

## CHAPTER 1: COMPOSITION WRITING

A composition can be defined as a piece of writing on a special subject. As an M.S.C.E. candidate, consider it imperative to develop your skills in writing English.

### HOW TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH

- (a) Read extensively. Exposing yourself to a variety of materials in English is helpful. Read a lot of novels, magazines and newspaper articles. English, in this way, is learnt spontaneously.
- (b) Practice how to write. You need to know that language does not develop in a vacuum. You do not have to spare any effort. It has been observed that the intensity of practice places you in a safe zone. Through practice the problem of committing grammatical errors is minimized.
- (c) Minimise the usage of vernacular language when communicating with people for the good part of your school day.

This strategy is essential as it aids one's brain to think in English. When one's brain gets used to this, he or she finds it easy to write a given composition test. Unlike those who do not employ this mechanism, you are able to think and write your composition test faster.

- (d) Join English clubs existing in your school. These may include Writers, Drama and Debating clubs. The mentioned clubs are an avenue through which you can gain your proficiency in English.

### COMPOSITION EXAMINED AT MSCE LEVEL

There are five types of compositions examined at MSCE level. These are as follows:

- (a) Business letter
- (b) Speech
- (c) Report
- (d) Essay
- (e) Short story

All these compositions as at now come in English paper two.

### GENERAL RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN WRITING A COMPOSITION TEST

- (a) Avoid contractions except in direct quotations in speeches and short stories. Contraction is an act of making a word appear shorter or smaller. The shortened word is always a verb.

<u>Contractions</u>	<u>Correct presentation</u>
I'm	I am
I've	I have
I'd	I had / I would
I'll	I will
She's	she is
He's	he is

She'll	she will	Doesn't	does not
Here's	here is	Don't	do not
That'll	that will	Hasn't	has not
That's	that is	Haven't	have not
That'll	that will	Is not	isn't
That's	that is	Mightn't	might not
What's	what is	Mustn't	must not
Where's	where is	Needn't	need not
Who'd	who would	Oughtn't	ought not
Who's	who is	Shan't	shall not
Aren't	are not	Shouldn't	should not
Can't	can not	Wasn't	was not
Couldn't	could not	Weren't	were not
Daren't	dare not	Won't	will not
Didn't	did not	Wouldn't	would not

### (b) Avoid usage of slang or colloquial expressions

Slang is non standard English. It is used by particular groups of people who know each other and is usually spoken rather than written.

Examples of slang words or expressions

#### Slang word

(i) ain't

#### Standard word

is / am / are / has/ have

#### Slang sentence

I ain't coming till six

#### Standard sentence

I am not coming till six o'clock

#### Slang word

(ii) Gimme

#### Standard word

Give me

#### Slang sentence

Gimme time please

#### Standard sentence

Give me time please

#### Slang word

(iii) Gonna

#### Standard word

will / shall

#### Slang sentence

(iv) We gonna win this game

#### Standard English

We will win this game

#### Slang

(v) Marijuana

#### Standard

Indian hemp

#### Slang sentence

(vi) He smokes Marijuana

#### Standard sentence

He smokes Indian hemp

**Other slang words**

<u>Slang word</u>	<u>Standard word</u>
Gotta	got to
Wanna	want to
Dad	father
Mum	mother
Papa / grand pa	grand father
Coz	because
Guys	gentlemen
Kid	child

**(c) No use of abbreviations**

<u>Abbreviations</u>	<u>Full presentation</u>
Y.C.S.	Young Christian Students
M.C.P.	Malawi Congress Party
P.O.	Post Office
M.B.C.	Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation
N.B.	National Bank
R.S.A.	Republic of South Africa

**(d) No use of short forms****Examples**

<u>Word</u>	<u>Short form</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Short form</u>
Monday	Mon	December	Dec.
Tuesday	Tues.	School	Sch.
Wednesday	Wed.	Minutes	Mins.
Thursday	Thurs.	Second	Sec.
Friday	Fri.	People	Pple.
Saturday	Sat.	Approximately	Approx.
Sunday	Sun.	Hours	Hrs.
January	Jan.		
February	Feb.		
September	Sept.		

**(e) Avoid Acronyms**

Acronyms are words formed by combining the initial letters of different words

**Examples**

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Proper presentation</u>
COSOMA	Copyright Society of Malawi
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
SCOM	Student Christian Organization of Malawi
PETRA	Peoples Transformation Party
MAWU	Malawi Writers Union

**(f) Avoid proverbial expressions**

Examples of proverbs

- Make hay while the sun shines
- If you live in glass house, don't throw stones

Proper presentation

- Do things at the right time
- Be careful when you have a weakness

**(g) Avoid Ideomatic Expressions**

Examples

He is sitting on the fence

Proper presentation

- He is not decided

**(h) Do not start a sentence with “And, So, With or “Because”.**

Examples of sentences to be avoided

- (i) Because he was hungry, he ate nsima.
- (ii) So he decided to leave for Lilongwe
- (iii) And this is what happened.

Proper presentation

He ate nsima because he was hungry.  
He decided to leave for Lilongwe.  
This is what happened.

**(i) All numbers from zero to ninety should be written in words.**

Examples

One

Twenty three

Seventy six

**(j) Numbers starting from 100 onwards should be written in figures**

Examples

100, 200, 324, 672, 1461

**(k) Avoid usage of American spellings:**

For example:- Labor, Sensitize, Socialize

**(l) Avoid exaggerations. Be as realistic as possible**

Examples of exaggerations

- Our school's football team scored 100 goals
- He was driving at 5000 kilometres per hour

Proper presentation

Our school's football team scored four goals.  
He was driving at 120 kilometres per hour.

**(m) Use words or expressions approximately**

**Wrong:** I want to tell you about the problem of drug and substance abuse.

**Correct:** I would like to inform you about the problem of drug and substance abuse.

**Wrong:** People steal maize and sell them.

**Correct:** People steal maize and sell it.

**Wrong:** Students vandalized school properties.

**Correct:** Students vandalized school property.

**Wrong:** Our old teacher showed us the way.

**Correct:** Our former teacher showed us the way.

**(n) Write within the word range of 350 – 500**

## **CHAPTER 2 : LETTER WRITING**

At M.S.C.E. level, a student is supposed to be knowledgeable of the requirements of a Business Letter. The focus will therefore be on this type of a letter which will be written in block style.

### **WHAT TO OBSERVE WHEN WRITING A BUSINESS LETTER**

- (a) Addresses
- (b) Date
- (c) Salutation
- (d) Introduction
- (e) The body
- (f) The conclusion
- (g) The valediction

#### **A. ADDRESSES**

The Business or a Formal letter has two postal addresses. One of them is the senders address. The other one is the recipient's address.

##### **The Sender's Address**

- This is the postal address of the writer.
- It is presented on the top right corner of the page.
- It is imagined and provided by the one writing the letter because more often than not the addresses are not provided in the question.
- It is worthwhile to present it in block although it can also be presented in an indented manner.

##### **The Recipient's Address**

- This is the postal address of the addressee.
- It is always presented on the left margin after the date.
- It is always supposed to be block.
- The first line of this addressee should be the addressee's position.

##### **Examples**

The Chief Executive Officer  
The Minister of Education  
The Chief Security Officer  
The Social Welfare Officer

##### **General Information on Addresses**

- Write them in block
- Present every first letter of a word in capital.
- No abbreviation and short forms are allowed.
- After the sender's address, leave a blank line before you write the recipient's address.
- You don't need to punctuate addresses

## **B. THE DATE**

- The date is another important part of the letter.
- It is always presented below the sender's address and after a blank line.
- It is only punctuated after the month. In this case, you put a comma.

## **C. THE SALUTATION**

- The salutation is a direct address of the one you are writing to.
- This person is addressed as Sir or Madam.
- In full, the salutation is written as follows: Dear Sir or Dear Madam.
- You are not allowed to write like this: Dear Sir / Madam. In any case, choose either Sir or Madam.
- Letters "S" on Sir and "M" on Madam should be written in capital letters.

## **D. THE HEADING**

- The Heading is written after the salutation and one blank line.
- It can be written in capital letters.
- It can as well be written in small letters.
- When you choose to write the heading in capital letters only, you do not have to underline it.
- When you write in small letters, remember to write the initial letters of all nouns, verbs, adjectives and other important words in capital. This should not happen with prepositions and articles except where these are found at the beginning of the heading.
- The heading should preferably be a phrase. Sentences should be avoided.

### **Examples of Headings**

Vandalism in Schools  
Request for Assistance

## **E. THE INTRODUCTION**

- The introduction should be a brief one.
- It should state or explain the purpose of the letter and other elements as demanded in the question. These may include, places and dates.
- Always start by writing this phrase:  
"I write to ...." This retrains you from digressing from the purpose of the letter.

### **Sample Question for Letter Writing**

Imagine that your community is facing the problem of beggars. As a concerned member of the community, write a letter to the District Social Welfare Officer informing him about the problem.

In your letter, you may include the following points.

- (a) Location and extent of the problem
- (b) Causes of the problem
- (c) The assistance you need from the Social Welfare Office.
- (d) Other relevant information.

## Sample Response for the above Question with Focus on Addresses, Date, Salutation and Introduction.

Phwezi Trading Centre  
Post Office Box 27  
Rumphi

19<sup>th</sup> September, 2014

The District Social Welfare Officer  
Post Office Box 268  
Rumphi

Dear Sir

### SEEKING ASSISTANCE ON THE PROBLEM OF BEGGARS

I write to seek an assistance from your office on the problem of beggars here at Phwezi Trading Centre. This problem has been there for three years now and it is becoming worse. You will be shocked to learn sir that this small community of ours has approximately thirty beggars.

### F. THE BODY

- The body is a culmination of different points expanded in different paragraphs.
- It needs to develop from a plan. You actually need to plan your composition before writing it as this prevents you from waffling.
- Each point from the plan is supposed to be introduced and substantiated in its own paragraph.
- While you do that make sure that the paragraphs are coherent. This is achieved through use of denoting devices.

### DENOTING DEVICES

Denoting devices, also called signaling devices, are words or phrases that indicate a shift from one idea to another by establishing a relationship.

