expected answers for (ii) were **‘trap, an old grey-haired watched.**

Question 1 d

Candidates were asked to explain the meaning of the expressions “...recklessly excused for youthfulness” and “...dead loss”. The majority of candidates did not do well. Their responses were based on literal meanings of the expressions. For example, some candidates wrote **careless death of the youth** in 1d (i) and in 1d (ii) they wrote **death of a person**. This showed that the candidates were not exposed to literature vocabulary that adds to its beauty. The expected response to “...recklessly excused for youthfulness” was **careless behaviour which people indulge in with the excuse that they are young;** and “dead loss”, among others, means **a person or thing that is completely useless.**

Question 1 e

Candidates were asked to describe any two themes portrayed in the poem. Generally, performance was good. It reflected that candidates were able to differentiate between a theme and a character in terms of parts of speech. The majority of candidates managed to come up with correct themes which included: **carelessness, death, recklessness** etcetera. Since the demand of the question was a description of the themes, it had two parts. Thus, mentioning a correct theme. The other mark was for description. So others failed to come up with proper description of the themes.

Question 1 f

The question demanded candidates to describe the character of the persona in the poem. Most candidates were able to come up with a correct description. The correct responses included:

Observant – He watches the careless behaviour of the young man which leads to his death

Meditative– He thinks deeply about the behaviour of the youth. Other responses included; **dutiful, foresighted, sympathetic** etc.

Question 2: Short Story – MY RUN TO FREEDOM

Generally, performance on the short story question was below average just like the case was in question 1. Such a performance can be ascribed to various reasons which include teachers failing to seriously teach short stories. Since the stories do not come from a prescribed book, teachers feel like not teaching. This jeopardises the performance of candidates.

Question 2a

Candidates were asked to describe the geographical setting of the story. Performance was very good. Most of those that lost marks did so due to wrong spelling. The correct response was

Urban area - justification was based on presence of taxis and buses which usually operate in town or urban areas. Also the presence of government offices such as the Education Division offices among others shows that the setting was urban.

Question 2 b (i) and (ii)

Candidates were asked to state the point of view in which the story was told and then to justify their answer. Most candidates came up with correct answers for part (i). Those that failed had difficulties to state “first person point of view” or ‘first person narrative’. They wrote “first personal point of view” or “first point of view” or ‘first person pronoun’. In literature these are not correct responses. However, they had challenges with part (ii) where they were asked to justify their answer. Most of them did not get it right because they simply stated **the use of pronoun ‘I’** in the story as a justification for first person point of view. This is not true because sometimes a story can contain a dialogue while presented in third person point of view. So, candidates were expected to justify their case by stating that **the narrator is explaining/unveiling his own experience in the story.**

Question 2 c

This question demanded candidates to describe one major conflict that the main character faces in the story. Performance was below average because some failed even to identify who the main character was. For example, they mistook the Education Division Manager to be the main character. Although others were able to identify Mondokwa as the main character, they still lost some marks for failing to link him to the conflict in the story. As such, they were only coming up with one side and failing to show the conflict. Correct responses to the question included:

He borrows money but does not want to pay back/ He wants to escape from his debtors but he ends up being caught by the Education Division Manager.

Question 2 d

The question demanded candidates to describe the character of Mondokwa as portrayed in the story. Performance was above average since questions of character analysis are common in literature. Most candidates, therefore, did not find problems in identifying the character(s) and their descriptions. However, some still had challenges of writing characters as nouns instead of adjectives. For example, they wrote **crookedness** instead of **crooked**. Other responses to the question included **untrustworthy/crooked/unreliable because he borrows money from banks and people but defaults the loans / irresponsible because he impregnates school girls.**

Question 2 e

In the question candidates were asked to identify the figure of speech portrayed by the sentence, “the revelations came to me like a nuclear bomb”. This was another literature application question and only those that had knowledge of figures of speech in literature managed to do well. Performance was below average. Some of the challenges candidates had on the question included wrong spelling on simile as majority wrote smile. While some gave ‘allusion’ as one of the possible answers possibly because of the word ‘revelation’, others gave parts of speech e.g. noun, adjective etc. Worse still, a few others wrote numbers e.g. 100, 50 etc because of the phrase figure of speech. The expected response included **simile or hyperbole**.

