

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO COMPOSITION WRITING

1. Introduction

There are five types of compositions examined at MSCE level. These are: letter, report, speech, short story and factual essay. There are some specific rules on how to write each of the first four types of compositions. These are the guiding principles that examiners use to come up with marking schemes. Most of these rules have not been made available to the candidates and teachers of English. This has resulted in most candidates and teachers alike to just speculate on what the candidate is expected to do in the examinations. It is therefore the aim of this book to try and bridge that gap which exists between the examiner on one hand and the candidate and the teacher on the other.

Unlike other books of this nature, this book is not just a compendium of questions and model answers, but also an explanation of what the examiners require in each situation. It also gives detailed skills in handling of each aspect of composition writing.

2. Understanding a Composition Question

A typical MSCE composition question contains three sections: background information, the instruction and guiding parts. (Let it be understood that the terms I am using are just for

purposes of facilitating understanding of the subject matter.) It is not every question that comprises all of these parts. But for purposes of our discussion, let us look at each one of them.

2.1. Background information

Background information to a question gives the candidate information regarding setting of the question, the point of view from which the composition will be written and other information. In the question below, the words in italics are just giving background information – that is, the point of view. The composition will be written from the point of view of a form four student.

You are a form four student. Write a speech to be read at the graduation party. In the speech, outline what you have liked most during your four year stay at the school. In addition, suggest what you feel ought to be done in order to improve the welfare of students at the school.

2.1.1. Further Examples

1. *Imagine your area has been affected by drought.* Describe the effects of the drought on the welfare of the people and livestock. Suggest what the people should do to lessen the effects of future droughts.
2. *You recently went home and discovered that the local bus company had cancelled the only bus service to your home area. Among other things, the bus company cited the poor condition of the road and lack of patronage as reasons for canceling the bus service.* Write a letter to the bus company asking it to re-introduce the bus service.

Mention the travel difficulties people in your home area are facing.

Practice Exercise 1

Identify background information in the questions below.

1. Imagine you are the Officer-in-Charge of Dowa Police Station and you have been invited to sensitize people on the issue of gender-based violence. Prepare a speech explaining what gender based violence is all about; citing real life examples. You should also suggest ways how you think the problem can come to an end.
2. Write a letter to the District Youth Officer of your district complaining about the bad practice of child-trafficking which has become so rampant in your area. You may include the following:
 - a. why child trafficking is a human rights issue (violation);
 - b. effects of child-trafficking on the victims;
 - c. suggested solutions.

2.2. The Instruction

The **instruction** is the part of a question that tells the candidate two most important things:

- which of the five types of compositions outlined above is the question all about;
- what the candidate is expected to do in the response.

Most questions on factual compositions have an explicit instruction part. However, there are some which do not show this part clearly. A good example is the question below.

Responding to HIV and AIDS: How should the young people be involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS?

Questions like the one above usually require candidates to write a factual essay. The title and the introductory sentence should capture the main theme of the question as much as possible.

Some questions, however, have a clear instruction part.

Let us consider the question below.

You recently went home and discovered that the local bus company had cancelled the only bus service to your home area. Among other things, the bus company cited the poor condition of the road and lack of patronage as reasons for canceling the bus service. *Write a letter to the bus company asking it to re-introduce the bus service.* Mention the travel difficulties people in your home area are facing.

In the example above, the sentence in italics is the instruction part of the question. Primarily, it is saying “*Write a letter...*”. As simple as this may seem, most candidates miss out on this one. In short, you are required to “*write a LETTER*” and NOT a speech or a report.

The last portion of the sentence reads “...*asking it to re-introduce the bus service*”. This portion of the sentence, usually beginning with an action verb (explaining, discussing, informing, applying, etc) helps us to do two things:

- to come up with a good title for our composition;
- to come up with a good topical sentence or paragraph.

Practice Exercise 2

In the questions in Practice Exercise 1 above, identify the instruction part of each of the questions.

2.2.1. Coming Up with a Title

A good title captures what the action verb described above is telling you to do. One way of coming up with such a title is by doing the following:

- change the action verb into a noun;
- finish the title with the rest of the words in the sentence changed into appropriate forms.

Let us consider the following for example.

You recently went home and discovered that the local bus company had cancelled the only bus service to your home area. Among other things, the bus company cited the poor condition of the road and lack of patronage as reasons for canceling the bus service. *Write a letter to the bus company asking it to re-introduce the bus service.* Mention the travel difficulties people in your home area are facing.

In the above question, change the word *ASKING* into a noun *REQUEST*. The whole title would then be "REQUEST FOR THE RE-INTRODUCTON OF A BUS SERVICE".

If the question is not structured as the one above, it becomes more challenging to come up with a good title. The best way to do it is to ask yourself the question "*what will the composition be all about?*" The response to this question which may be a single word or phrase can pass for a title. For example, it may be "*Conflict*". You may need to qualify this word in order to make

the title more specific. This would bring up such phrases as “*Conflict in a family*”.

Let us consider the question below.

Write about your memorable day in life.

In the above question, the response to the question “*what will the composition be all about?*” can be ***The Memorable Day***. This can pass for a good title. But if there is need to qualify it further, ask yourself the question “*What memorable day?*”. In response to this, the title ***The Memorable Day in My Life*** will result.

Practice Exercise 3

Generate suitable titles from the following questions. In the first two questions, the action verb has been highlighted in bold and italics. In the last two, you are required to identify the action verb yourself.

1. Write a letter to the producer of “Literary Corner” radio programme. ***describing*** three good cultural practices that can best be promoted by literature.
2. Imagine your area has been affected highly by HIV/AIDS. ***Describe*** the effects of the pandemic on the welfare of the people.
3. Responding to HIV and AIDS: How should young people fight against HIV and AIDS.

2.2.2. Coming up with introductory sentences

There are so many ways of beginning a composition. The beginning usually determines the focus of the body. Therefore

when you miss direction at the beginning, then the whole composition becomes OFF POINT (see section 4.2 below). As indicated in **Section 2.2** above, the action verb in the **Instruction** portion of the question gives the composition direction. As such, to capture a good beginning, there is need to focus on this action verb. In a response to Question 1 of Practice Exercise 3 above, for example, one would start with:

I would like to describe three good cultural practices that can best be promoted by literature ...

OR

I am writing to describe three good cultural practices that can best be promoted by literature.

Practice Exercise 4

Construct introductory sentences for questions 2 and 3 of Exercise 3 above.

2.3. The Guiding Part

The guiding part is available only in guided questions (see section 2.3.2). This portion spells out the areas that have to be included in the composition. To understand this, let us compare a guided and a non-guided question. A **guided question** is a kind of question that spells out what a candidate is supposed to include in his or her response to the question. A non guided question does not include such information.

2.3.1. A Guided Question

A guided question is probably the easiest to respond to. The candidate does not need to brainstorm points to include in the

response. All that is needed is to expound on the points given. Though the question may sometimes be phrased in such a way that it gives room for the candidate to choose whether or not to include the points spelt out, the candidate, in principle, does not have that choice. He or she must work on the given points first.

2.3.2. An example of a guided question

You are a form four student. Write a speech to be read at the graduation ceremony. *In the speech, outline what you think are the benefits of cooperation between students and teachers at school. In addition, suggest what you feel ought to be done in order to improve the welfare of students at the school.*

The italicized part of the question is giving specific areas where a candidate is supposed to focus on.

As already indicated above, in response to guided questions, candidates are supposed first to write on what has been spelt out for them. For example, in the above question, the candidate is supposed to write on:

- *what you think are the benefits of cooperation between students and teachers at school;*
AND
- *what you feel ought to be done in order to improve the welfare of students at the school.*

After finishing with the given points, a candidate can add other points that are relevant to the topic.

2.3.3. A Common Mistake

Other questions end their lists of guiding points with ...*any other*

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relevant points.... In such cases, most responses usually include ...any other relevant points... as the beginning of a paragraph on this. Such a beginning leads into complications in sentence construction. It is, therefore, advisable that the candidate should just go straight to the point without including ...any other relevant points are... at the beginning.

2.3.4. Non Guided Question

A non-guided question is open ended. A candidate is supposed to brainstorm ideas and come up with his or her own points. In such questions it is very important to plan.

2.3.5. An example of a Non-Guided Question

You are the Chairperson of AIDS TOTO club in your school and you would like to organise your friends to go for voluntary counseling and testing at the nearest health centre. Prepare a speech that you would deliver to the club members on the importance of Voluntary Counseling and Testing.

3. General Rules in Composition Writing

There are several rules that have to be followed when writing compositions in MSCE examinations. Some of these rules are specific as already indicated above while some apply to all types of compositions. The table below outlines the latter.

RULE	WRONG	RIGHT
1. Do not use contractions except in speech or direct quotations.	Can't Don't Won't Aren't Shan't	Cannot Do not Will not Are not Shall not
2. Do not use abbreviations, acronyms or short forms.	Sch. P.O. P/B Sec. 11pm	School Post Office Private Bag Secondary Eleven o'clock in the evening
3. Do not use American spellings.	Program Organized Gas	Programme Organised Petrol
4. Do not use colloquial expressions or slang.	Dad Guy Kid Marijuana I gonna do it	Father Gentleman Child Indian hemp I will do it
5. Do not use proverbial or idiomatic expressions	If you live in a glass house don't throw stones.	Be careful with what you do because it may have negative implications on yourself.
	What comes does not beat a drum.	It is not possible to know what is coming in future.
6. Do not begin a sentence with "because, so, with, and"	Because he loves me, I will marry him.	I will marry him because he loves me.

	And this is what happened.	This is what happened.
7. All numbers from ONE to NINTY-NINE must be written in words. Those from 100 onwards can be written in digits.	20 years old. Standard 6. Take 16 bolts in total. Limbe is 2 miles from home.	twenty years old Standard six. Take sixteen bolts in total. Limbe is two miles from home.
8. Do not exaggerate facts. Be realistic, make believe.	I fired 150,000,000 bricks.	I fired 100,000 bricks.
	The man weighed 1500 kilograms.	The man weighed seventy kilograms.
9. Use appropriate words for all situations.	He caught flu. He contracted AIDS.	He contracted flu. He developed AIDS.

Other points to note

- ◆ A composition should have at least three points which are well expounded.
- ◆ It is advisable to plan but do not put your plan inside the composition. Cross out the plan after use.
- ◆ Use simple and straight forward language.

4. Scoring a Composition

It is very important for teachers and candidates alike to know how a composition is scored. This helps both teachers and candidates to take the necessary precautions against common

problems and mistakes.