#### Examples

Firstly  
Secondly  
Another  
Besides  
For example  
For instance  
In addition  
In a similar way  
Likewise  
Similarly  
Although  
Nevertheless

Even if  
To the contrary  
Instead  
Conversely  
On the other hand  
As a result  
Because  
For this reason  
Hence  
Therefore  
Consequently  
Meanwhile

In conclusion

In spite of  
Despite the fact

Presently  
Thereafter

#### A. THE CONCLUSION

The conclusion is the summation of what has been presented in the entire letter.

It is supposed to be brief.

In this concluding paragraphs, register your anticipation of hope and give your thanks to the addressee.

#### B. VALEDICTION

A valediction is a formal close of a letter. It is written “Yours faithfully.

This is followed by a signature and if the writers position matters, it is also included at the very end.

Example of the valediction

Yours faithfully

Brave Wathando

#### SAMPLE LETTER IN FULL

*Phwezi Trading Centre  
Post Office Box 27  
Rumphi.*

*19<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.*

*The District Social Welfare Officer  
Post Office Box 268  
Rumphi.*

*Dear Sir,*

#### ***SEEKING ASSISTANCE ON THE PROBLEM OF BEGGARS***

*I write to seek an assistance from your office on the problem our community is currently facing. Our community, Phwezi, has lately been faced by the problem of beggars, and the situation is becoming more worrisome.*

*The problem of beggars is a result of a number of factors. Firstly, it has been observed that lack of employment is contributing significantly to*



*this problem. I, for one, have seen a lot of young people here who finished their education long time ago and cannot secure any job. For this reason, they just loiter around the trading centre while some resort into begging. These are people who lack food, clothes and even accommodation.*

*The other cause is the behavior of certain parents. It has been observed that some parents especially men spend the little money they earn on drinking. They seem to think very little about their own children's welfare. These children end up begging from anyone they meet around the shops and at boarding secondary school here. The situation worse at beggars come in large numbers and inconvenience the students as they beg and scramble for the left overs.*

*The last major cause is the same world ravaging disease called Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome." This disease has not spared our community. In fact, it has taken the lives of most of the parents rendering children orphaned. The problem can however be attributed to the parents themselves. Most adults here behave strangely in the sense that they are so promiscuous. Consequently, they contract this deadly disease and die. The children left behind have no one to turn to for support. They eventually resort to begging.*

*In spite of the gravity of the problem, members of the community hold the feeling that with proper interventions this problem can be eradicated. There is a feeling that if your office can build an orphanage centre here, the problem will not be as it now. Establishing an orphanage would mean that these vulnerable children will be able to access their basic needs including education. Education will aid them to become self-reliant in future. Apart from the above stated solution, there is also need for your office to civic educate members of this community on the dangers of promiscuity and excessive beer drinking. Such a strategy will reduce deaths as well as the drinking habits. The result will be that people will be able to raise their children properly.*

*In conclusion, I hope your office will take this issue seriously and come to the rescue of our community. I thank you in advance.*

*Yours faithfully*

*Lughano Kuyokwa.*

**JOB APPLICATION LETTER**

In normal circumstances, a job application letter is supposed to be very short as much of the information is provided in the curriculum vitae. However, should this question come during the MSCE examination, you will be required to detail it since the requirement is that you write 350 to 500 words.

## **HOW TO WRITE A JOB APPLICATION LETTER**

- (a) Addresses

Refer to page 7

- (b) Date

Refer to page 7

- (c) Salutation

Refer to page 7

- (d) Heading

Write in capital letters. Below is an example of how you can write it.

APPLICATION FOR A JOB AS AN ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT

OR

APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT

- (e) **The introduction**

State that you are applying for a job and how you came to know about the vacancy.

- (f) **The Body**

Include the following information in the body of the job application letter.

- (i) Your personal background information

Your personal background information should include your nationality, age and marital status.

For example, if you are a Malawian, state it. If you are single, state it.

- (ii) State what you are doing now and the reason for applying for the present job.

- (iii) Provide information on your education and profession qualifications.

State your qualification in terms of academics and your profession. For example mention, if you hold an MSCE Certificate or a certificate in Accounting.

- (iv) Include information on your experience. For example the number of years you have been working.

- (v) State your character, interests and social skills. For example you may write statements like these:

I am a good team worker, flexible and sociable. I work very well under pressure.

- (vi) Mention your referees. Referees should include the former authorities of the schools you attended and organization you worked with.

## **MODEL JOB APPLICATION LETTER**

*Phwezi Foundation  
Post Office Box 222  
Rumphi*

*26<sup>th</sup> September, 2014*

*The General Manager  
Malawi Red Cross Society  
Post Office Box 5460  
Lilongwe*

*Dear Sir*

***APPLICATION FOR A JOB AS AN ACCOUNTANT***

*I write to apply for the post of an Accountant of which your organization advertised in the Nation Newspaper dated 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.*

*I am a twenty one years old single man residing at Phwezi in Rumphi. I hold a Malawi School Certificate of Education obtained from Robert Laws Secondary School in 2008. I scored a distinction in Mathematics and credits and passes in other subjects. The actual grades were as follows: Mathematics 2, English 4, Physical Science 4, Geography 6, History 7, Agriculture 7, and Bible Knowledge 7. I also hold a diploma in accountancy of which I obtained in 2010 from the Malawi College of Accountancy. The combination of these two certificates allow me to meet the requirements your organization prescribed in its advertisement for this post.*

*Currently, I am working with Phwezi Foundation as an assistant Accountant. I joined this institution in the year 2011 and I have been here till now. This means that I have a hands on experience on the job for three years. Despite the fact that there is no any problem with my current employer, my desire is to move on to a more challenging position. I feel this position I have applied for in your organization tallies with my abilities and qualification. This will be an addition experience to me in addition to come earnings. My interest with your organization started long time ago due to humanitarian services you provide to the society. Getting employed by your organization will also help me greatly. This*

*will change my life economically. Your decisions and directives on my job will also help to perfect my working abilities.*

*I am a good team worker, a fast learner, sociable and flexible. I work very well under pressure and I always meet the deadlines. My greatest wish is to help advance the plans of your organization. I will always keep in mind the reason why I will need to do my job professionally and diligently. For example, I will observe punctuality and be obedient to those in authority.*

*With regard to my hobbies, I like reading economic and political articles. I also enjoy singing and watching music videos. I sing in our church choir.*

*For more information about me may you please contact the following people. The Headmaster, Robert Laws Secondary School, Post Office Box 44, Embangweni, Mzimba and the Board Chairman, Phwezi Foundation, Post Office Box 222, Rumpfi.*

*I hope to receive your consideration and this will be highly appreciated.*

*Yours faithfully*

*Daniel Nkosi.*

## **EXERCISE**

**Answer the following questions and make sure that your letters have a word range of 350 – 500.**

1. Imagine that there are a lot of cases of indiscipline at one of the secondary schools in your area. Write a letter to the District Education Manager informing him about this. In your letter, include the following points.
  - (a) Location and examples of the indiscipline acts
  - (b) Causes of these acts
  - (c) Effects of indiscipline acts
  - (d) How to end these problems
2. Imagine that there is an advertisement in The Daily Times in which Phwezi Foundation is looking for a qualified person to fill the position of Chief Security Officer. Write a letter to the General Secretary applying for the post.

In your letter include the following points:

- (a) Details of your qualification
  - (b) Where and when you obtained your qualification and the grades if necessary
  - (c) Why you are interested in the post
  - (d) Suggestions of measures you will put in place to improve the security of the place if successful
3. Imagine that in your area men and women are mostly spending their time drinking beer in devoting it to doing development work. As a concerned village headman, write a letter to the District Commissioner informing him about the problem.

In your speech you may include the following points

- (a) The location of the area
- (b) How irresponsible beer drinking has affected development in the area
- (c) Suggest ways in which the people can minimize their beer drinking habits

### CHAPTER 3: SPEECH WRITING

A speech is defined as formal talk given usually to a large number of people on a special occasion. As an M.S.C.E. candidate, you need to be acquainted with speech writing skills.

A speech has the following parts

- (i) Title
- (ii) Introduction
- (iii) The body
- (iv) The conclusion

#### (a) The Title

- The title should be developed from the question
- It has to reflect the core of the question
- The title must be so brief, preferably a phrase
- It should sound general
- It must be written in capital letters and must not be underlined
- Write it at the center of the page

#### (b) The introduction

- The introduction of the speech, like any other composition should be brief. This restrains you from keeping the audience bored.
- It must also carry a list of dignitaries. These are people that make the audience. They may include public officials and local leaders.
- The first line must be list of dignitaries and should be presented in order of seniority.
- Names and positions of these dignitaries must begin with capital letters.
- The list of dignitaries should not be written inform of a sentence but a phrase.

#### (c) The body

- The body of a speech is a collection of different substantiated points. This is reflected in different paragraphs.
- When writing it, employ the first person point of view. This is where you use the pronoun 'I' or 'We'. What it means here is that you as the speaker imagines that you are literary speaking to the audience.
- The entire body, just like the introduction, should have features that arouse the interest of the audience.

#### Features that can Arouse Audience's Interest

- (i) Write short and clear sentences.
- (ii) If possible you can employ some quotations of great people of the world. These notable people may include great presidents, senior public officers. Do not get any quotations from people who are known.

#### Example of the quotation structure

The former president of our country, Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika, once said and I quote: Malawi is not a poor country. It is the people of Malawi that are poor.

**(iii) Use repetition where necessary**

Repeating expressions helps in creating emphasis. But do not overdo it to avoid rendering it into a cliché.

**Example of Repetition / Refrain**

Boys and girls cheating during examinations can destroy your future. Cheating during examinations can ruin this nation.

According to the above two sentences, the repeated phrase is “Cheating during examinations can .....”.

This helps to instill the point in the audience.

Note however, than use sparingly overuse of repetition bores the audience again. Be crafty when using this strategy.

(iv) Conversational strategy is also essential in creating effect. In this case, posing some questions become imperative.

**Examples of questions included in the speech**

- Boys and girls are you ready to be imprisoned due to cheating during examinations?
- How can Malawi develop with such massive examinations leakages?

**(d) THE CONCLUSION**

The concluding paragraph ought to take care of dignitaries and thanks. Mention only the one highest dignitary and the rest in general.