Question 2 f

In the item, candidates were asked to justify how the title was ironic to the happenings in the story. This was a test on candidates’ critical thinking as they were expected to retrieve information on literary elements and apply it to the overall plot of the story. In the first place, a candidate had to understand what an irony was before justifying it. Performance was poor. Most candidates that attempted the question just wrote the title of the story **My run to freedom** without showing how ironic it is. The correct response included:

The title assumes that Mondokwa is free from his debtors after he ran away but he is not free at all. The EDM is processing his interdiction and banks have a warrant of arrest.

Question 2 g

Candidates were demanded to describe any two themes the story portrayed. Performance was above average. The expected responses were **rookedness/irresponsibility/untrustworthiness – when he borrows money from banks and people without paying back. He is constantly hiding away from his debtors so that he should not pay back their money**. The candidates who failed did so because they presented adjectives as themes. For example, they wrote **irresponsible** instead of irresponsibility. Furthermore, others lost marks because they failed to justify their themes. Teachers must continue training students on theme identification and their part of speech which must be a noun and not an adjective.

Section B: Essays

THE PEARL BY JOHN STEINBECK

Question 3 a

Candidates were asked to discuss eight points from the book, “The Pearl” that show how violence is portrayed as one of the major themes. It was not a popular question. However, most of those who attempted it performed very well. The question was so clear that candidates whose literature teachers had time to drill them on the concepts of the book did not have challenges. However, some candidates failed because they did not fully understand the meaning of the word ‘violence’. Those who missed it gave responses related to ‘violation of rights’ which was off point.

Candidates were expected to discuss their essay around the following points:

- Kino beating Juana
- Kino furiously hitting the doctor’s gate
- Kino crushing the scorpion to pieces
- Kino stabbing the thief to death
- Coyotitto being shot dead
- Destruction of Kino’s house
- Destruction of Kino’s canoe
- Trackers chasing Kino
- Kino killing the trackers
- Kino killing the robbers
- Kino being attacked by robbers/thieves at his house
- Kino being attacked at the sea

The points were supposed to be written in eight separate paragraphs. A candidate had to raise a point then clearly explain it. Candidates who simply presented points without illustrating them lost marks.

Question 3 b (i) and (ii)

The question demanded candidates to discuss, using four points, the character of (i) the pearl buyers and (ii) the priest. It was a more popular question compared to **3a**. However, most candidates who attempted it performed poorly. The commonest challenging issue was poor presentation of points and description of a character as a theme. For example, **the pearl buyers are deceit instead of deceitful or the priest is a hypocrite instead of hypocritical.**

Candidates were expected to discuss their essays around the following points:

(i) The pearl buyers

- untrustworthy – offering lower price on a pearl which was valuable
- cunning – connive in order to cheat Kino on the price of the pearl
- exploitative – taking Kino's status to cheat him on the price offered
- organised – organised their market before hand
- calculative – had come up with a good strategy in order to deceive Kino
- deceitful – cheating Kino on the price
- regretful – after they had offered lower price
- hopeful – great expectations to get rich after cheating Kino on his pearl
- disillusioned – after having great expectations in the pearl then later failed to materialise etc.

(ii) The priest

- religious – reminds Kino to pay his tithe
- greedy – reminds Kino to offer to God while in truth he wants to benefit from it
- hypocritical – pretends to visit Kino's house as a God fearing person yet he wants to benefit from the pearl
- opportunistic – takes advantage on Kino's ignorance in order to benefit by asking him to pay tithe
- materialistic – wants to benefit from the pearl for himself by asking Kino to conduct a church wedding
- hopeful – has great expectations to benefit from the pearl after Kino sells it

Question 4

MACBETH BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Question 4 a

Candidates were asked to discuss how the theme of evil is portrayed in the book. The question was less popular as compared to **4b**. Nonetheless, the majority of those that attempted it performed very well. Performance was above average. The only challenge that candidates faced in the question was misunderstanding of the word “**evil**”. Further to that, others lost marks because they presented sketchy points without qualifying them.