4.1. Categories of Compositions

First, compositions are categorised into two: a full length composition and a short composition. A full length composition is the one which has a **BODY** of 350 words or more. A short composition has less than 350 words. It is very important to determine the category in which a composition falls because there is a very heavy penalty that is imposed on those compositions that are short. If one is not sure, it is important to count word for word.

The second question to consider when scoring a composition is whether or not it is consistently responding to the question. In this case, a composition can be ON, ON/OFF or OFF. A composition which is consistently responding to a question is rated ON. For examples, see model answers below.

4.2. ON/OFF and OFF Compositions

ON/OFF compositions are those that have some content which is not in line with the question being answered. OFF compositions, on the other hand, are those compositions which have missed the question completely.

In most cases, candidates include irrelevant information in the composition because of failure to expound the points. They want to reach the target number of words but they have nothing to write. See the **worked example** below.

4.3. Formulas for Scoring a Composition

4.3.1. Letter and Report

Category	Layout (Marks)	Mechanical Accuracy (Marks)	Content Marks (when mechanical accuracy is ZERO)	Content Marks (when mechanical accuracy is ONE or more)
Full Length	5	10	3 – 14	12 – 20
Full Length ON/OFF	5	10	2 – 10	10 – 12
Short	5	5	2 – 10	10 – 12
Short ON/OFF	5	5	1 – 7	5 – 8
OFF	5	5	1 – 7	5 – 8

4.3.2. Other compositions

Category	Mechanical Accuracy (Marks)	Content Marks (when mechanical accuracy is ZERO)	Content Marks (when mechanical accuracy is ONE or more)
Full Length	10	3 – 16	12 – 20
Full Length ON/OFF	10	2 – 12	10 – 14
Short	5	2 – 12	10 – 14
Short ON/OFF	5	1 – 8	5 – 10
OFF	5	1 – 8	5 – 10

Note that anyone who transposes any of the elements of the layout loses marks for both the elements.

4.4. Markings Used in Grading a Composition

There are several markings that can be used to indicate errors in a composition. Below is a sample that is mostly used at national examination marking.

A wavy line is drawn under text that does not make sense. If the part that does not make sense runs for a few lines, draw a vertical wavy line in the margin along the text.



A ring is drawn around a word for all spelling and semantic errors



These symbols indicate where a word, a letter or punctuation is missing



Underline every repeated mistake. A repeated mistake should not be counted again.



This is written in the margins of the text that is irrelevant to the question.



4.5.

A worked example

Abbreviations are not allowed

Kakhome (FP) School,

Post Office Box 2,

No capitalisation in the address

KAWAMBA

✓ 13th June, 2007

The Wildlife Officer ✓
 Kasungu District Assembly,
 Post Office Box 1,
 Kasungu.

A full stop
is missing
here

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is not allowed. Use either 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' and not both.

IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVING WILDLIFE

Spelling and
other
grammatical
errors are
encircled

This part
is
relevant.
Indicate
in the
margin
writing

I would like to conversat with you on the above mentioned heading.
 Before I come to that, I would like to remind you what I am.

I am a man aged fourty, I did my primary school from 1975. I
 have done a lot in my life. I was once a primary school teacher
 'Off' but I stopped working because I wanted to assist people in my
 area in development.

This part
does not
make
sense.
Delete this

by
underlining
it with a
avy line

Now, I want to discuss with you the importance of wildlife.
 Wildlife is/has benefited a lot to our lives and to the entire
 nation in the following ways; wildlife has brought an increase
 in foreign exchange as visitors/tourist come from far.

And lastly, if wildlife is not conserved, the nation losse foreign
 exchange

A repeated
mistake:
Underline it
with a
straight line.

Yours faithfully

Yonamu Phiri

4.6. Formula presentation

- State the category of the composition first.
- Indicate marks for layout.
- In brackets indicate marks of mechanical accuracy minus errors at the rate of half a mark per mistake. If a mistake has been repeated do not count it again.
- Add content mark given.

The formula presented below is for the worked example above

$$\underbrace{\text{Short, ON/OFF}}_{\text{Category of composition}} \quad \underbrace{4}_{\text{Marks for layout}} + \underbrace{(5 - 5)}_{\text{Marks for mechanical accuracy minus errors}} + \underbrace{6}_{\text{Content marks}} - \underbrace{10/40}_{\text{TOTAL}}$$

CHAPTER 2

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LETTER WRITING

1. Introduction

Letter writing is the most common type of questions at MSCE level. In letter writing, students are required to write a letter on different subjects.

There are two types of letters; formal and informal. A formal (business) letter is usually addressed to an office as opposed to an individual in the case of an informal-one. This section will only focus on a formal letter which is the main concern at MSCE level. This section explains rules which candidates are supposed to follow when responding to letter writing questions.

2. Layout

Unlike other types of compositions, layout of a letter has got a special allocation of marks. It is, therefore, very important to pay attention to every bit of detail that examiners require.

A formal letter comprises of two addresses: the sender's address on the top right corner and the recipient's address on the left, below the date. Below are some important points to note:

- Even when you have not been provided with the receiver's address, come up with one and both the addresses **MUST** be complete postal addresses.

- The receiver's address **MUST** always be aligned straight vertically on the left margin.
- The salutation **MUST** be either '*Dear Sir*' or '*Dear Madam*' and **NOT** '*Dear Sir/Madam*'.
- The heading **MUST** be in upper case (block letters), aligned at the centre of the page and **MUST NOT** be underlined.
- 'Yours' in the ending **MUST NOT** have an apostrophe and 'faithfully' **MUST** begin with a small letter.
- The ending **MUST** always be 'Yours faithfully' and **NOT** 'Yours sincerely' or any other variant.
- The receiver's address **MUST** start with the position of the person or the office that will receive the letter (the addressee). Sometimes you are not given the addressee in the question. You are required to come up with one. The position which you create should be relevant. For example, if you are writing a letter to a company, you can use positions such as 'The Executive Director', 'The Chief Executive', 'The Director' and 'The General Manager'. If you are writing to a specific office, you can just mention the office and add officer at the end, for example, 'The Youth Officer' if you are writing to the youth office.

There are two types of layout: block and traditional. The main distinguishing feature between the two is the layout of the senders address.

2.1. Block Layout

In this kind of layout, the senders address is aligned from a straight vertical margin on the left (see Samples A and B below). There are two options in terms of punctuation of this kind of layout. In the first option the layout is punctuated fully. In this case, every address line ends with a comma except for the last one which ends with a full stop. The date ends with full stop. Salutation and ending end with a comma. For a detailed example, see Sample A below.

In the second option, the whole layout is not punctuated except the date which is punctuated between month and year as shown in Sample B. This is not referring to the content of the letter as well. However, consistency is very important. Do not confuse one convention with the other.

For both the layouts below, note that:

- There **MUST** be a space between the date and each of the two addresses;
- The paragraph style **MUST BE** block, that is, all sentences start from the margin and a new paragraph is indicated by jumping a line. This must be one complete blank line.
- There **MUST** be a space between the heading and the beginning of the first paragraph signifying beginning of the first paragraph.

2.1.1. Sample A – Block Layout (The layout fully punctuated)

Salima Secondary School,
Post Office Box 34,
Salima.

23rd September, 2007.

The General Manager,
Madalitso Company,
Private Bag 3,
Blantyre.

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF CLERK

I would like to apply for the post of Clerk which you advertised in Daily Local newspaper.

I am a young woman aged twenty one.

Yours faithfully,

Maison Bauleni.

is
2.1.2.

Sample B – Block Layout (The layout is not punctuated)

Salima Secondary School
Post Office Box 34
Salima

23rd September, 2007

The General Manager
Madalitso Company
Private Bag 3
Blantyre

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF CLERK

I would like to apply for the post of Clerk which you advertised in the Daily Local newspaper.

I am a young woman aged twenty one.

Yours faithfully

Maison Bauleni

2.2. Traditional Layout

In this kind of layout, the senders address is aligned to the right margin (see example below). Unlike in the block layout, punctuation is compulsory in this kind of layout. Besides:

- Paragraphs **MUST NOT** be signaled by a blank line, but rather, the first sentence **MUST** be indented at two centimeters from the margin;
- Do not jump a line after heading.

2.2.1. Sample C - The Traditional Layout

Salika Secondary School,
Post Office Box 34,
Salika.

23rd September, 2007.

The General Manager,
Madalitso Company,
Private Bag 3,
Blantyre.

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF CLERK

I would like to apply for the post of Clerk which you advertised in the Daily Local newspaper.

I am a young woman aged twenty one.

Yours faithfully,

Maison Bauleni.

1.3. Questions and Model Answers

Question I

Imagine that your area has embarked on a project aimed at erecting two classroom blocks for a Junior Primary School. As the chairperson of the Village Development Committee in your area, write a letter to the Malawi Development Fund (MDF) asking for assistance to build two classroom blocks.

You may include the following:

- a. where your school is located;
- b. problems that have come about because of the inadequacy of classrooms;
- c. work already done by the community.

Model Answer

*Chakhala Full Primary School,
Post Office Box 11,
Kawamba.*

23rd September, 2007.

*The Executive Director,
Malawi Development Fund,
Private Bag 1,
Lilongwe.*

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

I am writing to request for assistance from your organization to build two classroom blocks at our school, Chakhala.

Chakhala Full Primary School is in Kasungu West Constituency. It is situated two kilometers off Kasera - Kawamba Road. When coming from Kasera, turn to your left just after Nkwayaya Village. The turn-off is just a kilometer from Mpitilira Catholic Church.

There are quite a number of problems that the school is facing. First, pupil enrolment has risen especially with the advent of free primary education. This has rendered our classrooms inadequate. At the mean time, some infant classes, especially standard one, learn under tree shades. This becomes a very big problem in rainy season. Sometimes classes are cancelled because of rain. Besides, it is not possible for pupils to be smart in their dressing. Their uniforms easily get dirty. Trees also pose a threat to our children. We have ever heard of an incident where a tree branch broke off and fell on the children learning underneath. We are afraid such a thing might as well happen to our children. In addition to the infant classes, pupils from standard three to five start their classes from eleven o'clock in the morning after the infant classes have knocked off. These classes knock off at four o'clock in the afternoon. Learning until late in the afternoon has proved to be bad for both teacher and pupils because of the heat of the day. Student lose concentration because of the heat. Teachers also find it difficult to teach to their best.

Secondly, because of the same problem of over enrolment, all classrooms are usually overcrowded. This makes it difficult for pupils to write comfortably. Besides, we have had several outbreaks of airborn diseases. This is probably because classrooms, a crowded as they are, do not afford enough ventilation of fresh air.