Example of conclusion

- At this juncture, our Guest of Honour and my fellow students, I urge you all to unitedly fight against cheating during examinations for it has a lot of negative effects to this country. I thank you all for your attention and may God bless you.

**OR**

- Finally, let me thank you our Headmaster, and all of you gathered here for your attention. God bless you.

**SAMPLE OF THE SPEECH WRITING**

Imagine that you are a head prefect of your school and have been asked to give a speech to your fellow students on the effects of cheating in an examination. Write a speech to be delivered to your fellow students.

In your speech include

- (a) Forms of cheating
  - (b) Reasons why students cheat during examinations
  - (c) The negative effects of cheating
  - (d) How the problem of cheating during examination can be stopped in the country
- (ISAMA Northern Division Mock Question: 2013)

### **SAMPLE OF THE PLAN TO THE QUESTION ABOVE**

- a. Causes of Cheating**
  - Lack of proper preparation
  - Lack of examination security
- b. Effects of Cheating**
  - Retardation of personal and national development
  - Leads to imprisonment
- c. How cheating during examination can be stopped**
  - Maximising examination security
  - Stiffer punishments to culprits

### **SAMPLE RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION ABOVE**

#### **CHEATING DURING EXAMINATIONS**

*The Headmaster, the Deputy Headteacher, Members of the teaching staff, Prefects, boys and girls: Allow me to first of all register my thanks to you all for the given opportunity that I can stand in front of you today and speak on the problem of cheating during examinations. This being a very serious issue, I therefore ask for your attention.*

*It is noted with disappointment that there are a lot of students in different schools who are involved in cheating during examinations. Reports have it that there are certain students who manage to blackmail the invigilating personnel and enter into the examination room with reference materials. These ill minded students hide these materials inside their clothes. What is even more disheartening is the fact that some teachers are also involved in this. These shameless teachers I am told, get money from lazy students on promise that they would help them pass examinations. Such teachers leak the questions to these students. This is total disgrace. Isn't it my fellow students?*

*Our Headmaster, girls and boys; there are a number of reasons why students cheat in examinations. One of them is lack of proper preparation. There is a bad tendency by most of us students. We often relax when we see that examinations are not coming anytime soon. We misdirect our energy to things that are not even helpful. For example, we simply make noise in class whenever teachers are not there. Some of us spend the entire night without reading even a single page of our notes. Surprisingly, such lazy people also want to pass. Is this fair? No! It is not.*



One other cause of cheating in an examination is examination security lapse. Examination papers are always prone to leakage whenever there is a weakness in the provision of security. What you need to know is that there are always certain people who are money hungry and would always take advantage of this. They would steal some examination scripts, photocopy them and sell them to desperate students. Some get them for their children. These students who access these papers discuss the questions in advance and go the examination room with answers in mind.

My fellow students, cheating in an examination can put you into serious problems. Mind you, disqualification follows whenever you are caught cheating. Think of how much your parents have spent on your education. Think of all the years you have been at this school and only ending up as some disqualified. Do you think your parents can be happy with this? Please spare them from the fate of shock. Apart from being disqualified you can as well end up being imprisoned. You have possibly ever heard from the radios that certain students who were caught cheating during last year's Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations were imprisoned for three years. Girls and boys, let me ask you a question. Who among you here is ready to be imprisoned due to cheating during examinations? Obviously, there is no one. Cheating in examinations retrogresses national development as it creates a mediocre working personnel.

Girls and boys, let us now turn to ways of stopping cheating in schools. I personally believe that intensifying examination security would help. These examinations scripts should be well guarded starting from the day of printing to the day they are being written. In addition to this, the culprits caught cheating should be given much stiffer punishments. Even if it means sentencing them to ten years imprisonment I would not mind because these are enemies to our society. Those cheating during schools terminal examination, need to be suspended from school.

At this juncture, our Headmaster and all of you gathered here, let us all fight against this malpractice because it ruins our nations. I thank you all for your attention and may God bless you.

## **EXERCISE**

Imagine that in your area people are not taking care of the environment. As a chairperson of the Community Environmental Conversation Committee, write a speech to be delivered to members of the community on the importance of taking care of the environment.

In your speech, you may include these points

- (a) Welcome remarks
- (b) Location of your community
- (c) How destructive to the environment the people are
- (d) The effects of destroying the environment
- (e) What should be done to maintain the environment
- (f) Concluding remarks

## **CHAPTER 4: SHORT STORY WRITING**

A short story can be defined as a piece of writing that reflects real human experiences and is shorter than a novel. A candidate is supposed to desist from writing folktales.

A short story has certain features that need to be adhered to when writing. The following are some of the features of the short story.

### **(a) Character and Characterisation**

- (i) A character is a person who is involved in advancing the story. The chief character is called a protagonist.

- (ii) Characterization

It is a process an author employs in making the characters appear real. This happens by giving the character the human traits, values and aspirations among other things.

### **(b) Setting**

Every short story will reflect the place or time it takes place. The time, place of social context becomes the setting. If the context or the setting is very important for your story then it needs to be detailed.

- (i) A geographical setting refers to the location of the story in terms of place.
- (ii) A historical setting is the location of the story in terms of time and certain memorable events. These can be political events for example.
- (iii) Cultural setting is reflected by prevailing elements of a particular culture.

**(c) Plot**

It is a sequence of events in a story from the beginning to the end. It is propelled by conflict.

**(d) Conflict**

It is a struggle facing the characters. It helps to move the story forward. Conflict can be within a character or it can be external. An external conflict can be as an opposition from other characters.

**(e) Exposition**

It lays the background work for the plot and provide the reader with the background information about the story. It reveals the protagonist and then setting. This means that when writing your story, you need to build it on certain characters. Reveal the major character as quickly as possible especially at the beginning. You also need to show the time when the events are taking place.

**(f) The Rising Action**

The Rising Action is the building up of the story. It begins to develop soon after the exposition.

**(g) The Climax**

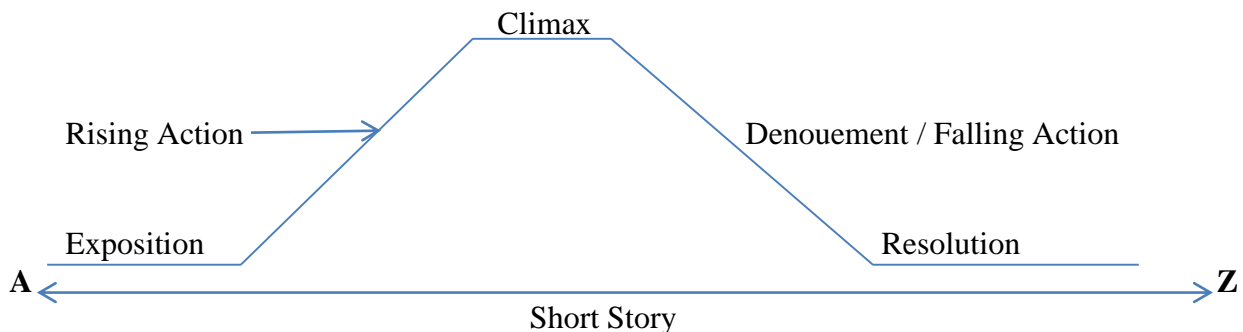
It is the most interesting or painful part of the story. It involves the important event, decision or discovery that affects the final outcome.

**(h) The Falling Action**

It is called the denouement. It consists of events that occur after climax. This part is characterized by stability.

**(i) Resolution**

The resolution is embedded in the falling action. It is when solutions to the problem has been identified. It is the end of it.



**(j) Narrative**

Any good short story consists of narratives. A narrative is an account of what happened. The narrator or the author tells the story as an observer. We employ a third person point of view.

**EXAMPLE**

There was a deafening silence as Chimaliro entered the classroom. His dilated eyes which appeared as fire were enough to for everyone to feel endangered. He immediately jumped to where I was sitting and my heart raced desperately.

**(k) Dialogue**

A good short story must also have dialogue in it. A dialogue is when people talk to each other. never dare write any story which is devoid of dialogue.

**EXAMPLE**

“You thought you are clever, didn’t you?” hoarse voice echoed in the corners of the classroom.

“I am sorry. Please forgive me.” Gezamchere pleaded.

**Punctuating a Dialogue**

Dialogue is about direct speech. You therefore need to punctuate it accordingly.

**Examples of wrong and correct dialogue punctuation.**

**Correct**

“Why did you do that shameful act to the community?” Chimwemwe asked.

**Correct**

John, his father asked, “Will you wash my clothes?”

**Correct**

“No, I am tired. I have been working on my assignment all day long,” he replied.

“Hurrah!” Sipho exclaimed, our team has won the match.”

**Correct**

“Hurrah!” Sipho exclaimed, “Our team has won.”

**Wrong**

“Why did they beat you?” he asked.

**Correct**

“Why did they beat you? He asked.

**Wrong**

“What a car, exclaimed Zewe.

**Correct**

“What a car!” exclaimed Zewe.

Paragraphing of a narrative and a dialogue.

For both narrative and dialogue employ block method of paragraphing. Although an indented paragraph can also not be ruled out. The only difference is that your outlook of your work is better when you adopt a block one.

When you are writing a dialogue remember to leave a blank line between the two speakers.

### Example

“Dingiswayo, is it you?” It was Zizwani.

“Yes, I am. What is the issue?” Dingiswayo asked.

### SAMPLE OF A SHORT STORY QUESTION

Write an original short story entitled  
“No man is an Island” (MANEB 2010)

### Sample of the Plan

- A. Main character : Dingiswayo
- B. Story line

- Dingiswayo wakes up at three o'clock in the morning
- He secretly gets his roast meat and eats
- Misheck surprised with him
- He eats his chicken in the toilet
- Other students discover him
- Dingiswayo learns the need for others

Sample of a short story

### *NO MAN IS AN ISLAND*

*There was a dead silence in the whole hostel except for the snoring of some students. Dingiswayo shivered with fear as he threw off his blanket and made for his bag. He did not even put on slippers lest he woke his friends who were sound asleep. He looked at his wrist watch and noted that it was three o'clock in the morning. He went past Wanangwa's bed and almost broke into laughter when he saw a stream of saliva springing from Wanangwa's mouth coursing down his cheeks and finally forming a pool at the nape of his neck. Meanwhile, Wanangwa was snoring fiercely like a hooting cowl.*

*Dingiswayo discreetly opened the zip of his bag. He loathed the crackling sound made by the plastic paper bags as he groped his fingers searching for the roast meat. Soon he got hold of a big chunk of meat which he immediately pushed into his mouth for chewing. He salivated as his teeth crunched the*

meat and squeezed out the juice that caressed his taste buds. For Dingiswayo, a boy who preferred eating to anything else, this was the greatest moment of his life.