The expected responses included:

- Macbeth kills his relative, King Duncan
- Macbeth kills his close friend, Banquo
- Macbeth sends soldiers to kill Macduff’s family
- Lady Macbeth calls on evil spirits to ‘unsex’ her so that she can gather courage to kill King Duncan
- The former Thane of Cawdor betrays King Duncan
- The witches plant evil in Macbeth through which Scotland is brought to destruction
- The witches share their evil experience after coming back from their unnatural world where they inflict death upon people’s livestock
- Macbeth kills the Chamberlains
- Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to kill King Duncan
- The witches plan to punish the sailor
- Macdonwald becomes a rebel

Question 4 b

Candidates were asked to discuss, using four points, the character of (i) Banquo (ii) Witches. Performance was not impressive. Most candidates presented wrong adjectives. Others presented the characters as nouns. Yet, others lost marks because they gave sketchy answers. They failed to justify them. Some of the expected responses were:

(i) Banquo

- ambitious –envisions himself as a father to many kings
- loyal – works and supports the king
- courageous – joins Macbeth in the fight against rebels e.g. Macdonwald
- naïve – falls under Macbeth’s trap and gets killed
- superstitious – believe in witches’ prophecies
- inquisitive/ curious – eager to know what would happen to him after witches’ prophecy to Macbeth
- suspicious – suspects Macbeth over the death of King Duncan

(ii) The Witches

- deceitful – deceive Macbeth that he would not be killed by anyone born of a woman
- prophetic – tell Macbeth that he would be king of Scotland
- evil – plan to bring chaos in Scotland
- defiant – do not meet Hecate before meeting Macbeth
- deceptive – do not tell Macbeth the truth about interpretation of their prophecies
- vengeful – punish the sailor’s wife
- cooperative – always do their things in unison

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON ESSAYS

Some candidates lost marks in essays because of the following reasons:

a. failure to understand the demands of questions

Some candidates supposed that **violence** in question 4a meant **violation**.

b. writing more points than required

c. alternating points especially in a multiple essay question

This made marking very difficult. Candidates should be advised to start writing all points for one character or theme before moving to the next.

d. failure to follow instructions

- Questions **3a** and **4a** were loaded essays. They required 8 points written in 8 paragraphs with clear presentation of points and explanations to attract two marks for each point. The other four marks were for expression i.e. flow of language, style and mechanical errors. Questions **3b** and **4b** were multiple essays. As such, each part required 4 points written in 4 paragraphs.

Additionally, parts i and ii for each question were separate and therefore, required different answers. Some candidates were answering both questions from one book and disregarded the other. For example, they answered both questions on **The Pearl** and none on Macbeth.

e. Poor presentation of answers

- Some candidates did not present their points in paragraphs. Such essays were difficult to follow because one could not tell where a point started and ended.
- Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions and conclusions. The introduction should simply highlight what a candidate is answering. For example; in **3 a**: *In the book, “The Pearl”, there are many themes displayed. This essay discusses the theme of violence.*---- or **4 b**: *In the book “Macbeth”, there are many characters acting in different roles. This essay discusses the following characters:*

(i) *Banquo -----Firstly, he is courageous. When the rebel Macdonwald with his Norwegian army invades Scotland, Banquo together with his fellow generals such as Macbeth joins to fight against this rebel leader to defend their country and King Duncan. They managed to win the battle as Macdonwald is executed by the Scottish Army. Based on what he did together with others proves that Banquo is courageous.*

- When developing a paragraph in an essay question, candidates must try to use the acronym

PEEE.

Presentation of a point in sentence form

Explanation of the point clearly and wherever necessary they must give an

Example. Finally they must give

Evaluation of the whole paragraph.

D. Recommendations to:

(i) Schools

- should teach all written genres of literature which include: poetry, short story, novel and play. Experience has shown that candidates do not do well mainly in Poetry.
- when teaching literature, teachers must try as much as possible, to teach language as well so that students present try to present their answers precisely.

(ii) Ministry of Education

- Teachers who have been picked from primary school to teach in CDSSs should undergo formal training in different colleges so that they can become competent teachers.
- deploy trained teachers even to very remote areas so that students in urban areas and very remote areas have access to teachers of the same quality.