As a community, we have already done quite a lot of work in preparation for the erection of the block.

We have already molded and fired 150,000 bricks. These bricks are right on the project site. We did this deliberately to make transportation easier. In addition, right now, other people are collecting both dambo and river sand while others are collecting poles for the rafters. In our community, there are some skilled brick-layers. These brick-layers have already started laying the foundation using a few bags of cement that we purchased with money from our community fund. What we need from your organization is money for purchasing iron sheets, cement, window panes, door and window frames, locks and furniture.

We will appreciate very much if you assist us according to our request.

Yours faithfully,
Kanchiliko Phiri.

Question II

The number of street children is rising at an alarming rate – a situation which has caused panic amongst members of your community. Write a letter to the District Social Welfare Officer informing him about the problem.

In your letter, you may include:

- the extent of the problem;
- what has led to the increase in the number of street children;
- suggest ways how the problem can be addressed;
- any other relevant points.

Chilipo Limited,
Post Office Box 55,
Bonongwe.

14th December, 2007.

The District Social Welfare Officer,
Bonongwe District Assembly,
Private Bag 23,
Bonongwe.

Dear sir,

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF STREET CHILDREN

I would like to inform your office about the problem of street children which has become of concern in our area, Nsenjere.

Nsenjere, one of the largest locations in the city of Bonongwe started to have children loitering in its streets ten years ago. The problem has worsened gradually until the past three years when the number of the street children started to grow at an alarming rate. This time, we have approximately 2000 street children in Nsenjere alone.

There are quite a number of factors that have led to this problem. The most important one is poverty. With the increase in population, poverty levels have increased in Nsenjere as more and more people fail to get any meaningful employment. When these young people get married and bare children, the children lack support and eventually resort to go

on the streets. Other street children, however, go on the streets simply because they get money through asking for alms from passersby. These children may come from families which are well able to support them. The only problem is that they want to have money to spend on petty things like sweets and biscuits. They pretend to be poor or lame. Sometimes they tell their prospective helpers that they have been going on an empty stomach for a long time. Once they are able to make money, they make it a routine to go on the streets to beg.

This problem can be addressed through a number of ways. The first one is through economic empowerment of the poor. As a nation we need to come up with ways of assisting the poor come out of their poverty. One of them would be to establish skill centres. At these skill centres, people would be trained in different skills like basket weaving, pot making and others. Once people graduate from these centres, they would be able to engage in income generating activities which would enable them support their families properly. Secondly, the police should just be rounding up any child found on the streets. This will deter children from going on the streets to beg money for sweets and biscuits.

I hope your office will consider this problem seriously and mobilize the community for action so that our future generation is developed positively instead of loitering in the streets.

Yours faithfully,

Anderson Phiri.

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CHAPTER III

REPORT

1. Introduction

Chikoti 2008 defines a report as an account about a situation that has happened, presented to authorities or an audience for decision making. In MSCE examinations a report is usually an account of an incident that has happened.

In real life setting, reports are categorised into formal and informal, short and detailed. At MSCE level, however, candidates are expected to write a short and informal report. Just like a letter, a report has got a defined layout which has got a special allocation of marks. As such, it is very important to know the detail of a proper layout.

2. Layout of a report

A report is based on the same principles as letter writing except for the following:

- the date comes on top;
- addresses are clearly marked TO: and FROM;
- the subject line is clearly indicated SUBJECT. Do not use RE: or REF;
- the addresses start from the right margin and are wrapped in a sentence order.

- Do not end the report with 'Yours faithfully'. Rather, just sign and write your name in full below the signature.
- For details, see a sample layout below.

Sample Layout

23rd September, 2007.

FROM: Mr Maison Bauleni, Salima Secondary School, Post Office Box 34, Salima.

TO: The General Manager, Madalitso Company, Private Bag 3, Blantyre.

SUBJECT: LEAKAGE OF SEWERAGE PIPES IN MANASE

I would like to report to you that sewerage pipes in Manase are leaking thereby causing a very serious pollution problem.

Maison Bauleni

Maison Bauleni.

3. Questions and model answers

Question 1

Cases of gender-based violence are increasing at an alarming rate – a situation which has raised concern amongst members of your community. Write a report to the District Social Welfare Officer highlighting the problem.

In your report, you may include:

- e. the extent of the problem;
- f. what has led to the increase in the number of cases;
- g. suggest ways how the problem can be addressed;
- h. any other relevant points.

Model Answer

12th December, 2007.

FROM: Anderson Phiri, Chilipo Limited, Post Office Box 55, Bonongwe.

TO: The District Social Welfare Officer, Dowa District Assembly, Private Bag 2, Dowa.

SUBJECT: INCREASE IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

I would like to report that cases of gender-based violence are at an alarming increase in our community, Nsenjere.

For the past four years, we have had so many cases of reported and unreported gender-based violence

in the community. Among the most notable cases is the issue of a woman who had both her arms amputated by an angry husband. The woman named Sabina separated with her husband because of some marital problems. This made her start going out with other men - a thing which irritated the husband. In one of her encounters with a boyfriend, the husband found them and cut off her hands while the boyfriend fled for his life. Several other cases of this nature have been reported in our area. This has worried the community so much. This violence is not only done to women. A number of men have also been victims of gender-based violence.

There are a number of factors that have led to the increase in such cases. Firstly, drug abuse is at an increase in the area. Most people abuse such drugs as Indian hemp and cocaine. Under the influence of drugs, these people cannot control their emotions and resort to violent response to any quarrel that may arise between them and their spouses. Under a normal circumstance, it is not possible for a person to literally cut off another person's limbs. This is only possible when one is under some bad influence like that of drugs. Secondly, infidelity among married couples is also another factor perpetrating gender-based violence. When married people engage in extramarital affairs, they create room for quarreling with their spouses which eventually leads to violence.

There are several ways of addressing the problem of gender-based violence. The first one is to deal

with the problem of drug abuse. The police should intensify their investigations and arrest all people involved in dealing in intoxicating drugs. Secondly, a heavy penalty should be imposed on those people who are caught abusing drugs or dealing in intoxicating drugs. Finally, people who are caught in extramarital affairs should be convicted by the courts. People will eventually be faithful to their spouses for fear of the law.

I hope your office will treat this issue with urgency so that the problem can soon come to an end.

Andreson Phiri.

Question 2

Imagine you are a village headman and in your village a lot of deforestation has taken place. Write a report to the District Forestry Officer in your district about the situation and highlight what you think must be done to preserve avert the situation. You may include:

- topographic location of your village;
- why people cut down trees;
- what you think should be done to avert the situation;
- any other relevant points.

Model Answer

12th December, 2007.

FROM: Village Headman Dombola, Traditional Authority Kawamba, Post Office Box 55, Kasungu.

TO: The District Forestry Officer, Kasungu District Assembly, Private Bag 2, Kasungu.

SUBJECT: INCREASE IN THE RATE OF
DEFORESTATION

I would like to report on the increase in the rate of deforestation in our village.

Our village, Dombolo, is located west of Kasungu District. It falls within the Kasungu-Lilongwe plain which is rich in trees and tall grass. It is bordered by Rusa River to the west and Bua River to the east. These two rivers flood yearly bringing with the floods rich alluvial soils to the river banks.

Until ten years ago, the area had thick vegetation consisting of mainly "Bovu" trees. It was receiving reliable and adequate rains year after year. That time, the area was scarcely populated. The population has grown so rapidly in the past decade. This eventually increased demand for land and other natural resources. People started increasing their gardens while others started opening new gardens. Others still, who had no enough land, resorted to charcoal selling business to supplement their incomes. Tobacco farmers required more and more trees for building shades, curing tobacco and

for stairs. Even demand for firewood increased. All this resulted into wanton cutting down of trees.

There are a number of ways how this situation can be averted. First, as can be seen, the root cause of the problem is rapid population growth. This means that if people can be empowered to reduce population growth, the problem can come to an end. People need to be educated on different family planning methods. Among others, couples should be able to decide how many children they want to have in regard to the resources at hand.

Secondly, people should be economically empowered. If people can be trained in alternative means of generating income, they can not indulge in charcoal selling business.

Tobacco farmers should be taught how cure their tobacco using alternative energy sources like coal. Finally, there is also need for people to plant trees on bare grounds. This will help in replenishing the trees which have been cut down.

We need your office to assign some forestry assistants in this area who can help to train people in new methods of conserving forests. We also need more nurses and midwives at our health centre who will help people on issues of family planning.

I hope your office will consider this issue urgently so that the problem can soon come to an end.

Samson Dombolo
Village Headman



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CHAPTER IV

SPEECH

1. Introduction

A speech is a less common type of composition in recent years. As such, most schools do not spend much time on it. However, it has to be pointed out that it is important to know speech writing skills not only for purposes of examinations but also for after-school life. The most disheartening thing is that in examinations, it is usually the most unpopular question.

2. Parts of a speech

Apart from the title, a speech has got three basic parts: introduction, main body, ending. Each of these sections is very important. Although there are no special marks allocated to the layout of a speech, general consideration on how good a speech is normally has a bearing on the presentation.

2.1. Title

Just like any other composition, a good title of a speech should capture the theme of the question. It must be positioned in the centre of the page. It must be in block letters but not underlined.

2.2. Introduction

Introduction of a speech comprises of the salutation and the introductory sentence.

2.2.1. Salutation

A speech is presented to an audience. Normally, an audience comprise of invited guests and other dignitaries and the general audience. In response to a question on speech, candidates are supposed to imagine such an audience. The invited guests and dignitaries imagined, however, should be relevant to the occasion where a speech is to be delivered. For example, in a speech delivered to members of a branch of Students Christian Organisation of Malawi, one cannot normally include the Head of State but probably the patron or matron would be the most important dignitary.

There are two important points to note when coming up with salutation.

- The salutation is not meant to constitute a complete sentence. It is in essence a list of dignitaries and parts of the audience.
- The list is mentioned in descending order of importance.

Let us consider the example below:

You are the Chairperson of AIDS TOTO club at your school and you would like to organise your friends to go for voluntary counseling and testing at the nearest health centre. Prepare a speech that you would deliver to the club members on the importance of VCT. (Robert Blake School 2007 MSCE Mock Examinations, English Language, Paper II)

In the above question, a good salutation would be as follows:

The Patron, the Vice Chairperson, the Secretary, the Treasurer, all members of the club executive committee, and all club members present here.

Take note of the following:

- names of positions begin with capital letters;
- the names should not be preceded by expressions such as 'your honour ...', 'or respect ...'. These are literal translations from Chichewa expressions commonly used at rallies like 'ulemu kwa ...' and its Tumbuka variant 'nchindi kwa...'