It was at this time that Khumbo woke up. Dingiswayo froze with fear. What would other students say if they discovered what he does? Would they not think of him as a greedy shameless student? These were the thoughts that crossed his mind. Still clutching the wing of his roast chicken close to his mouth, he remained transfixed to the spot.

"Dingiswayo, is it you? It was Zizwani.

"Yes, I am, what is the issue?" Responded Dingiswayo.

"What are you doing at this time while holding a chunk of meat as well?"

"I am just trying to sort out my things in the bag" Dingiswayo lied.

Zizwani had proceeded to the toilet without further questions. He came back and resumed sleeping. Dingiswayo felt the pang of fury and shame gripped him. What sort of a man was he? Why could he not have the piece to eat during the day and when others were watching? However, he convinced himself that the school was full of beggars. They would never let him enjoy his own food. It was better to eat in secret rather than lose all the food to a multitude of insatiable stomachs. This was his conviction.

That is why this time he was eating in a toilet. His powerful teeth crushed the bones of meat like a lion. The bones succumbed to his powerful jaws and made noise like that of crushing dry leaves. This convinced other students that a dog had strayed into one of the toilets. So they mobilized themselves to teach the dog a lesson. Many students armed themselves with sticks and stones and got ready for the attack. One daring student rushed with great speed to the toilet and kicked the door open.

It was a shame. A great shame. Dingiswayo sat at a corner holding the remains of the wing he was munching. His face was down cast. His mouth had a circle of fat smeared around it.

Soon the shameful story went around the school. Dingiswayo failed to find peace. His friends shunned him. He became a lonely figure at school. He finally realized that generosity is essential in friendship. The more he was

*shunned, the more he realized that he needed his friends for company. He had finally learnt a lesson that no man is an island and that friendship surpasses many human needs.*

## **EXERCISE**

Write an original story on the following titles. Each story should have words between 350 and 500.

- (a) The scandal
- (b) The only way out
- (c) The missed opportunity
- (d) True love
- (e) Betrayal

## **CHAPTER 5: REPORT WRITING**

A report is an account of a situation or event that has happened. It is supposed to be presented to a particular office or audience for decision making.

A student should be well versed with skills of writing a report as this is inevitable in any academic life. At M.S.C.E. level candidates are expected to write a simple report.

A report and a letter are written in a similar way except on the layout format.

### **LAYOUT OF A REPORT**

The report has the following:

- The date
- Addresses
- Subject
- Introduction
- The body
- Conclusion
- Signature

- The name of the one writing
- Sometimes the position held by the one writing it.

(a) **The date**

- It is the first item to be written
- Locate the date to the uppermost left hand side just after the margin
- Punctuate it. The comma must be placed after the month and a full stop after the year.

Example: 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

(b) **Addresses**

- A report has two addresses.
- These two addresses are written horizontally.
- They are written in full forms. (Abbreviations such as “P.O. Box” are not allowed.
- The first address is marked at the beginning with the word “FROM”. This is the sender’s address.
- The second address is the recipient’s one and is marked “TO”
- Both addresses need to be fully punctuated.

**Example:**

From: The Chairperson, Mulembe Human Rights Club, Post Office Box 44, Chisenga, Chitipa.

To : The Human Rights Officer, Malawi Human Rights Commission, Post Office Box 20347, Lilongwe.

(c) **The Subject**

- This is the heading or the title of the report.
- Write the word “Subject” and the actual title in capital letters.

**Example**

**SUBJECT: DISCRIMINATION IN MULEMBE VILLAGE**

(d) **The Introduction**

- Just like in other compositions, the introduction must be short.
- It needs to only reveal the purpose of the report and sometimes the place and the time an event you are reporting about took place.

(e) **The body**

- It is the core part of the report.
- It explains or informs or discussed the subject. The paragraphs should be like those of a letter. Check the letter writing again.

(f) **Conclusion**

- In the conclusion, express your optimism that the officer or the office you are writing to will be of help.



- It should also be very short preferably one or two sentences.

### **EXAMPLE OF A CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I hope that your office will take a considerable action to arrest the problem of discrimination in my area.

#### **(g) Signature**

The signature should come just after the conclusion and a blank line. It needs to be written from the margin.

#### **(h) Name**

Write your name after the signature but without skipping a blank line. The name should be written in full.

### **Example**

Brave Wathando and not B. Wathando

Note that if you are holding a position, for example Chairman, Secretary or Village Headman then write it after your name and underline it if written in small letters. If written in capital letters do not.

### **Example**

Brave Wathando  
Human Rights Club Chairperson

OR

Brave Wathando  
HUMAN RIGHTS CLUB CHAIRPERSON

### **SAMPLE REPORT QUESTION**

Imagine that there is an increase in acts of indiscipline at your school. As a Head Prefect of the school, write a report to the District Education Manager informing him or her about the problem.

In your report, you may include the following

- (a) The name and place of your school.
- (b) Examples of indiscipline acts.
- (c) Causes of indiscipline at your school.
- (d) Effects of these indiscipline acts.
- (e) Ways of ending these discipline acts.

### **Sample of a Plan**

#### **Plan**

Acts of Indiscipline at Mulembe Secondary School

**(a) Name and place of the school**

-Mulembe Secondary School in Chitipa

**(b) Examples of indiscipline acts**

- Going out of school bounds without permission
- Drinking and smoking
- Vandalism of school property

**(c) Causes of Indiscipline**

- Drug and substance abuse.
- Lack of school fence.

***Model Report I***

15<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

**From:**      *The Headboy, Mulembe Secondary School, Post Office Box 72, Chitipa.*

**To :**        *The District Education Manager, Ministry of Education, Post Office Box 234, Chitipa.*

***INDISCIPLINE AT MULEMBE SECONDARY SCHOOL***

*I write to inform you about acts of indiscipline at Mulembe Secondary School here in Chitipa. This problem which started on a low note last year, is now becoming worse and there is need for urgently to arrest the situation.*

*Among the serious acts of indiscipline are teasing, bullying and vandalism of school property. On teasing and bullying, it has been observed that students in the junior classes are the common victims. Most of the times, they are forced to clean the hostels, wash clothes and beddings of those in the upper classes. In*

cases where these young students fail to satisfy their senior colleagues, they are beaten up by them. Just two days ago, one form one student was beaten up by a form four student after he declined to wash his shirt. It was pathetic to see a helpless boy beaten to the point of bleeding. What is more worrying is that the bully is still at school and is still bringing about a lot of fear in many of the students.

Apart from teasing and bullying, there is vandalism of school property. Last month students went on rampage and vandalized the school library, tuck-shop and staffroom. They looted all the books, groceries and other important items of the school. They did this because the school did not succumb to their demand. They demanded to watch an English Premier League match during study time, a thing that has never happened in the school.

There are several causes to this breakdown in the discipline at this school. One of them is drug and substance abuse. Lately, the school is characterized by a big group of students who usually sneak out to the trading centre at night. Their sole purpose of doing this is to drink and smoke. The most unfortunate thing is that they smoke Indian hemp and being under its influence, they stir a lot of trouble not only within the school but also the community at large. It so happened a week ago that this nasty group picked up fight with some members of the community. Unfortunately, one of them came back seriously injured.

Another cause is lack of security. Our school is one of those without a fence. This is a weakness on its own. Students take advantage of this scenario and go beyond the prescribed school bounds to indulge themselves in immoral acts as they cannot be confined within the school premises.

The effects of this lack of indiscipline at our school are just so grievous. Most of the students have no time to concentrate on their studies. This is why this year's record of results reflects a drastic decrease in performance. As a matter of fact, this was a school from which several students could be selected to the University of Malawi some five years ago. Apart from the explained effect, certain students are subjected to emotional and physical abuse. Consequently, they lack peace in class. Some of them have been dropping out of school, a thing that destroys their future.

This problem, with concerted effort and intervention of your office, can stop. I therefore request your office to lobby the ministry for a construction of a fence around the school. This will bar students from going out of school bounds at

will. Outsiders would also not find it easy to interact with them. It is these people that sell Indian hemp to them. Apart from this, the students who are found doing these despicable acts should be severely punished to serve as warning to others. This can be one other effective measure. May I urge your office to talk to our school's administration on this.

I hope your office will take an immediate action and save our schools reputation.

*Chimango Mwangonde*  
*HEAD PREFECT.*

### ***MODEL REPORT I***

***Date :*** 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

***From :*** Aleck Nyasulu, Chozoli Boys Secondary School, Post Office Box 21, Rumphí.

***To :*** The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security, Post Office Box 203, Lilongwe.

***Subject: ROAD ACCIDENTS***

*I write to report on the rampant fatal accidents which occur frequently at Buwira Road Intersection in Rumphí district.*

*There are many contributing factors to this problem. Lack of civic education is one of them. People do not know rules and regulations to be followed on the road. People from Malawi Road Regulatory Authority have never come before to teach people on how to walk on the road. This makes both pedestrians and drivers to be using the road ignorantly.*

*Not only that, people destroy sign posts. Some people destroy them aimlessly while others destroy them to make items like pots and buckets. This malpractice causes drivers to not know that there is point of intersection ahead hence accidents occur.*

*Besides that, people misuse drugs and substance especially alcohol. It was observed that most of the accidents which have been taking place here were due to driving while drunk. For example, last year there was twenty cases of car accidents due to drunkenness. Lastly, there are no robots at that place. Therefore, it is very difficult to control movement of both cars and people at that place.*

*The investigation showed that almost thirty accidents per month occur at that place only in our area. This problem has greatly affected our area, negatively. It has led to deaths of very important people to the development of our area. It has also increased orphanage.*

*There are many things that we need to be assisted with from you. Establishment of sign posts is one of them. The stolen sign posts should be established again so that these fatal accidents can be reduced. If not, there will be great poverty in our area due to this problem.*

*Apart from that, civic education should be provided. People should be taught on how to use the road. Besides that, they should be warned about their behavior of driving while drunk. Finally, robots should be built as soon as possible. This will completely get rid of this problem.*

*I would be very grateful if you take our request into consideration.*

*Aleck Nyasulu*  
*THE VILLAGE HEADMAN*

## **EXERCISE**

Imagine that a local market in your area caught fire which destroyed a lot of valuable property. As a Chairperson of the Market Business Committee, write a report to the District Commissioner about the incident.

In your report, include the following points:

- (a) Location of the destroyed market
- (b) When the accident happened and how it happened
- (c) Property destroyed and its value
- (d) Death and injuries to people
- (e) Type of assistance required (MSCE 2014)

## **CHAPTER 4: ESSAY WRITING**

There are certain compositions that take the layout of an essay. The question is asked on a particular topic and you just need to discuss it without a particular audience as is the case with a letter, report and speech.

### **Examples of such questions**

- (i) Write a composition on the effects of deforestation.
- (ii) Write a composition on how road accident can be minimized.

### **Parts of Essay Composition**

#### **(a) The title**

- The title should be short preferably a phrase
- It should capture the core of the question.
- It should be written in capital letters.
- It should be presented at the centre of the page.

**(b) The Introduction**

- The introduction should be short.
- It should also capture the main aspect of what has been asked.

**(c) The body**

- The body of an essay composition is similar to other compositions. It is a collection of different points that have been substantiated.
- Each point should appear in its own paragraph.

**(d) The conclusion**

It is the summary of what has been discussed. It is therefore short.

Sample Essay Composition Question:

**MODEL ANSWER**

***CAUSES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CHEATING DURING EXAMINATIONS***

*Cheating during examinations is one of the malpractices that manifests in different schools nowadays. This composition discusses its causes, effects and ways of stopping it.*

*To begin with, there are several reasons why candidates cheat during or even before the examinations. One of them is lack of preparation. This is so because students tend to relax so much before the examination time. They think they would study when time for the examination approaches. Unfortunately, when examination time comes, they find themselves panicking because of the pile of unstudied materials. This reduces their confidence towards examinations. They start to perceive the coming examinations as tough and to run away from the shame of failure, they look for ways of cheating.*

*The other cause is moral decadence in those who are the custodians of these examinations. Some of the officers who are supposed to protect the examination papers resort to leaking them. These are people who seek short means of finding money. They take out some question papers and sell them to candidates. They do not even care about the nation's image due to their interests.*

*Examination cheating has with it several negative effects. Schools for example, are greatly affected. Whenever students cheat, their school bears a bad record. This results into parents not being interested in sending their children there. Sooner or later, the school closes down as it faces the tremendous drop out in the number of students.*

*The other effect is on the nation as a whole. With such misguided minds, the nation is likely to suffer from the problem of incompetent workforce. This would be so since some of the students who find themselves in the national university beat the system through cheating. What this implies therefore is that there will be development retrogressiveness in the country.*

*Furthermore, cheating in an examination leads to imprisonment and resource wastage. When one is caught cheating during an examinations, there are penalties attached. For example, he or she is disqualified from the examination. This is detrimental to one's future. In addition to this, it leads to payments of exorbitant fines charged by the courts and failure to comply with this ends one in prison. This could be so costly, not only to the one who is caught cheating, but to his or her parents as well. It may lead them into a financial and emotional crisis.*

*The problem of cheating can be stopped by firstly, carrying out a continuous civic education where the target groups should be the students themselves, the security officers and teachers. These groups of people need to be informed in the dangers of cheating during examinations. The other way is by raising allowances of the personnel handling or providing security to the examination scripts. This will restrain them from the temptation of selling out examinations scripts.*

*In conclusion, it is clear that cheating during an examination is a vice which does not only lead to the destruction of one's future but also the nation. Therefore, it needs to be stopped.*

## **EXERCISE**

Write a composition on effects of drug and substance abuse



## **CHAPTER 7: NOTE – MAKING**

Note-making is a process of extracting important points from a particular passage. Many have written on this topic but this book gives you tips to follow when writing your Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations.

What to observe when writing your notes

- Present the notes in Note-Form. In this regard the passage is reduced into points. Therefore you do not need to write a prose. Prose writing is a comprehensive continuous writing.
- Avoid presenting your notes the exact way they appear in the actual passage. You are supposed to paraphrase them.
- Write each point in its own line.
- Be very brief. Rather than sentences, phrases are preferred.
- Pay attention to the layout, note-style and brevity of notes.

### **THE LAYOUT**

The layout is the outlook of your notes. It has to appear with the following elements.

- (i) The title
- (ii) The main points
- (iii) The major supporting points
- (iv) The minor supporting points sometimes these are not present in a passage.

A good presentation of the above elements creates a fair copy of notes.

**(a) The Title:** Extract it from the introductory paragraphs.

- Write in small letters and underline it. When you have opted for small letters make sure that the first letters of important words are capitalized.

**Example**

Importance of Lake Malawi

- Write in capital letters when you opt to write in capital letters do not underline.

**Example**

**IMPORTANCE OF LAKE MALAWI**

- Do not number the title.
- Write it on a centre of the page.

**(b) The Main Points**

- They appear better when written in small letters but only with the first letters of important words in capital.
- They should be written starting from the margin.
- They need to be numbered.
- Each main point can be extracted from its own paragraph.

Numbering of Main Points

- Arabic Numerals (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Capital Letters (A, B, C, D)
- Roman Numerals (I, II, III, IV)

- These main points need to be underlined.

**(c) Major and Supporting Points**

- A major supporting point is written just after the main point and are also followed by the major supporting points if there are any in the passage.
- They also need to be numbered.

Numbering of major supporting points are either the Roman numerals, Arabic numerals or the alphabet. This numbering need to be in lower case.

**Example**

(i)	(ii)	(iii)
1	2	3
a	b	c

- When numbering the minor supporting points bullets and dashes are ideal.

Examples of bullets

- 
- 

Examples of dashes

- 
- 

**HOW NOTES CAN BE LAID DOWN**

***TITLE***

**A. Main Point**

- (i) Major Supporting Point
  - Minor supporting point
  - Minor supporting point
- (ii) Major supporting point
  - Minor supporting point
  - Minor supporting point

**B. Main Point**

- (i) Major supporting point
  - Minor supporting points
  - Minor supporting point
- (ii) Major supporting point
  - Minor supporting point
  - Minor supporting point

**C. Main Point**

- (i) Major supporting point
  - Minor supporting points
  - Minor supporting point
- (ii) Major supporting point

- *Minor supporting point*
- *Minor supporting point*

#### **D. Main Point**

- (i) *Major supporting point*
  - *Minor supporting points*
  - *Minor supporting point*
- (ii) *Major supporting point*
  - *Minor supporting point*
  - *Minor supporting point*

### **BREVITY**

Notes are supposed to be presented as briefly as possible.

#### **Ways of Achieving Brevity**

##### **(i) Re-phrasing**

This is done by understanding the text thoroughly and reducing it without changing the meaning.

Example of the structure that can be rephrased

- Lake Malawi also acts as a tourism harm that beckons visitors to our country.

Rephrased sentence

##### **(ii) Abbreviations, Acronyms short forms and symbols**

Brevity can be achieved through the usage of the above mentioned. However these need to be universally applicable. Do not create you own abbreviations, acronyms, short forms or symbols.

#### **Examples of short forms**

Sch	-	School
Sec	-	Second
Mins	=	Minutes
Hr	-	Hour
Mon	-	Monday
Tues	-	Tuesday
Wed	-	Wednesday
Thurs	-	Thursday
Frid	-	Friday
Sat	-	Saturday
Sun	-	Sunday
Jan	-	January
Feb	-	February
Mar	-	March
Aug	-	August

Approx - Approximately  
Dept - Department

### Examples of Acronyms

NICE - National Initiative for Civic Education  
MERA - Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority  
MAWU - Malawi Writers Union  
SCOM - Student Christian Organization of Malawi  
AFORD - Alliance for Democracy  
MZUNI - Mzuzu University  
UNILIA - University of Livingstonia  
MANEB - Malawi National Examinations Board

### Examples of Abbreviations

M.B.C. - Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation  
R.S.A. - Republic of South Africa  
B.B.C. - British Broadcasting Cooperation  
I.M.F. - International Monetary Fund  
U.D.F. - United Democratic Front  
E.C.D. - Early Childhood Development  
C.B.O - Community Based Organisation

### Examples of Symbols

© Copyright	Cl Chlorine
+ Plus or addition	Na Sodium
- Subtraction	Ca Calcium
> Greater than	@ at
< Less than	& and
/ or	# Number

## SAMPLE OF THE NOTE MAKING

### PASSAGE

*It is important to be well versed with skills of speech writing and presentation. Whether we like it or not contexts will arise when we will be required to make a speech. This passage therefore aims at providing you with information on speech writing.*

*In speech making, the first item to consider is the title. A good title should be short-preferably a word or a phrase and should capture the theme of the question. It should also be positioned at the centre of the page. There are two ways of presenting the title of the speech. One of them is by writing the whole title in capital letters. If one writes in this way he or she will not need*

to underline it. The other way is by writing in small letters and underlining it. However there is need to write each and every first letter in capital.

After writing the title come up with an introduction. Every good speech should have a catchy introduction. An introduction is an excellent confidence booster. Therefore it has to be taken seriously. One of the things you need to remember as you write your introduction is brevity. Make the introduction relatively brief and general. This to keep your audience from getting bored. The other thing to employ in your introduction is list of dignitaries. These are people present. These dignitaries may include government officials, traditional leaders or any other person of importance and should be presented in order of seniority. Start by acknowledging the most senior person and finish with the most junior one. Apart from this, let your introduction reveal the topic of your speech. In the process of gaining attention be sure to state it very clearly.