2.2.2. The introductory sentence

A speech does not have a peculiar way of coining an introductory sentence. For detailed information on this refer to Chapter I, Section 2.2.2)

2.3. The main body

When writing the main body of a speech, the candidate should imagine that he or she is literally speaking to the audience. That is, it should sound live. As such, it should be written from first person point of view. See the example below.

I would like to talk to you on the need to go for voluntary counseling and testing. I hope you will be with me up to the end of my speech.

2.4. The ending

At the end, the speaker is supposed to:

- mention the highest dignitary and the rest of the audience together;
- thank the audience.

An example

The Patron, all members present, I thank you very much for listening to my speech.

3. Questions and Model answers

Question 1

Imagine you are the Chairperson of a human rights club at your school. You have just learnt that there is a lot of teasing and bullying of Form 1 students at a neighbouring school. The head teacher of the neighbouring school has asked you to talk to the students of the school on causes and consequences of teasing and bullying. Prepare a speech to be delivered at the meeting.

Model Answer

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF TEASING AND BULLYING

The head teacher, the deputy head teacher, heads of academic departments, all members of the teaching staff, the prefect council, boys and girls. I would like to thank you very much for this time that you have allowed me to talk to you on the causes and consequences of teasing and bullying.

Teasing and bullying is on an increase in most secondary schools here in Malawi. In most cases, the victims of teasing and bullying are form one students. In some cases, even students from other classes who have just joined the school are victim of this malpractice.

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Teasing and bullying takes several forms. The victims are ordered to do some silly things like drawing water using a basket. If they fail to comply, they are beaten up. Sometimes this has led to serious injuries and even death.

This malpractice can be looked at from several angles. In the first place it is a social problem. Most students involved in teasing and bullying their friends do it to avenge for the atrocities they themselves went through when they were new students at the school. This makes the whole thing an ongoing problem because those who are victims this year will want to avenge the following year when a new set of students are joining the school. Secondly, the malpractice is a spiritual problem. The spirit of vengeance grips the culprits so much so that they no longer have natural love for fellow human beings in their hearts.

Where ever teasing and bullying is taking place, there are always bad consequences both to the victims and the perpetrators. Apart from physical injuries that the victims may sustain, they are subjected to psychological trauma which makes them fail to concentrate on their studies. This results into poor performance in their studies thereby affecting their productivity in the development of the nation. Consequences on the part of perpetrators include being suspended or excluded from school when caught. This brings disturbance in their education which may also result in poor performance or dropping out of school altogether.

As can be seen, it is good if students desist from such malpractice and concentrate on their studies only.

The head teacher and all who are here, I thank you very much for your patience to listen to me.

Question 2

You are the Chairperson of AIDS TOTO club in your community and you would like to organise your friends to go for voluntary counseling and testing at the nearest health centre. Prepare a speech that you would deliver to the club members on the importance of VCT. (Robert Blake School 2007 MSCE Mock Examinations, English Language, Paper II)

Model Answer

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING

The Patron of AIDS TOTO Club, the Vice Chairperson, executive committee members, all members present. I thank you very much for sparing your precious time to listen to me in this talk on the importance of voluntary counseling and testing.

Voluntary counseling and testing is a process that one undergoes if he or she wants to know whether he or she has Human Immunodeficiency Virus or not and what one has to do if he or she has the

virus or not. As the term suggests, this process involves three stages. There is counseling before the test is conducted. This is done to prepare the client for whatever results that will come out. Then comes the testing stage. After testing and the results are known, the client is also counseled on how one in his or her state is supposed to live.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus can be contracted through so many ways. This makes it difficult for one to simply know without testing whether he or she has the virus or not. Knowing one's status is very important. One is able to employ measures that will prolong his or her life if found positive. It is only then that medical practitioners are able to monitor your immunity levels and determine when you can start taking antiretroviral drugs. Without this knowledge, one continues to lead a reckless life which eventually leads to early death. In addition, when one knows that he or she has the virus, one may properly plan the future of his or her family so that if he or she has children, they should not lack financial support in the eventuality of his or her death. Knowing one's status is even more important for pregnant women. If a pregnant woman is found positive, some medical precautions are taken to ensure that the child does not contract the virus during birth. Without knowledge of the status one may choose to hire traditional midwives instead of going to a hospital to give birth. This may be very dangerous to the child being born.

When we consider all the factors explained earlier on, it is obviously very important to undergo voluntary counseling and testing. I therefore urge

you all to visit the nearest health centre for the process.

Finally, let me thank you all for your patience and order as you listened to my speech. May God bless you all.

SHORT STORY**1. Introduction**

Different scholars have attempted to define a short story. However, there seem to be no single definition which does not lack in one area or the other. To avoid any controversy, we will not attempt to define a short story here. However, an attempt will be made to give a clear working concept of what it is for purposes of our discussion.

A short story is not just any kind of story that is short. The term short story refers to a specific kind of literary form with its definitive features. Candidates sometimes confuse a short story with other literary forms especially a folktale. It is therefore important to draw a clear distinction between the two to facilitate a clear understanding of the short story.

A folktale is a popular story of wisdom and traditions passed on orally from one generation to another. In the present age of technology, folktales are presented in written form. It may involve animal characters like a hare, a tortoise or a hyena. Its setting is usually in the undefined remote past. This is probably why folktales usually begin with "Once upon a time..." or "A long time ago...". One important feature that folktales lack is the 'make believe' element, that is, the reader clearly knows that the story is fictitious.

On the other hand, a short story explores real issues that concern the human race. Its characters are usually human. It contains a make believe element.

2. Elements of a short story

A short story has got so many elements. For purposes of examinations, however, a candidate is required to pay attention especially to the major elements. In this regard, we will only look at these important elements.

2.1. Conflict

A good story is built around a conflict. A conflict is a situation where one character wants to achieve a certain goal while the other character or circumstances are deterring him or her. What ensues is a conflict.

A conflict may be physical. For example, see an extract below from *A Careless Cook*.

The satisfied cluckings of chickens dancing round the kitchen as they picked up the remains of a great feast reminded me of the groundnuts. Yes, every nut was gone. How stupid I had been to leave them there uncovered with the kitchen door wide open. But such self-reproach did not occur to me at the time. For I was seized by a blinding rage and an overwhelming desire to punish the greedy offenders.

Now the most annoying thing about a chicken is that you can never hit it if you intend to. You are always bound to miss it, especially if you are really cross. At your failure it will make a noise half of defiance and half of disapproval, and then march away majestically, leaving you more annoyed than ever. I added all these things up to make a sum of charges against them as I stood in the doorway, thinking

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how best to launch my attack while they were still busy scratching here and there in search of a stray nut.

I seized the pestle and raised it high up above my head. By this time they had seen me and were flying in disorder all over the kitchen. They tumbled over each other through the doorway. I let down my powerful weapon just in time to hit the last one right on the head. I did it! I gasped in triumph as it croaked painfully. But my victory song did not last; for in a minute the poor thing was staggering frantically about the kitchen. Its strength failed after a while and it fell lifeless just near the fire.

Adapted from Practical English – A Comprehensive English Course Book 3 p15.

In the above extract, the conflict resulted into the physical hitting of a chicken by the main character, making this a physical conflict.

Other types of conflict include psychological, social and political. In any conflict, man can be in conflict with another man, environment or even himself or herself. Some conflicts are clear in a story while some are subtle.

2.2. Story Line and Plot

Once a conflict, which forms the basis of a story, has been thought out the next thing is to see how the story runs from the first incident to the last. This is what is known as a story line – a chronological sequence of events from the beginning to the end. Look at a simple example below.

1. John buys a beautiful pen which he thinks he is the only one with such a pen in his class.

2. Jane, of the same class as John, buys a pen similar to John's but does not know that John also has a pen like that one.
3. Somebody steals John's pen in class.
4. John searches the class for his lost pen and he finds Jane with a pen like his.
5. Jane knows that the pen is hers.
6. A physical conflict ensues.

What you see above is a story line. A plot on the other hand is an arrangement of events in short story. This arrangement may correspond to a story line or it may be slightly different. For example, in the above story line, one may decide to begin the story in the middle. In this case the plot can begin with a conflict and then a series of other events and finally finish with a conflict again as follows:

6	A physical conflict
1	John buys a beautiful pen which he thinks he is the only one with such a pen in his class.
2	Jane of the same class as John buys a pen similar to John's but does not know that John also has a pen like that one
3	Somebody steals John's pen in class
4	John searches the class for his lost pen and he finds Jane with a pen like his.
5	Jane knows that the pen is hers
6	A physical conflict

In the MSCE examinations, it is required that a story should have a clear plot. The story should be seen having a tempora

dimension, that is, the story should develop from one event to another.

2.3. Characters

A character is a personality taking part in the events in the story. A short story normally has one major character and other supporting characters. Regardless of how characters are fielded, it is required of a candidate to develop the characters. Character development (characterisation) involves letting the characters show out his or her qualities through what he or she is doing in the story. A character may be flat or round. A flat character displays only a single trait. It is easy to predict what a flat character will do in a particular situation. A round character is an unpredictable kind of personality whose traits change depending on circumstance.

In examinations, it may be difficult to develop a round character successfully. As such, flat characters are the most appropriate for examination short stories.

2.4. Narrative and Dialogue

A good short story contains both narrative and dialogue. A narrative is a brief account of what is happening in the story. In the narrative, it is actually the one telling the story who is speaking. Let us see a good example below from '*Why Blame a Mosquito*'.

There was some silence. The clergyman adjusted the wick of hurricane lantern hanging on a nail in the wall. He stalked a mosquito that was taking liberties with his ankle, and murdered the offending insect in an explosion out of all proportion to its size.

“Pastor,” the old chief said, startled. “You educated people are funny. Killing a mere mosquito as if you are killing an elephant! Why, why don’t you let the little insect alone? How much of you can it bite to make any difference to you, pastor?”

The potions in italics are narratives. Normally, the narrative takes care of the unsaid details of the story. The other details are given in the dialogue.

Dialogue refers to the verbal interaction between characters in the story. Dialogue helps in developing characters and advances the story.

In the above example, the potions which are not in italic are dialogue. Dialogue is always direct speech.

2.4.1. Punctuating Dialogue

Most candidates find it difficult to punctuate dialogue. Let us therefore look at very simple examples of punctuation.

Primarily, every new speech must begin a new paragraph.

Example 1 (block paragraph)

They all arrived at the place where the accident took place. Everybody was in tears except John.