The body is another important part of the speech that deserves special focus. The body is a collection of all points needed for the audience. It is built from an outline of points called the plan. It has to be pointed out that clear organization is vital in speech making. Therefore, organize your body as efficiently as possible. All listeners demand coherence in one's speech. To satisfy your audience each main point appearing in your plan should be well presented here in a paragraph of its own. A topic sentence often appears first on each and every paragraph of your body. This topic sentence should be worded properly to give your point enough support. It should also be relevant to the main points. This topic sentence is followed by supporting sentences.

Lastly, let us look at the conclusion of your speech. No matter what kind of speech you are making, the conclusion needs to be made. Your conclusion gives you the last chance to drive home your ideas. Thus you need to craft your conclusion with as much care as possible. You need to know that your conclusion has two functions. The first one is to let the audience know you are ending the speech. If this is not done, the audience will be at a loss. The question now is how do you let an audience know your speech is ending: Some of the ways is by writing denoting devices. For example, these can be words or phrases like "In conclusion, In summary, To wind up, among others. The other function of the conclusion is to reinforce the audience understanding of the central idea or topic. Therefore, be very emphatic.

*To sum up, it is clear that acquiring speech making skills is important. We hope that you are going to take a step and become one of excellent speech makers.*

(Modified from: The Art of Public Speaking pp 214 – 232)

## **SAMPLE RESPONSE BASED ON THE ABOVE PASSAGE**

### **SPEECH WRITING**

#### ***I. The Title***

- a. Should be short & capture theme*
  - *A word / phrase*
- b. Written @ page centre*
- c. Written in capital letters*
  - *Don't underline*
- d. Written in small letters*
  - *Underline*

#### ***II. The Introduction***

- a. Should be catchy*
  - *Boosts confidence*
- b. Should be brief*
  - *Keeps audience alert*
- c. Present a list of dignitaries*
  - *Start with most senior e.g. gvt official.*
  - *End with the most junior*

#### ***III. The Body***

- a. Collection of all points*
- b. Organization is vital*
- c. Each point presented in its own paragraph*
- d. Topic sentence appears 1<sup>st</sup> in a paragraph*
  - *Well worded*

#### ***IV. The conclusion***

- a. Gives last chance to drive ideas home*
- b. Has two functions*
  - *Ending the speech*
  - *Reinforcing understanding*

## **PASSAGE**

*Air is life. A few minutes without air would certainly be the end of us. This element is essential to 'sustain' our lives. In this passage we explain about air and for health.*

*Firstly, we have to look at the importance of air. Why is air important? The air we breathe contains oxygen. Red blood cells pick up the oxygen from the lungs and carry it to all cells in the body. Each cell needs oxygen to operate. Red blood cells then carry carbon dioxide back to the lungs. When we breathe out, this is forced out of the body with the oxygen.*

*Secondly, let us look at the effects of poor ventilation. Poor ventilation means that air is inhibited into the room. This results in headaches drowsiness and difficulty in concentration. What is the reason? When air is a breathed and rebreathed over and over, the oxygen content decreases and carbon dioxide and other wastes increase in the body. Bad and poor breathing results into depression, irritability exhaustion and chronic fatigue. This is quite dangerous to our health. We should now consider ways of getting air into our bodies. When you open your windows, you let in fresh air. Sleep with an open window.*

*Another way is by doing regular exercises. Exercise in fresh air. This will strengthen your breathing muscles and increases your lung capacity. You also need to practice good posture habits. Sit up straight with your shoulders. You will be able to breathe deeper. In addition, concentrate on breathing deeply. Stop where you are several times a day. Take a few slow, deep breaths. You can as well keep live house plants. The house plants remove many pollutions and use carbon dioxide replacing it with oxygen.*

*Finally, we need to talk about poisoned air. One of the worst enemies of breathing freely is tobacco. Smoking causes the normal air passages to become clogged and irritated. Nicotine in the smoke constricts small arteries. Carbon monoxide interferes directly with the ability on red blood cells to carry oxygen together they decrease endurance and promote narrowing and hardening of the arteries. The biggest favour that you can do to your body is quitting smoking and breathing freely.*

## **AIR**

### **1. Importance of Air**

#### **a. Contains O<sub>2</sub>**



- Cells need O<sub>2</sub> for operation.
- b. Helps in releasing CO<sub>2</sub> from lungs

## 2. *Effects of Poor Ventilation*

- a. Headaches, drowsiness & difficulty in concentration
  - Caused by decrease in O<sub>2</sub> & increase in CO<sub>2</sub>
- b. Poor breathing
  - Leads to depression, irritation & chronic fatigue

## 3. *Getting Air into Our Bodies*

- a. Opening windows
  - Lets in fresh air
- b. Doing regular exercises
  - Strengthens breathing muscles
  - Increases lung capacity
- c. Through good posture habits
  - Enable one to breathe deeper
- d. Keep live flower plants
  - Remove pollutions
  - Replaces CO<sub>2</sub> with O<sub>2</sub>

## 4. *Poisoned Air*

- a. Caused by smoking
  - Leads to clogging & irritation of air passages
  - Nicotine constricts small arteries
- b. Carbon Monoxide
  - Co decreases endurance
  - Promotes hardening of arteries

### EXERCISE

Read each one of the following passages carefully and afterwards make a summary of them in NOTE – FORM.

#### In your summary

- (a) Provide a suitable title
- (b) Give the main points
- (c) Supply supporting points for each main point

### PASSAGE ONE

*Most families have lost their loved ones because of stroke, a condition that occurs when blood supply to the brain is disrupted or cut off. The good news, however, is that stroke is preventable. This passage therefore aims at providing steps to prevent it.*

*The first way is through checking your blood pressure regularly. High blood pressure is a silent killer because it often shows no signs. The only way of knowing that you have high blood pressure is by having it measured. If not treated, the high blood pressure will damage your arteries leading to stroke. So check your blood pressure numbers. A person is usually considered to have high blood pressure if he or she has a measurement that is consistently above 140 / 90 mm Hg. If this is the case it has to be lowered.*

*The second way is to stop smoking. If you smoke, stop. If you don't smoke do not start! Smoking doubles your risk of stroke because it causes high blood pressure and also makes blood thicker and easier to clot. The chemicals in tobacco smoke are absorbed into the body, damaging blood vessel walls. These increase the risk of stroke.*

*Stroke can also be prevented by having a healthy diet. A person should eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables daily means you benefit from a range of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. These include antioxidants such as Vitamin A, C and E. Antioxidants help to prevent damage of your arteries that can lead to stroke. You also need not to eat too much salt. Too much of salt can raise your blood pressure. You also need to avoid processed foods and fast foods which contain a lot of salt. Eat fresh food whenever you can. You can also cut down fatty foods. A diet high in fatty causes cholesterol to build up in the blood and arteries to narrow.*

*Lastly do regular exercises. Regular exercises can halve your risk of stroke. Regular exercise help to lower blood pressure as well to reduce fat and sugar levels in the body. Just 30 minutes of exercises five days a week is enough to reduce your risk. You just need to get slightly out of breath and feel a small increase in your heart rate to reap the benefits.*

*If the above steps are taken seriously stroke will no longer be a big problem. Stroke is preventable.*

*(2013 Phwezi Boys Secondary School Mock)*

## PASSAGE TWO

*Malawi is a country least known for minerals. However, certain gave her another sort of blessing. She has what many other countries do not have – the lovely lake. Indeed, lake is a blessing to the country in a number of ways.*

*The first way is through provision of fish to the people. The lake harbours different types of fish. The most popular species of fish found in the lake is “Chambo”. For your own information, chambo is a type of fish found only in our lake. Other types of fish found in the lake include, “Kampango,” “Bombe,” “Utaka,” “Usipa”, and the list is endless. Fish are very essential in our diets. They provide us with proteins necessary for body repair and growth.*

*The lake also acts as a tourism charm that beckons visitors to our country. Unlike many other African lakes, Lake Malawi has fresh water. That is the more reason why visitors like to visit the lake side so that they can swim in the fresh water of our lake. In this way, the lake helps in capturing foreign currency, which is a boost to our economy.*

*Thirdly, the lake helps the country in transport system. It provides a water way. You can have fun on the lake when you board our ships such as Mtendere. You can travel from Chilumba to Cape Maclear using the lake as a water way. Apart from ships, many people use canoes and small boats to travel from place to another along the lake shore. There are also bergs that ferry cargo to parts in the north from Monkey-Bay.*

*Finally, the lake is a blessing through the wide shores it has. These shores provided opportunities to our businessmen and women to build hostels, lodges and inns along the lake. There are places where very important conferences are often held. Tourists spend their time at these places as well. All this is possible because of the lake.*

*The lake is indeed, a blessing to the country. (MSCE 2008)*

## PASSAGE THREE

*Listening skills are very essential in one’s life. There are so many aspects of life that encourage us to listen actively. Passive listening is always dangerous to us. You should begin to start thinking of how you can become a better listener.*

*The first step is always self-awareness. Knowing who you are helps you to become a better listener. You need to analyse your short comings as a listener. You also need to commit yourself to overcoming them. People are not born with listening skills, but acquire them through practice and self-discipline. As such, a person needs to work very hard in learning how to listen effectively.*

*The second step is to resist distractions. Distractions are either physical or mental. Physical distraction may include the noise from objects around. For example, an object could be producing some noise while the speaker is delivering his message. This may divert your attention. Mental distractions come when the mind wanders about. For instance, your mind can take you to some other experience outside the context of the speaker's message. When you meet these distractions, make an effort to pull your mind back to the speaker.*

*The third way is that you do not need to be diverted by appearance. Most listeners are misled by the speaker's appearance. Bear in mind that certain speakers have an unusually attractive appearance. One's appearance at times can disturb you from getting the message. It is easy to believe that because the speaker is good looking, then his speech is correct. On the other hand, a listener might think that because the speaker is not good looking then he cannot have the correct message. Let looks not deceive you. Some of the bad speakers in the world have been very beautiful or handsome.*

*Lastly, suspend judgment. It is not always that the speaker will say things with which we agree. When this happens we argue with the speaker mentally or dismiss what he or she says. This should be avoided. The other thing is that you need to learn to hear people out before you come up with a final judgment. To achieve this, understand their point of view. Listen to their ideas, examine their evidence and assess their reasoning.*

*In conclusion, this passage has provided you with areas you need to work on so that you can turn out to be a better listener.*

*(Developed from: The Art of Public Speaking Page 62)*

#### **PASSAGE FOUR**

*Malawi, like any other developing country, is grappling with the problems of malnutrition. The common form of malnutrition is under-nutrition which contributes to high mortality rates for children and adults, particularly pregnant women. Under-nutrition is mostly characterized by poor nutritional status. There are several factors that influence poor nutritional status in Malawi.*

*The major factor is lack of food production and supply. Most small holder farmers are not able to produce enough food for the whole year. This is caused by lack of inputs, limited crop and animal diversification, and poverty. In addition, animal production is low and animal protein consumption is limited due to high cost of animal food products.*

*The other factor is maldistribution of food. Some traditional practices encourage uneven distribution of food within the household. It is a custom in some families that adult males of the family eat first, consuming most tasty portions of the meal, mostly those rich in protein and very little is left for children and females. Also children eating from the same plate with adults do not eat adequate amounts of food due to inability to compete with older members of the household. Furthermore, some areas lack food due to poor transport and lack of appropriate food processing and preservation technologies. For example, maize can be available in one area and absent in the other. In addition, protein and fatty foods are often too expensive for poor people.*

*Eating meals that are low in nutrients is another factor. Most Malawians eat “nsima” which is often served with small amounts of vegetables or animal food rarely both at each meal. Such meals are low in nutrients. Therefore, there is poor supply of important nutrients in the body like fatty acids and vitamins. The low nutrient content of the meals is also aggravated by infrequent meals for the day especially children whose stomach is too small to take large amounts of “nsima” from only two to three meals per day. In some cases, infants do not get enough calories and other nutrients to satisfy their nutritional requirements for growth because complementary foods are introduced either too early or too late.*

*Ignorance caused by misconceptions in nutritional issues is the last factor. One of the main misconceptions is the general assumption that “a full belly” is all that is necessary to provide health without considering the nutrient content of meals. Furthermore, infants may unfortunately be removed*

*from the breast due to misinformation about breast milk and diarrhea. During convalescence, no extra food is given. (MSCE)*

### **COMPREHENSION & SUMMARY WRITING**

The word comprehension means understanding. A comprehension test is therefore meant to gauge the understanding of a candidate on the given passage. Being a test component at M.S.C.E. level, a candidate needs to be acquainted with technical aspects of handling it.

### **EFFECTIVE HANDLING OF A COMPREHENSION QUESTION**

- (a) Read the question before the actual passage. This enables you to have a clue about the contents of the passage.
- (b) The next step is to read the whole passage. When you do this, some of the questions asked would linger in your mind as you go through the passage. You therefore need to take note of those parts by underlining them.
- (c) The third step is reading each question again and responding to it.
- (d) Write your responses as briefly as possible. Devise means of presenting your responses as briefly as possible.
- (e) Punctuate your response properly. If your response is a sentence or a statement a full stop must always be there at the end of it. If the response is a word or a phrase don't put a full stop at the end of it.
- (f) Paraphrase your responses. This is where you answer a question in your own words while maintaining the meaning. You actually desist from extracting the structures as exactly as they appear in the passage.
- (g) Questions demanding the provision of meanings of words or expressions need to be answered according to the context used. Words at times can have a different meaning depending on the context used. When giving the meaning of a word, it is advisable to find it synonym.

A single word is preferred. The part of speech and tense should be maintained as much as possible.

#### **Example**

Fascinated – interested

Counterpart - colleague

When providing an explanation of an expression write it in form of a phrase or sentence.

#### **Example**

Explain the meaning of the following expressions:

- Mungo's mind was fertile with ideas.

Meaning

- Mungo thought deeply

- h. Let no single response begin with the word “because”.

## SUMMARY WRITING

There is a question that comes on MSCE English that calls for a summary of a given comprehension passage. It is therefore imperative to develop summary writing skills.

A summary can be defined as a concise and a clear restatement of the substance of a larger passage.

Guidelines for MSCE summary writing.

- (i) Read the whole passage understandably.
- (ii) The summary must be written without the heading.
- (iii) It must contain words between 70 and 100.
- (iv) Write in in prose form. That is to say that you write full sentences that logically connect to each other. Avoid writing in note-form.
- (v) Write your summary in a reported speech. No direct speech is required.
- (vi) Write your summary in your own words. This means that you do not have to copy certain sections in the passage word by word. Word lifting is strictly discouraged.
- (vii) You need to adhere to the dictates of grammar as well. Thus avoid faulty grammar.

## EXAMPLES OF THE PASSAGE AND THE MODEL COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### PASSAGE

*Engaruka spread out before him like a shallow bowl. Sitting on a crag on top of a dome-shaped hill, he was like a fly sitting on a lump of food. Behind him was a wall of mountains, to his left continued the plain, broken only by the dark form of an extinct volcano some five miles away, looking like a sleeping giant. Far ahead was another chain of mountains looking blue and hazy. Behind those distant ranges lay an unknown world. To his right, the almost endless flatness vanished on the horizon, shimmering as far as the eye could see, only occasionally interrupted by a tree, or the neck of a giraffe.*

*Mungo caught sight of two brown figures coming from the left, the direction of the river, carrying what looked like bundles of reeds. Each held his spear in his right hand while with the other he balanced his bundle on his head. Maasai: he could not mistake them. They were probably carrying the reeds to the manyatta lying below the hill a little to the right. About a mile ahead, a column of dust hung in the air. He could see dark figures making their way to the glittering lake.*

*The two Maasai were coming up the hill, having laid down their bundles of reeds, and were carrying only their spears. He felt uneasy. What could be bringing them up here? He calmed himself and increased the volume of the transistor radio set beside him – they might get interested in the music. Presently, he could hear them panting behind him; he turned round and smiled at them. They smiled back, exposing their coppery teeth, and said cheerfully,*

*'Jambo, bwana!'*

*'Sijambo, Abari gani?' he ventured, in his best Swahili.*

*Silence ensued. They were regarding him with curious smiles, and he, them. Neither side seemed willing to take courage. He was handicapped as much as they were, because he was new to the country, while they were not well-grounded in the 'national' language. His eyes swept slowly across the plain and then turned to the mountains for a while. Then he looked back at the Maasai; they were getting eager for a conversation. This, their country, was fascinating; so different from those other parts he was familiar with. He broke the silence pointing to the dark form of the volcanic mountain:*

*'That mountain, what is it called?'*

*'Of Donyo ...; and that one behind is Oldonyo L'Engai. That one where the sun rises is Oldonyo Sambu.'*

*'Why is each of them an Oldonyo something?'*

*'Oldonyo means "mountain",' they explained eagerly.*

*'I see.'*

*Silence again. Then it was their turn to do the questioning. The taller of the two, who spoke more than the other, cast a critical eye at the radio set.*

*'It must be expensive, that thing,' he stated rather than asked.*

*'Oh yes, quite expensive.'*

*'Two cows,' he suggested.*

*'Ah-mm, a little less; you see, this one is quite small. Of course there are much bigger ones; some of them cost as eight cows.'*

*'Wheeh'*



Yes, to them it was a fortune. Eight cows. The cow was the source and the aim of their lives. The cow could be mourned as sorrowfully as a human being.

Mungo was looking over the plain with what seemed to be a disturbed concentration. Engaruka, clad in brown with all her sons, was harsh; and yet fascinating. Except for that winding oasis, there was nothing inviting enough to call 'home'. That river basin itself was an island, not only because of its greenness which was in sharp contrast with the dry plains, but also because the people who tilled its soil were not Maasai. They were people who knew the value of the soil. Every year the floods came with rich soils, and the people of the valley reaped the fruits of the river's generosity. He smiled a little when it struck him that there were black colonialists in Maasailand. Was he one of them? No, he could not see any sense in the people's existence. So enwrapped were they in themselves and their cows in these vast hot plains that they were cut off from the rest of the world. Engaruka was a place to be visited, not to live in.

But, to them, the hills, the vast plain, and the sea of brown was home; nothing unusual about them. He was a newcomer who regarded these features with a new and suspicious eye. They had known the land's scourges and sweet tempers for hundreds of years. Nothing could make them question the naturalness of so 'homely' a place; and when he asked them why they lived in such a difficult region, they were sincerely surprised.

'This has been our home for years and years, you know,' they told him, unable to get the gist of his question.

He tried an alternative; 'Aren't those mountains behind us part of your land? They look greener than the plain. Here there's no rain.' He might as well have asked why they were not cultivators, instead of pastoralists.

Yes, they did see that the mountains were greener than the plain (at least at that time of year), but the plain was their home, and that was that. The cow did better on these flats.

While he was weighing the reasonableness of what they had said, he was interrupted with 'Dasalamu must be very far from here,' from the tall one.

'Yes it is ... very far.' It felt much further than he had ever imagined before. Should he tell them how many miles? No, they would not get the idea. So he

added, 'walking, you would spend about ten sunrises and sunsets to get there.' They understood.

While the tall one was still agape with wonder, the short one asked, 'Are there cows in Dasalamu?' which was another way of asking whether the people there had anything to live on, and to live for.

Yes, there were cows, he replied, but they were mainly kept in large houses before they were killed by a *chuma* for meat. Only a few people near the city kept cows. Most of them lived on rice, maize-flour, vegetables.

They went apart and exchanged words between themselves for a while.

'That man is speaking from Dasalamu,' said the tall one, pointing at the transistor set. Mungo was glad he was not asked how a man from 'Dasalamu' could have his voice heard in a box so far away. They asked him to make the box sing in Swahili. He could not find a song, but he came upon one reciting a *Shairi*.

'Is that how they sing there' asked the short one.

'Yes.' He did not want to elaborate.

At that moment they heard a droning sound overhead. It grew louder and louder. Presently they saw a gleaming aeroplane gliding across the sky. Mungo's friends were following its progress in complete absorption, mouths agape, eyes agoggle. This was one of those rare, curious things from the other side of the world that occasionally visited their world. Like Mungo, it was an intruder.

As he observed them intently watching the 'plane' Mungo wondered whether the young Maasai was not generally becoming interested in leaving his 'native' regions to see a bit of the outside world. Only the previous evening he had been told (at the mission school by the river), of a young man who was being stopped from continuing his studies. He had done very well in his Standard Eight examinations, but his parents and the Maasai elders had gone to a witch-doctor to ask him to cast a spell on the young man, so that the 'madness of school' should get out of his head.