“Who was driving?” The policeman asked.

“Rachel.” John answered with a little tremor in his voice. He tilted his head at an angle as if trying to peek at the policeman.

“What happened, Rachel?” The policeman quizzed.

“I can’t really explain. I ... I don’t know.”

Example 2 (indented paragraph)

They all arrived at the place where the accident took place. Everybody was in tears except John.

“Who was driving?” The policeman asked.

“Rachel.” John answered with a little tremor in his voice. He tilted his head at an angle as if trying to peek at the policeman.

“What happened, Rachel?” The policeman quizzed.

“I can’t really explain. I...I don’t know.”

Apart from paragraphing, dialogue is also punctuated with quotation marks. There are several things that we have to consider about quotation marks.

- Quotation marks, just like brackets are terminal in nature – that is, when they come at the end of a sentence, they normally must come after every punctuation mark. See the example below.

“Who was driving?”

In the above sentence, the closing quotation mark is placed after the question mark.

- If the sentence contains a direct speech and a continuation in form of a narrative,
 - the direct speech must end with a comma before a close quotation mark; and
 - the narrative part should begin with lower case (small letter)

For example

"I can't really explain," he said.

- Where the direct quotation ends with an exclamation mark or a question mark, the narrative part should begin with upper case (capital letter).

Example

"Come here!" He shouted.

Practice exercise 1

Punctuate the sentences below properly.

1. Shall we go to the cinema?
2. Listen to me John shouted on top of his voice.

Practice exercise 2

Are the sentences below punctuated properly? If not, correct the punctuation.

"I will go with you". He said.
"Oh! My God!" she exclaimed.

Question and Model Answer

Write an original story entitled "Left Behind".

LEFT BEHIND

Chilipo tossed again in his bed. He stretched his right hand to gather Jane closer to him. She was not there. She must be at the toilet, he thought. How the hell can she manage to make her way to the toilet without lights on? He murmured under his breath.

He reached for the switch and with the tip of his fingers pushed the creaky button down. His eyes were momentarily blinded.

"Oh! My God!" The words spurted out of his mouth reflexively. Jane's night dress lay neatly on the bed. He looked at the wall clock. It was twenty minutes before mid-night.

"Jane!" He shouted. There was a tremor in his voice. His hands started shaking. No reply. He jumped at the door and dashed to the toilet all along calling on top of his voice. The door was closed and lights were off. He groped his way through the darkness and checked every room. There was no trace of her.

Chilipo and Jane were different on one thing; Chilipo was a drunkard while Jane was a serious Christian. Every Sunday, Chilipo drove Jane to church and went out drinking.

This Sunday, Chilipo decided to attend the church service on Jane's insistence.

"Open your bibles on Matthew 26 verse 64."

There was some cracking noise as the congregation leafed through their bibles. Chilipo swore under his breath as he went back and forth from Genesis to Revelation without locating where the book of Matthew was. Jane looked at him sympathetically. Slowly she gave him her bible and took his which she opened to where the said scripture was.

"Jesus is assuring us that He is coming soon." The preacher continued after reading a small portion of the sighted scripture. The sermon seemed never-ending to Chilipo. The rest of the congregation seemed to enjoy the service very much. Periodically "Amen", "Praise the Lord" and "Alleluiah" were chorused in unison.

Back at home, Chilipo sank into a sofa, tired with the long church service.

"Darling." Jane started as she made herself comfortable beside her husband. "Did you hear what the Pastor preached; that Jesus is coming soon?"

"To do what?" He responded mockingly.

"To take the faithful to heaven. That's what the bible calls rapture."

"I'm sorry Jane. I don't really believe in this Jesus kind of stuff." He answered curtly.

He now remembered how Jane recoiled in the sofa and released a deep sigh of resignation.

Suddenly he heard a loud knock at the front door. Without asking who it was, rushed to the sitting room and opened the door expecting to see Jane in the doorway.

"My wife and children have disappeared right before my sight." It was his neighbour Msakati.

Chilipo gasped in response. He felt the earth sinking under his feet. For a long moment he stood fixed in the doorway, mouth agape, his gaze fixed on Msakati.

"Rapture." He managed to spit the word with difficulty.

Msakati nodded and left without any further word.

JOSEPH

Chilongy

CHAPTER VI

COMPREHENSION

1. Introduction

A comprehension test is a kind of examination whose main aim is to find out if the candidate is able to understand (comprehend) the text that has been given to him or her. This information is derived from the responses that candidates give to the questions that are asked based on the comprehension passage given.

Most candidates do not perform well in comprehension at MSCE level because of failure to know what they are supposed to do.

In this section, we will look at both technical aspects on how to handle comprehension and other important skills in handling the examination itself.

2. Types of Comprehension Questions

There are five major types of questions asked at MSCE level namely: **observation, comparison, reflection and selection questions.**

Observation questions test the critical thinking of candidates. Candidates should be able to follow the “line of thought”, that is, what the passage is all about. One should be able to show how one point depends on another.

Examples of observation questions

1. Do you think Thoko's mission to the forest was successful?
Give one reason to support your answer.
2. According to the passage, how many nights did Thoko spend in the forest?

Comparison questions test candidates if they are able to notice differences or similarities between two items or facts. If a candidate has fully understood the passage, he or she will be able to compare:

- actual words used;
- writer's vocabulary;
- the way words have been used in the passage with expressions, sentences and contexts;
- facts and questions asked in the passage.

Examples of comparison questions

1. Two groups of people hold different views on how to contain the problem of deforestation. State each group's view on how to contain the problem.
2. Give the meaning of each of the following words as used in the passage.

Reflection questions invoke critical thinking in candidates to:

- notice the way something has been written;
- relate the passage to the mind of the writer;
- be able to scrutinize, picture and see the author's mind.

Examples of reflection questions

1. What made Thoko think that the man who had fallen into the hole had died?

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you all to visit the nearest health centre for the process.

Finally, let me thank you all for your patience and order as you listened to my speech. May God bless you all.

CHAPTER V

SHORT STORY

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A good story is built around a conflict. A conflict is a situation where one character wants to achieve a certain goal while the other character or circumstances are deterring him or her. What ensues is a conflict.

A conflict may be physical. For example, see an extract below from *A Careless Cook*.

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Now the most annoying thing about a chicken is that you can never hit it if you intend to. You are always bound to miss it, especially if you are really cross. At your failure it will make a noise half of defiance and half of disapproval, and then march away majestically, leaving you more annoyed than ever. I added all these things up to make a sum of charges against them as I stood in the doorway, thinking

how best to launch my attack while they were still busy scratching here and there in search of a stray nut.

I seized the pestle and raised it high up above my head. By this time they had seen me and were flying in disorder all over the kitchen. They tumbled over each other through the doorway. I let down my powerful weapon just in time to hit the last one right on the head. I did it! I gasped in triumph as it croaked painfully. But my victory song did not last; for in a minute the poor thing was staggering frantically about the kitchen. Its strength failed after a while and it fell lifeless just near the fire.

Adapted from Practical English – A Comprehensive English Course Book 3 p15.

In the above extract, the conflict resulted into the physical hitting of a chicken by the main character, making this a physical conflict.

Other types of conflict include psychological, social and political. In any conflict, man can be in conflict with another man, environment or even himself or herself. Some conflicts are clear in a story while some are subtle.

2.2. Story Line and Plot

Once a conflict, which forms the basis of a story, has been thought out the next thing is to see how the story runs from the first incident to the last. This is what is known as a story line – a chronological sequence of events from the beginning to the end. Look at a simple example below.

1. John buys a beautiful pen which he thinks he is the only one with such a pen in his class.

2. Jane, of the same class as John, buys a pen similar to John's but does not know that John also has a pen like that one.
3. Somebody steals John's pen in class.
4. John searches the class for his lost pen and he finds Jane with a pen like his.
5. Jane knows that the pen is hers.
6. A physical conflict ensues.

What you see above is a story line. A plot on the other hand is an arrangement of events in short story. This arrangement may correspond to a story line or it may be slightly different. For example, in the above story line, one may decide to begin the story in the middle. In this case the plot can begin with a conflict and then a series of other events and finally finish with a conflict again as follows:

6	A physical conflict
1	John buys a beautiful pen which he thinks he is the only one with such a pen in his class.
2	Jane of the same class as John buys a pen similar to John's but does not know that John also has a pen like that one
3	Somebody steals John's pen in class
4	John searches the class for his lost pen and he finds Jane with a pen like his.
5	Jane knows that the pen is hers
6	A physical conflict

In the MSCE examinations, it is required that a story should have a clear plot. The story should be seen having a temporal

dimension, that is, the story should develop from one event to another.

2.3. Characters

A character is a personality taking part in the events in the story. A short story normally has one major character and other supporting characters. Regardless of how characters are fielded, it is required of a candidate to develop the characters. Character development (characterisation) involves letting the characters show out his or her qualities through what he or she is doing in the story. A character may be flat or round. A flat character displays only a single trait. It is easy to predict what a flat character will do in a particular situation. A round character is an unpredictable kind of personality whose traits change depending on circumstance.

In examinations, it may be difficult to develop a round character successfully. As such, flat characters are the most appropriate for examination short stories.

2.4. Narrative and Dialogue

A good short story contains both narrative and dialogue. A narrative is a brief account of what is happening in the story. In the narrative, it is actually the one telling the story who is speaking. Let us see a good example below from '*Why Blame a Mosquito*'.

There was some silence. The clergyman adjusted the wick of hurricane lantern hanging on a nail in the wall. He stalked a mosquito that was taking liberties with his ankle, and murdered the offending insect in an explosion out of all proportion to its size.

“Pastor,” the old chief said, startled. “You educated people are funny. Killing a mere mosquito as if you are killing an elephant! Why, why don’t you let the little insect alone? How much of you can it bite to make any difference to you, pastor?”

The portions in italics are narratives. Normally, the narrative takes care of the unsaid details of the story. The other details are given in the dialogue.

Dialogue refers to the verbal interaction between characters in the story. Dialogue helps in developing characters and advances the story.

In the above example, the portions which are not in italic are dialogue. Dialogue is always direct speech.

2.4.1. Punctuating Dialogue

Most candidates find it difficult to punctuate dialogue. Let us therefore look at very simple examples of punctuation.

Primarily, every new speech must begin a new paragraph.

Example 1 (block paragraph)

They all arrived at the place where the accident took place. Everybody was in tears except John.

“Who was driving?” The policeman asked.

“Rachel.” John answered with a little tremor in his voice. He tilted his head at an angle as if trying to peek at the policeman.

“What happened, Rachel?” The policeman quizzed.

b. Mwanza still has extensive tracts of forest reserves?

Answer

It is sparsely populated.

10. Explain each of the following expressions:

a. "in situ"

Answer

the original habitat of a thing.

b. "ex situ"

Answer

outside the original habitat of a thing.

11. How do human beings interfere with medicinal plants?

Answer

They cut down plants for other personal uses.

12. Give the meaning of the following words or expressions as used in the passage.

a. Fate (paragraph 2)

Answer

Survival

b. Culprits (paragraph 4)

Answer

perpetrators

c. Unabated (paragraph 7)

Answer

unstoppable

d. Watchful eye (paragraph 8)

Answer

Protection/Keen (candidates should put only one alternative answer)

- e. Ailments (paragraph 14)

Answer

Sicknesses/diseases (candidates should put only one alternative answer)

13. Suggest a title for the passage.

Answer

The problem of deforestation

Passage 2

Read the following story carefully and answer all the questions that follow.

LEFT BEHIND

Chilipo tossed again in his bed. He stretched his right hand to gather Jane closer to him. She was not there. She must be at the toilet, he thought. He wondered how she could go to the toilet without switching on the light. The bedroom floor was littered with unpacked cases. They had just arrived from Lilongwe that very night. Chilipo had been promoted to a top management position at Talimba Limited. The position was tenable here in Blantyre. How the hell can she manage to make her way to the toilet without lights on? He murmured under his breath.

He reached for the switch and with the tip of his fingers pushed the creaky button down. His eyes were momentarily blinded by the bright flood of light from the energy server bulb which illuminated the room.

"Oh! My God!" The words spurted out of his mouth reflexively. Jane's night dress lay neatly on the bed with her head scarf on top. He looked at the wall clock. It was one in the morning.

"Jane!" He shouted. There was a tremor in his voice. His hands started shaking. No reply. He jumped at the door and dashed to the toilet all along calling on top his voice. The door was closed and lights were off. She was not there. He raced to the living room confusedly. The main outer door was securely closed. He hurriedly checked all the windows. All were securely closed. The only way out remaining was through the kitchen door. He **groped** his way through the darkness to the kitchen door. It was securely locked. Kitchen windows were too small to let through a person of Jane's stature. He was now shaking uncontrollably.

"How can she do this to me?" He mouthed the words softly.

'You deserve all this, boy.' Something inside him replied.

Chilipo and Jane were different on one thing; Chilipo was a drunkard while Jane was a serious Christian. Every Sunday, Chilipo drove Jane to church and went out drinking.

This Sunday, Chilipo decided to attend the church service on Jane's insistence.

“Open your bibles on Matthew 26 verse 64.”

There was some cracking noise as the congregation leafed through their bibles. Chilipo swore under his breath as he went back and forth from Genesis to Revelation without locating where the book of Matthew was. Jane looked at him sympathetically. Slowly she gave him her bible and took his which she opened to where the said scripture was.

“Jesus is assuring us that He is coming soon.” The preacher continued after reading a small portion of the cited scripture. The sermon seemed never-ending to Chilipo. The rest of the congregation seemed to enjoy the service very much. Periodically “Amen”, “Praise he Lord” and “Allelujah” were chorused in unison.

Back at home, Chilipo sank into a sofa, tired with the long church service.

“Darling.” Jane started as she made herself comfortable beside her husband. “Did you hear what the Pastor preached; that Jesus is coming soon?”

“To do what?” He responded mockingly.

"To take the faithful to heaven. That's what the bible calls
rupture."

"I'm sorry Jane. I don't believe in this Jesus-kind-of stuff." He
answered curtly.

He now remembered how Jane recoiled in the sofa and released
a deep sigh of resignation.

Suddenly he heard a loud knock at the front door. Without
asking who it was, rushed to the sitting room and opened the
door expecting to see Jane in the doorway.

"My wife and children have disappeared right before my sight."
It was his neighbour Msakati.

Chilipo gasped in response. He felt the earth sinking under his
feet. For a long moment he stood fixed in the doorway, mouth
agape, his gaze fixed on Msakati.

"Rapture." He managed to spit the word with difficulty.

Msakati nodded and left without any further word.

Answer the questions below.

1. Who was Chilipo looking for?

Answer

Jane

2. Mention three places that have been mentioned in the passage where Chilipo looked for the lost person.

Answers

Toilet

Sittingroom

Kitchen

3. What was the last place to be searched?

Answer

The kitchen

4. What made Chilipo different from Jane?

Answer

He was a drunkard while Jane was a devout Christian.

5. Why do you think Chilipo failed to locate the scripture that the preacher cited?

Answer

He was not used to his bible.

6. Explain the meaning of the following expressions:

- a. Never-ending

Answer

Too long

- b. a deep sigh of resignation

Answer

Giving up

7. "Did you hear what the Pastor preached; that Jesus is coming soon?"

- a. How did Chilipo respond to the above question from Jane?

Answer

Mockingly

- b. Why do you think he responded in this way?

Answer

He did not believe in Jesus.

8. What do you think happened to Jane the night Chilipo was looking for her?

Answer

She was ruptured.

9. Give the meaning of the following words or expressions as used in the passage.

i. Tossed

Answer

Turned over.

ii. Littered

Answer

Found every where

iii. Tenable

Available

iv. Groped

Answer

Searching in darkness

v. Chorused

Answer

Shouted together

10. Suggest the title for the passage.

Answer

A fruitless search

CHAPTER VII

NOTE-MAKING

1. Introduction

The process of note-making involves extracting the facts that have made up a piece of writing. There are quite a number of books which explain in proper detail what is involved in the process of note-making. The concern of this book, however, is to give candidates tips on how to handle note-making in national examinations in terms of layout, note style and brevity of the fair copy of the notes.

2. General Rules in note-making

- Do not present notes in prose form.
- Do not pick text from the passage word for word.
- Be consistent in numbering (see numbering conventions below).
- Each separate point must be written on a separate line.
- Be brief – no complete sentences are allowed.

3. Layout

The layout of notes consists of title, main points, major supporting points and minor supporting points. The fair copy of the notes should be presented in a specified layout as follows:

The title should:

- be in block letters and NOT underlined or in small letters
- AND underlined
- not be numbered
- be centered

The main points should:

- be underlined;
- start from the margin;
- be numbered with either of the following:
 - Arabic Numerals (1, 2, 3 etc)
 - Capital Letters (A, B, C etc)
 - Upper case Roman Numerals (I, II, III etc)

The major and minor supporting points should

- be numbered with either of the following:
 - small letters (a, b, c etc)
 - lower case Roman Numerals (i, ii, iii etc)
 - bullets

Do not use the same numbering for different levels of facts. For example, if the main points have been numbered with capital letters, you should not number supporting points with letters even though they be lower case. Use either Roman or Arabic Numerals or bullets. Numbering system should be consistent.

4. Note style

This refers to the way notes have been presented. Sometimes it also encompasses how sentences or phrases have been reconstructed. As already indicated above, notes must consist of title, main points, major supporting points and minor supporting points.

i. Title

A passage normally contains one main idea. This idea is the one that constitutes the title for the passage. When you read a passage ask yourself the question "What is the passage all about?" This question can be answered by a single word or phrase. It is this word or phrase that makes up the title of the passage.

ii. Main Points

We already saw in Chapter II that in factual compositions paragraphs begin with topic sentences. It is this topic sentence that captures the main idea contained in the paragraph. Sometimes, however, we may not have a clear topic sentence in a paragraph. In this case, a paragraph just begins with a topic idea. Let us consider examples below.

Third, you have to be organised. Good organisation will cut out the strain of having to keep lots of details in your head. Some of the ways of making sure that you are really organized are writing everything down, making timetables and keeping lists.

Fourth, you have to learn to prioritise things. When time is limited, make sure that only very important tasks are given priority while the rest are waiting. At very busy times you should ignore some jobs altogether while concentrating on studies and getting through the examinations. Don't feel guilty about it.

In the paragraphs above, topic sentences are italicized. These italicized topic sentences have main verbs where the main idea revolves. These are *organised* and *learn*. Based on these verbs therefore the main points of the above paragraphs can be

captured in the notes as “*Be organised*” and “*Learn to prioritise*” respectively.

In cases where you have topic ideas instead of topic sentences, you can phrase the ideas as briefly as possible.

iii. Supporting Points

The rest of the sentences in each respective paragraph simply supply supporting information. These make up what are known as supporting points or ideas. Each of them will have a verb or verbs which captures the idea. In the paragraph below, the ideas have been italicized.

Third, you have to be organised. Good organisation will (1) *cut out the strain* of having to keep lots of details in your head. Some of the ways of making sure that you are really organized are (2) *writing everything down*, (3) *making timetables* and (4) *keeping lists*.

However, it has to be noted that supporting points are not always on the same level. For example, in the paragraph above, the first point is on the result of being organised while the last two are on how organisation can be achieved. As such, the first point is a major supporting point while the last two are minor supporting points. The paragraph can be laid out as below.

1. Organised

- a. cut out the strain
 - writing everything down
 - making timetables
 - keeping lists

iv. Other Paragraphs

Apart from the paragraphs which supply the substance of a passage as exemplified above, it is important to know that a passage may also contain other types of paragraphs. These include: introductory, transitional and concluding paragraphs. You do not have to make notes from these paragraphs because they are not really factual but rather they perform different functions. According to Chikoti 2008, these paragraphs have the following characteristics:

- They may be composed of one sentence only.
- They may capture different ideas in one sentence.
- They may be used to prepare the reader about what they are about to read or hear; or recapture what they have read.
- They may not have an independent idea connected to the topic as other paragraphs do.

An introductory paragraph comes at the beginning of a passage. However, it is not every paragraph that comes at the beginning of a passage that is an introductory paragraph. Introductory paragraphs are made to prepare the reader for the substance that is coming in the subsequent paragraphs.

A transitional paragraph establishes a link between two paragraphs. It links a paragraph dealing with one subject to another paragraph dealing with a different subject. This ensures that there is coherence in the piece of writing. It is important to note that a transitional paragraph does not have facts of its own.

A concluding paragraph, on the other hand, simply consolidates or recaptures what the other paragraphs have already dealt with.

3. Brevity

One of the important skills in note-making is in making the notes brief. Brevity means that the notes should be brief, that is, complete sentences are not allowed. Brevity can be achieved in two ways: rephrasing the sentences in a shorter form; using short forms, abbreviations, acronyms and symbols instead of words or phrases.

a. Re-phrasing

Re-phrasing is done when a meaning in a long stretch of text can be contained in a shorter phrase. Let us look at the example below.