Mungo could see a new eagerness in the eyes of these two young men. That they had not been to school, he could not doubt. What would they live? Who would protect them against the vices of that world?

Here on the plains, a little thorn-prick in your flesh hurt all the family. There you were responsible for everything you did. Yes, sooner or later, Engaruka would be touched by a new hand, and all this would come to pass. How long would it take before Engaruka was a city? A hundred years? He could not tell. Yet one day the cow would become fatter on this plain than it was then. And, instead of being served by man, it would serve man. The Maasai would be his own master, and then ...

'Motokaa!' One of them nearly shouted, pointing down the hill, at an object raising a trail of dust half a mile away. Mungo recognized it as the Land Rover coming for him. He smiled.

'Wananchi,' he said, 'I am going. The motokaa has come for me. I am pleased to have met you. I hope we shall meet again.'

They smiled broadly and hoped that he would travel well. They wished he could stay a little longer among them. Would he please accept a gourd of sour milk? They could it quickly. He thanked them but said he and his companion had a long way to go, and must hurry. Another time he would take the milk. He gave the tall one some coins to buy pombe, a local type of beer which he had had the evening before. He hurried down the hill, clutching his radio set under his arm, and waving to the two Maasai. They watched him go.

Back in the Land Rover, Mungo's mind was fertile with ideas. Here was a place to transform. The river could play a wonderful part in the plan. Engaruka could be a new place - green fields, large cattle stalls, a meat factory, electricity, new roads, hospitals, amusement parks - a sprawling trading centre. With money, and people's efforts, it could be done. Let him be given the mountain for his own mansion, from where he would watch all these things happen on the plains. In ten years it would be possible.

(Adapted from: *Looking for a Rain God* pp. 93 - 97)

### Questions

(a) Apart from the title, "The Intruder," suggest any other suitable title for the passage. (2 marks)

- *Mungo and two Maasai men*

(b) Mention **two** things that the Maasai men are curious of according to the story. (2 marks)

- *Mungo's radio*
- *aeroplane*

(c) State **two** physical features that make Engaruka a beautiful place to visit. (2 marks)

- *Mountain*
- *River*

(d) What was the first thing Mungo did when he saw the two Maasai men going up the hill to meet him? (2 marks)

- *He raised the volume of the radio.*

(e) What evidence is there in the story that a cow in Maasailand was a precious asset? (2 marks)

- *A dead cow could be mourned like a human being.*

(f) Explain why Mungo thinks Engaruka is a place to be visited and not to live in. (2 marks)

- *It lacked development. For example there were no hospitals and shopping malls.*

(g) Why did the Maasai people choose to live in a dry part of their vast land? (2 marks)

- *They craved for it because they thought it had been their home for many years.*

(h) What did it suggest about the character of the parents of the boy who had done very well in his Standard Eight examination but was taken to a witch doctor to dispel what was dubbed as school madness? (2 marks)

- *They were primitive.*

(i) According to the story, what **two** things can transform Engaruka into an urban area? (2 marks)

- *People's effort*
- *Money*

(j) Give the meanings of each of the following words as used in the passage.

(i) Ensued - *erupted* (1 mark)

(ii) Fascinating - interesting (1 mark)

(k) Explain the meaning of the following expressions as used in the passage.

(i) the people of the valley reaped the fruits of the river's generosity. (2 marks)

- *They harvested from the fields along the river.*

(ii) a little thorn prick in your flesh hurt all the family (2 marks)

- *One problem affect all members of the family.*

(iii) Mungo's mind was fertile with ideas. (2 marks)

- *Mungo thought deeply.*

(l) Summarise the passage in your own words. Your summary should be between 70 and 100 words. (10 marks)

*Mungo visited Engaruka, a Masaai Community that lacked development. He met two primitive Masaai men who were curious about him, his transistor radio, an aeroplane that had hovered over their heads and a land rover. These Masaai people lived a life contrary to Mungo's expectation. For example, they lived in the dry part of their land and regarded cattle as the most precious resource. They mourned a dead cow like a dead human being. They also regarded school as madness. As he left the Masaai land for Dar es Salaam, he thought of how Engaruka could be transformed.*

## EXERCISE

**Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow**

*Every weekday morning, Chief Sekoto listened to cases brought before his court, while the afternoons were spent at leisure unless there were people who had made appointments to interview him. This particular Monday morning a lively and rowdy case was in session when, out of the corner of his eye, Chief Sekoto saw his brother Matenge drive up and park his car opposite the open clearing where court was held. Nothing upset Chief Sekoto more than a visit from his brother, whom he had long classified as belonging to the insane part of mankind. He determined to dally over the proceedings for as long as possible in the hope that his brother would become bored and leave. Therefore he turned his full attention on the case at hand.*

The case had been brought in from one of the outlying villages, called Bodibeng, and the cause of its rowdiness was that the whole village of Bodibeng had turned up to witness the trial. A certain old woman of the village, named Mma-Baloï, was charged with allegedly practicing witchcraft, and so certain were the villagers of her guilt that they frequently forgot themselves and burst out into loud chatter and had to be brought to order by the president of the court with threats of fines.

Evidence was that Mma-Baloï had always lived a secret and mysterious life apart from the other villagers. She was also in the habit of receiving strangers from far-off places into her home who would not state what dealings they had with Mma-Baloï. Now, over a certain period, a number of the children of the village had died sudden deaths, and each time a mother stood up to describe these sudden deaths, the crowd roared in fury because the deaths of the children and the evil practices of Mma-Baloï were one and the same thing in their minds. The accused, Mma-Baloï, sat a little apart from the villagers in a quaking, crumpled heap and each time the villagers roared, she seemed about to sink into the earth. Noting this, Chief Sekoto's kindly heart was struck with pity.

Further evidence was that about a week ago a strange young woman had turned up in the village of Bodibeng and made straight for the hut of Mma-Baloï, where she had died a sudden death. This had made Mma-Baloï run screaming from her hut, and it was only the intervention of the police that had saved Mma-Baloï from being torn to pieces by the villagers.

Chief Sekoto was silent for some time. The insanity of mankind never ceased to amaze him. At last he turned to the accused and said gently, "Well, mother, what do you have to say in defense of yourself?"

"Sir, I am no witch," said the quavering old voice. "Even though I am called the mother of the witches, I am no witch. Long ago I was taught by the people who live in the bush how to cure ailments with herbs and that is my business."

She pointed a shaking finger at a bag placed near her.

"I would like to see the contents of the bag," Chief Sekoto said with a great show of interest. The bag was brought to him and its contents tipped out on the ground. They were a various assortment of dried leaves, roots and berries. He examined them leisurely, picking up a few items for closer inspection. This

very deliberate gesture was meant to puncture a hole in the confidence of the crowd, who annoyed him. While he fiddled about he was aware of how silent and intent they had become, following his every movement with their eyes. Thus holding the stage, he turned to the old woman and said:

“Proceed with your defense mother.”

“About the deaths of the children of which I am accused, I know nothing, sir,” she said. “About the young woman who died in my home last Saturday, I am also innocent. This young woman came to me on recommendation, being grievously ill. We were discussing the ailment when she fell dead at my feet. Never has such a thing occurred before, and this caused me to lose my mind and run out of the house.”

“That is quite understandable, mother,” Chief Sekoto said sympathetically. “Even I should have been grieved if some stranger was struck with death in my home.”

He swept the crowd with a stern glance. “Who issues the certificates of death in Bodibeng?” he asked.

There was a short, bewildered silence. Then a car and a messenger had to be found to fetch the doctor of the Bodibeng hospital. There was a delay of two hours as the doctor was engaged in an operation. Throughout this long wait the court remained in session. At one stage Chief Sekoto received an impatient note: “Dear Brother,” it said. “Please spare a few moments to discuss an urgent matter.”

Chief Sekoto replied: Is it life or death? I am at the moment faced with the life or death of an old woman. I cannot move.”

It was near noon when the doctor arrived. His evidence was brief and to the point. Yes, it was true, he said. There had been a surprising number of child deaths in the village of Bodibeng, and death in each case had been due to pneumonia; and yes, he said, he had performed a postmortem on the body of a young woman last Saturday afternoon. The young woman had died of a septic womb.... He would say that the septic condition of the womb had been of three months’ duration.

All that was left now was for Chief Sekoto to pass judgment on the case. This he did sternly, drawing himself up to his full height.

*“People of Bodibeng,” he said. It seems to me you are all suffering from derangement of the brain.”*

*He paused long enough to allow the villagers to look at each other uneasily.*

*“Your children die of pneumonia,” he thundered, “and to shield yourselves from blame you accuse a poor old woman of having bewitched them into death.”*

### Questions

- a. What time of the day does Chief Sekoto prefer to listen to cases brought before his court?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)
- b. Why is Chief Sekoto upset by the arrival of his brother at a time the court is in session?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)
- c. What does the Chief plan to do in order to make his brother leave the court earlier Than he wishes to say?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)
- d. (i) What charge was brought against Mma-Baloi in this passage?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)  
(ii) What evidence did the accusers use to support this charge?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3 marks)
- e. According to the passage, why did Mma-Baloi bring a bag of herbs with her to the court?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)
- f. Give the meanings of each of the following words as they are used in the passage:  
(i) “dally”: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)  
(ii) “gesture”: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)  
(iii) “grievously”: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)



- (iv) “bewildered”: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)
- (iv) “shield”: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

g. Explain the meaning of the following expressions as they are used in the passage:

- (i) “roared in fury”: \_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)
- (ii) “lose my mind”: \_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)
- (iii) “performed a postmortem” \_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

h. In what way was Chief Sekoto a fair and just judge?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

i. What did Chief Sekoto do in the passage that shows he had the welfare of his people at heart?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

j. (i) What, according to the doctor, was the cause of deaths in Bodibeng village?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

(ii) What did the doctor’s evidence suggest about the character of the villagers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

k. Suggest a suitable title for the passage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

l. Summarise the passage in your own words. Your summary should be between 70 and 100 words.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (10 marks)

**(Adapted from: Literature: The Reader’s Choice, pp 489 to 491)**

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