His first habit is *going to church every Sunday and Wednesday*.

The italicized part of the sentence above can be rephrased as follows:

His first habit is *church going*.

The expression above has collapsed 7 words in the original expression into two.

b. Short forms, abbreviations, acronyms and symbols

Wherever a chance arises, it is recommended to use conventional short forms, abbreviations and acronyms. Sometimes there is a special allocation of marks for these.

Short forms are shorter representations of words which are long. For example, the word "*representative*" can be shortened to "*rep*".

Some most common short forms are as follows:

ppl	-	people
dept	-	department
approx	-	approximately
sch	-	school
Wed	-	Wednesday
Jan	-	January

Abbreviations are structures made from initial letters of words making up a name or an expression.

Examples of common abbreviations include:

CCAP	-	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
USA	-	United States of America
MCP	-	Malawi Congress Party
UDF	-	United Democratic Front
DPP	-	Democratic Progressive Party
IBM	-	International business machine

Acronyms are structures which sound like a word but are made from initial letters of words making up a name or an expression.

Examples include:

COSOMA	-	Copyright Society of Malawi
NDA	-	National Democratic Alliance
AFORD	-	Alliance for Democracy

Symbols are representation of words which are not words themselves.

Examples include:

=	-	equals
%	-	percentage
1	-	one
2 nd	-	second
©	-	copyright
®	-	registered
#	-	number
<	-	less than
>	-	greater than
/	-	or

It has to be emphasized here that it is not allowed to use non-conventional short forms, abbreviations, acronyms or symbols.

Some of these include:

B4	-	before
<u>Cⁿ</u>	-	when

4. Questions and Model Answers

Question 1

Read the following passage carefully and afterwards make a summary of it in NOTE-FORM.

In your summary:

- Provide a suitable title for the passage
- Give the main points
- Supply supporting points for each main point

Marks will be awarded for note-style, brevity and a fair-copy layout. Candidates who simply copy the passage will be penalized.

Anxiety is an uneasy feeling in the mind. This time the mind is troubled. Being anxious is not a conducive state of mind especially when you are preparing for an important examination such as the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE).

It is not easy to realise that you are under attack of anxiety. Some of the symptoms of anxiety are crying for no good reasons, experiencing sleeplessness and studying for long hours without anything seeming to stick. A person under serious attack of anxiety is likely to experience withdrawn silence and have irregular eating patterns.

From what has been discussed so far, anxiety is not a good thing, let alone to a candidate. Indeed, there are two major disadvantages of anxiety. First, anxiety prevents concentration. In addition to this, anxiety stops you from working effectively. This creates more anxiety and gets one into a dangerous cycle.

There are many ways, however, of eliminating the causes of anxiety. First on the list is to make sure that you break the

anxiety cycle itself. Second, you have to check or ensure that you are happy with your overall goal. This is so because if you are happy with that, you are making progress in your plans for the future. You will not feel anxious that you are wasting time.

Third, you have to be organised. Good organisation will cut out the strain of having to keep lots of details in your head. Some of the ways of making sure that you are really organized are writing everything down, making timetables and keeping lists.

Fourth, you have to learn to prioritise things. When time is limited, make sure that only very important tasks are given priority while the rest are waiting. At very busy times you should ignore some jobs altogether while concentrating on studies and getting through the examinations. Don't feel guilty about it. Finally, use time sensibly. Employ some time saving methods, for example, fast reading techniques. Do not waste time on aimless worrying and useless arguments.

ANXIETY

1 Symptoms

- a *Crying for no good reasons*
- b *Sleeplessness*
- c *Studying for long hours without anything sticking*
- d *Withdrawn silence*
- e *Irregular eating patterns*

2 Disadvantages

- a Prevents concentration
- b Stops from working effectively
- c Creates more anxiety
 - i Gets into a cycle

3 Ways of eliminating causes

- a Break anxiety circle
- b Ensure you are happy with overall goal
 - i Not anxious of wasting time
- c Be organised
 - i to avoid memorizing details
 - (1) Write everything down
 - (2) Make timetables
 - (3) Keep lists
- d Learn to prioritise things
 - i Prioritise important tasks when time is limited
 - ii Ignore some jobs at busy times
 - iii Concentrate on studies & getting through exams
 - iv Don't feel guilty about it
- e Use time sensibly
 - i Employ time saving methods e.g.
 - (1) Fast reading techniques
 - ii Waste no time on:
 - (1) Aimless worrying
 - (2) Useless arguments

Practice passage

Read the following passage carefully and afterwards make a summary of it in note form. In your summary:

- Provide a suitable title for your passage
- Give the main points
- Supply supporting points

Marks will be awarded for note-style, brevity and fair copy layout. Candidates who simply copy the passage will be penalized, leading to a heavy loss of marks.

Anger is an intense emotion which can stay in a person for many years. It can do some damage emotionally as well as physically. Unexpressed anger is associated with some depression and feeling of worthlessness. It is believed that there is also a link between anger and certain types of mental retardation. Most people do not know how to handle the feeling of anger within them. The only coping mechanism they know is aggression or violent outbursts. This is usually destructive in that, while there is a sense of relief afterwards, the consequences of the expression can be dreadful.

Anger lies in the expectations we have of others as well as the interpretations we make of our interactions with others. We hold certain expectations about the way that we should be treated. There are personality rules within every person concerning how others should treat you and how you should treat others. If you perceive that someone is not responding to you according to your expectations, then you respond negatively towards that person. It is perfectly in order to hold expectations about the way that one is treated. Each of us expects to be treated with some respect and consideration, to be acknowledged and appreciated. It is, however, when some of the expectations we hold become excessive or unreasonable, that we tend to suffer. One such expectation, for example is, "I must be loved by everyone," or "everyone must agree with what I say". Unfortunately, life being what it is, this rule can never be satisfied because not everyone is going to love you or agree with you. Hence, when the expectations are not met, the experience pains. Anger is a front for the pain we feel when these expectations are not met.

To deal with anger, acknowledge that you have a problem with anger. The removal of the problem can only be effected when you bring it into the open and admit first to yourself that you have a problem. Self-deception prevents us from dealing with issues in a healthy manner.

Walk away from an anger-creating environment so as to cool down. The intensity of anger can at times lead us to actions we would later regret. We may act violently or say words or do things out of anger that could ruin or damage relationships permanently. Walking away is not a sign of defeat or cowardice. It is a sign of maturity. When you are angry, do not talk much. Choose to be silent until peace is restored in your heart.

Maturity is the sense that you know your limits. The damage caused by not walking away could be worse than that caused by walking away. Go out, leave the room and tell yourself to cool down. Vent out the energies of the anger. Anger is energy. Run, hit your pillow, scream!

The best remedy for controlling anger is prevention rather than cure. If you have an understanding of the dynamics of anger, you shall be in a better position to control it.

allowing only one finger at a time, and so, when the book of
books is open, all fingers are working outside the book at the
same time, leaving only the thumb and forefinger to hold the
book upright. This is a very good way of reading a book.

After this, the children practice holding the book firmly, then
the teacher asks them to copy a large letter, which is not
written in the book, but is written on a separate sheet of paper.
The children are asked to copy the letter just as it is, and
not to change its shape or size. This is done by holding the
book with both hands, and copying the letter with a pencil.

When this is well understood, the teacher asks the children
to hold the book with one hand, and to copy the letter with
the other. This is done by holding the book with the left hand,
and writing with the right hand. This is done in the same way

as before, but the children are told to hold the book with their
left hand, and to copy the letter with their right hand.

After this, the teacher asks the children to copy the letter
with both hands, and to hold the book with one hand.

After this, the teacher asks the children to copy the letter
with both hands, and to hold the book with one hand.

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

1. Introduction

As part of comprehension testing, candidates are required to summarize the comprehension passage given. This summary is not very different from note-making which has been discussed in the chapter above. The only major difference comes in the presentation. In note-making, the facts are presented in note style – that is, in point form. In summary, on the other hand, the facts are presented in prose.

Summary writing at MSCE involves identifying main ideas in a passage and presenting them in one's own words within the specified number of words. Successful summary writing therefore depends on the ability to identify the ideas or points that make up a passage. As already pointed out above, these ideas may be contained in a single topic sentence of a paragraph or in a group of sentences.

2. The process of summarising

Stage 1

In summary writing the first and most important stage is identifying topic sentences. Once identified, you can simply underline them right on the question paper with a pencil for easy reference.

Note that it is not every paragraph that contains these topic sentences. Some paragraphs serve other purposes apart from adding to the main topic of the passage. These include: introductory, transitional and concluding paragraphs. Such paragraphs must be ignored when identifying topic sentences.

Let us examine the passage below for example. All the main ideas have been underlined:

Perhaps no other community in Malawi is more alarmed by the problem of deforestation than the country's over 100,000 herbalists.

Indigenous trees and herbs are their stock in trade. The remedies herbalists prescribe derive from plant roots, barks, and leaves. The fate of their calling, therefore, is clearly tied to the fate of the indigenous forests. Although the government believes the best way to contain the problem of deforestation is to plant more trees, herbalists who command a national practitioner to patient ratio of 1 to 138, do not see afforestation as the best solution to the depletion of forests. The solution they prescribe is prevention of forests from destruction. According to the president of the International Traditional Healers Council of Malawi, the biggest culprits for deforestation are those who fell trees for fuel wood and charcoal production.

"Government can stop these people by introducing coal as an alternative source of energy," suggests the president. "We have a coal mine in this country. Why not produce enough coal and popularize it everywhere in our towns? After all, coal burns longer than charcoal, so town people are likely to prefer it to charcoal. Who will

then buy the charcoal since people who buy charcoal are town dwellers?

Government officials maintain that the solution is not in alternative energy sources. Argues Deputy Regional Forest Officer for the South, "the alternatives – electricity, coal, solar energy or paper briquettes – will always be on a small scale. The real solution is to continue encouraging the rural communities to plant trees around their villages and in bare areas."

Meanwhile, the destruction of forests continues unabated. And so the president of International Traditional Healers Council of Malawi and his colleagues, aware of the immediate danger deforestation poses to their vocation, have resorted to protecting indigenous trees and herbs that have medicinal properties.

Their council has so far established twelve botanical gardens throughout the country, where such trees are protected from man, beasts and fire. Conservation in these gardens, which range in size from three acres to twelve acres, is both "in situ" and "ex situ". In "in situ" conservation, medicinal species already growing in the garden habitat are identified so that they can be placed under the watchful eye of the garden guard. In "ex situ" conservation, species are transferred from habitats where they are usually endangered by human settlement or cultivation. These species are propagated in the garden by seed or cutting.

The council's largest botanical garden is the twelve acre property it manages in Mwanza District. Although it is in the southern region (the most densely populated

region, and therefore the worst hit by the problem of vanishing forests), sparsely populated Mwanza is the only district in the region where one can still find extensive tracts of indigenous forests that are not government forest reserves. The council bought the forest from a local woman and appointed the chairman of the district's branch of the council, a 47 year old herbalist to watch over the precious species. A practitioner for over twenty years, he had to relocate his clinic from one part of the district to a homestead the council purchased for him at the garden site.

The Mwanza botanical garden was officially opened in November 1996 by the Minister of Health. According to the chairperson, each of the over seventy herbalists that attended the opening ceremony brought a cutting of a medicinal tree or herb and planted it in the botanical garden. To mark the official opening of the garden, the Minister himself planted a sausage tree (*Kigilia Africana*), a widely used medicinal tree whose roots and leaves cure ailments ranging from venereal diseases to insanity. Traditional healers seeking to extract herbal medicine from the garden must first obtain permission from the chairperson, who warns them not to extract any root or bark from a single tree, as that will kill it. Livestock are not allowed in the botanical garden. Even the chairperson's modest herd of cattle have to graze in other parts of the forest. Whenever he gets some freedom from attending to his patients or concocting and bottling his herbal medicines, the chairperson takes immense pleasure in showing interested visitors around the garden.

The Deputy Regional Forest Officer for the south, speaking about Mwanza District's surviving forests, once

said: "but even these, in a year they'll be gone. All the charcoal being sold in Blantyre come from here. If you saw where the charcoal is burnt, you would feel sorry for the area.

Stage 2

Once topic sentences have been identified, the second stage involves rephrasing the ideas in your own words. The topic sentences above can be rephrased as follows:

In Malawi, herbalists are more alarmed by deforestation because their trade depends on indigenous trees and herbs. They think this can be stopped by introducing alternative sources of energy. Government officers, however, think that the solution is afforestation.

International Traditional Healers Council of Malawi has established twelve botanical gardens throughout the country to protect indigenous trees. The largest of these gardens is in Mwanza District. It was opened in November, 1996.

Stage 3

It is advisable that the summary should be drafted first so that corrections and refinements should be made on the draft before writing a fair copy.

Corrections and refinements may involve adding some additional points which were initially left out. This may be done if the resultant summary does not reach the minimum number of words. If the summary is longer than the required limit, it can be shortened in two ways:

- Removing less important words

Some words like adjectives and adverbs can be removed from the notes to reduce the number of words. It has to be noted, however, that some adjectives or adverbs are so important that removing them would mean distorting the meaning of the summary. Let us see an example below:

In Malawi, herbalists are more alarmed by deforestation because their trade depends on *indigenous* trees and herbs.

In the example above, the adverb “more” can be removed without distorting the meaning of the summary. However, the adjective “indigenous” can not be removed because the focus of the passage is not just on any trees but specifically indigenous ones.

- Removing some points

Though all points which have been picked for our summary are important, nevertheless, they differ in the degree of importance. In situations where removing less important words may not reduce the number of words to the desired range, some less important points are removed. In our summary below the underlined sentences can be removed without disturbing the coherence of the summary.

In Malawi, herbalists are more alarmed by deforestation because their trade depends on indigenous trees and herbs. They think this can be stopped by introducing alternative sources of energy. Government officers, however, think that the solution is afforestation.

International Traditional Healers Council of Malawi has

established twelve botanical gardens throughout the country to protect indigenous trees. The largest of these gardens is in Mwanza District. It was opened in November, 1996.

- Non-structured Passage

Literary works such as short stories and plays do not have facts presented in a structured manner as in the passage above. However, it is possible to identify scenes of a story line that have made up the passage. In such passages, it is difficult to use the three stages described above to make a summary and as such, a summary is made based on the scenes. Each scene may be contained in a single paragraph or in several paragraphs. A candidate is expected to summarise each scene in his or her own words. For example, see the question and its model answer below.

3. Question and Model Answer

In your own words, summarise the passage below. Your summary should be between 70 and 100 words.

Chilipo tossed again in his bed. He stretched his right hand to gather Jane closer to him. She was not there. She must be at the toilet, he thought. He wondered how she could go to the toilet without switching on the light. The bedroom floor was littered with unpacked cases. They had just arrived from Lilongwe that very night. Chilipo had been promoted to a top management position at Talimba Limited. The position was tenable here in Blantyre. How the hell can she manage to make her way to the toilet without lights on? He murmured under his breath.

He reached for the switch and with the tip of his fingers pushed the creaky button down. His eyes were momentarily blinded by the bright flood of light from the energy server bulb which illuminated the room.

"Oh! My God!" The words spurted out of his mouth reflexively. Jane's night dress lay neatly on the bed with her head scarf on top. He looked at the wall clock. It was nearly twelve mid-night.

"Jane!" He shouted. There was a tremor in his voice. His hands started shaking. No reply. He jumped at the door and dashed to the toilet all along calling on top his voice. The door was closed and lights were off. She was not there. He raced to the living room confusedly. The main outer door was securely closed. He hurriedly checked all the windows. All were securely closed. The only way out remaining was through the kitchen door. He groped his way through the darkness to the kitchen door. It was securely locked. Kitchen windows were too small to let through a person of Jane's stature. He was now shaking uncontrollably.

"How can she do this to me?" He mouted the words softly.

'You deserve all this, boy.' Something insidé him replied.

Chilipo and Jane were different on one thing; Chilipo was a drunkard while Jane was a serious Christian. Every Sunday, Chilipo drove Jane to church and went out drinking.

This Sunday, Chilipo decided to attend the church service on Jane's insistence.

"Open your bibles on Matthew 26 verse 64."

There was some cracking noise as the congregation leafed through their bibles. Chilipo swore under his breath as he went back and forth from Genesis to Revelation without locating where the book of Matthew was. Jane looked at him sympathetically. Slowly she gave him her bible and took his which she opened to where the said scripture was.

"Jesus is assuring us that He is coming soon." The preacher continued after reading a small portion of the cited scripture. The sermon seemed never-ending to Chilipo. The rest of the congregation seemed to enjoy the service very much. Periodically "Amen", "Praise he Lord" and "Allelujah" were chorused in unison.

Back at home, Chilipo sank into a sofa, tired with the long church service.

“Darling.” Jane started as she made herself comfortable beside her husband. “Did you hear what the Pastor preached; that Jesus is coming soon?”

“To do what?” He responded mockingly.

“To take the faithful to heaven. That’s what the bible calls rapture.”

“I’m sorry Jane. I don’t believe in this Jesus kind of stuff.” He answered curtly.

He now remembered how Jane recoiled in the sofa and released a deep sigh of resignation.

Suddenly he heard a loud knock at the front door. Without asking who it was, rushed to the sitting room and opened the door expecting to see Jane in the doorway.

“My wife and children have disappeared right before my sight.” It was his neighbour Msakati.

Chilipo gasped in response. He felt the earth sinking under his feet. For a long moment he stood fixed in the doorway, mouth agape, his gaze fixed on Msakati.

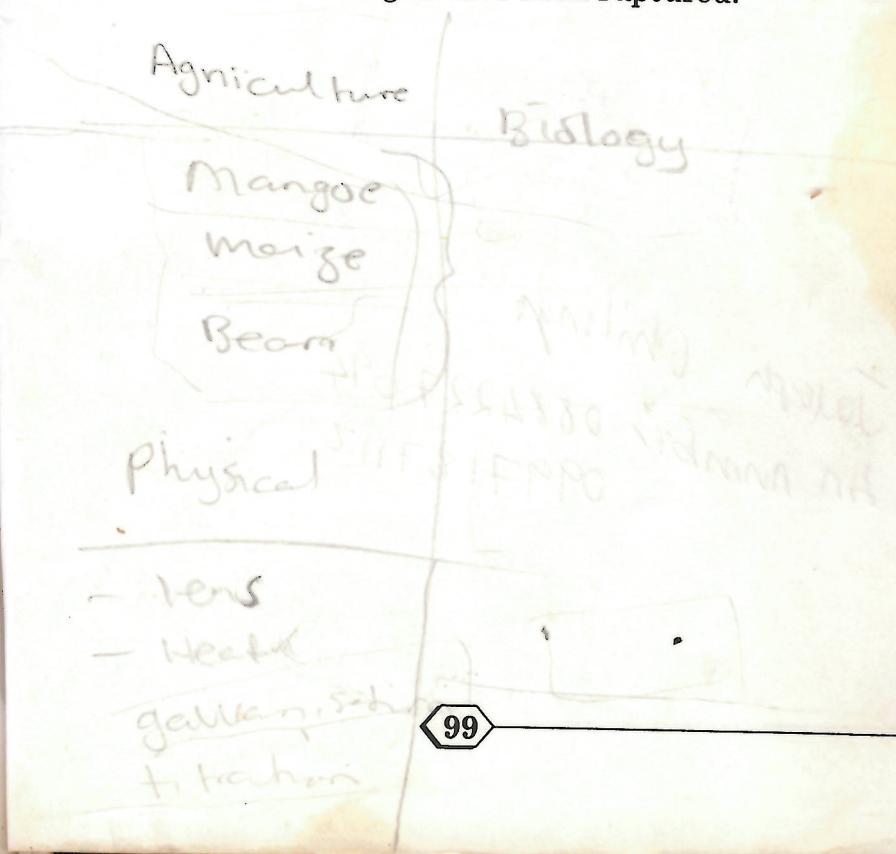
"Rupture." He managed to spit the word with difficulty.

Msakati nodded and left without any further word.

Model Answer

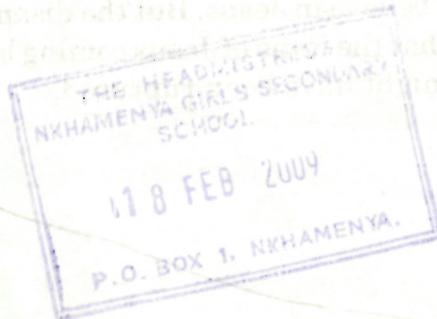
When Chilipo woke up he realised that his wife Jane was not in bed. He searched for her in several places but could not find her.

Chilipo was not a committed Christian. One day, however, he went to church where he found the service too long. Even after the service, he could not believe in Jesus. But the disappearance of his wife showed him that the issue of Jesus coming back could be true and that Jane might have been ruptured.



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Joseph Chilanga
An number 0884227694
0997187112