



EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT CHIEF DIRECTORATE

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2023 NSC CHIEF MARKER'S REPORT

SUBJECT	ENGL	
PAPER	2	
DURATION OF PAPER:	2½HRS	
PROVINCE	EASTERN CAPE	
DATES OF MARKING	4 DECEMBER 2023	

SECTION 1: (General overview of Learner Performance in the question paper as a whole)

- The standard of the paper was fair.
- The choice of prescribed poems saw most candidates opting not to do the poetry essay. This limited their choices to question 2, 3 and 4. Candidates probably struggled the most in responding adequately to the questions on 'A Hard Frost'. They clearly have a very limited understanding of this poem or what frost actually means. A problematic question across all the genres were questions on imagery. These still remain problematic for candidates and need more guidance answering such questions. Candidates also need to be encouraged to focus their responses on specific line references, most gave generalised responses that were not focused on the specific line references. The tendency to award 2 or 3 marks for contextual questions depending on the quality of the answers fortunately continues and adds a handy dimension to the marking process.
- In Section B, more than two thirds of the candidates chose the questions on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Candidates who chose to do the contextual questions on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, generally produced better results as the questions were much more straight-forward in comparison to that of *Life of Pi*.
- In Section C, the best overall results were for *The Crucible*. This is probably because the text is a more modern one and considerably shorter. The *Othello* contextual question (Q13) produced considerably better results than the *Hamlet* contextual question (Q11). Candidates tend to achieve better results for the essays on the Shakespearean plays than the contextual questions, and this exam was no exception.
- The rubrics remained as they were last year, and all markers were familiar with the format; no

additional training was necessary.

- It is worth mentioning that many centres submit scripts where the question numbers are not entered on the front page. It adds considerably to administrative time when question numbers have to be recorded on each script. Chief invigilators should be encouraged at their training to insist that candidates do this. It would certainly save considerable time at the marking venue.
- A summary of the 100-script analysis is attached.

SECTION 2: Comment on candidates' performance in individual questions

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

SECTION A: POETRY

QUESTION 1: 'THE GARDEN OF LOVE'

An excellent choice for a poetry essay. However, very few candidates opted to do this question. This is unfortunate as the rubric would certainly favour candidates who chose this option. From the 100- script analysis it is clear that the stronger candidates did choose to do the poetry essay and did quite well. Weaker candidates still resort to weak paraphrasing.

Teachers should encourage candidates to choose this option and give enough practise in identifying and explaining technical aspects like diction, tone and imagery.

QUESTION 2: 'A HARD FROST'

A difficult poem and candidates understandably did not fair well. It is not accessible to most of our candidates who showed in their responses that they could not identify and explain the imagery and message of the poem. The marking guideline should allow for both literal and figurative interpretations.

QUESTION 3: 'VULTURES'

Candidates who chose this poem faired much better. As with most questions requiring a 'reader's attitude, candidates missed the mark. It has become a common question in this question paper so candidates would do well if they prepare for such questions in all the genres. Candidates also interpreted this poem very literally and focused only on the vultures rather than on human nature. Candidates are also missing the third mark on scaffolded questions and do not, for example, make the link between diction and the message. These are fair questions but candidates obviously do not read the questions in its entirety.

QUESTION 4: 'AN AFRICAN THUNDERSTORM'

A popular choice but not very good responses. Candidates did not obtain full marks for the questions since they only provided one element of the answer. Question 4.2 on the irregular line lengths received very generic responses linked to the thunderstorm rather than the wind. This may have been an unexpected question for the candidates. 4.3 would have received better responses if it only focused on 1 image rather than 2 which candidates often got muddled. In 4.4 candidates were able to identify the sensory images but did not develop their responses by linking it to the message of the poem. Very few candidates made reference to the political allusion offered as an alternative in the marking guideline but those who did provided much more developed answers. The marking descriptor included that political allusions should be 'marked on merit' but it was not always clear to the markers what is the acceptable response in these cases. The question requires a fairly straightforward answer but the guidelines were unnecessarily fastidious.

It would seem that candidates in the weaker centres are often taught a superficial, literal interpretation of the poems rather than the technical aspects on which they will be examined.

QUESTION 5: 'NIGHTFALL'

An improvement to see that candidates are reading instructions correctly and recognise this poem as compulsory and attempt it. Marks varied greatly; candidates either got it or did not. The greatest problem is with interpreting the questions correctly. The marking descriptor in 5.2 required '2 distinct ideas' and candidates were not able to get full marks here. In 5.3 candidates were lifted from the poem and could not make the comparison between 'hunters' and 'people'.

SECTION B: NOVEL

QUESTION 6: ESSAY: 'THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY'

This was the overwhelming choice for the candidates but it was to their detriment. This question had so many layers (the main characters, how they display superficiality and hypocrisy and how this is linked to Victorian society) and very few candidates were able to deal with each of it in a succinct essay. The responses show that many of the essays did not explore all these aspects and it was reflected in their results.

Compared to the novel, 'Life of Pi', this essay was much more challenging

QUESTION 7: CONTEXTUAL: 'THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY'

7.1 Although an entry level question, candidates rarely obtained full marks by providing distinct points. Candidates need to be taught correctly how to place an extract in context.

7.2 Candidates provided a general answer on Lord Henry's character not linked to this particular extract. It should have been a relatively easy question to answer.

7.3 Candidates could link the word 'lad' to Dorian but again do not provide the significance in the context of the novel as a whole. This seems to be a problem with candidates not reading the question in its entirety before responding.

7.4 As in similar questions where the marking descriptor suggests 'ideas', candidates do not develop their discussions.

7.5 As mentioned previously, questions requiring a reader's response was ignored and a problem with the contextual questions is that candidates do not base their responses on what is actually happening in the particular extract; answers are very generalised.

7.6 This should be an entry level question with marks allocated for 3 distinct points. Candidates missed the third mark as the marking guideline is prescriptive with such questions.

The rest of the questions for this section were accessible and well answered.

The responses to 7.7 and 7.8 could be very similar so candidates, if they knew this novel, could obtain bonus marks here.

QUESTION 8: ESSAY: 'LIFE OF PI'

This was a structured essay which was much simpler than the other novel. Most candidates resorted to simple character sketches rather than link it to how Pi survives his ordeal. Many candidates confuse the two stories with many inaccuracies. In addition, there was not much to include regarding Pi's mother and the French Cook and this resulted in mediocre and unbalanced essays which focussed mainly on Richard Parker.

QUESTION 9: CONTEXTUAL: 'LIFE OF PI'

9.1 An entry level question but few candidates could get the 3rd mark.

9.2, 9.3 & 9.4 were quite challenging and most candidates gave superficial answers based on Pi's

relationship with Richard Parker. It was especially difficult for the markers to mark these questions and they were quite profound questions that teachers may not have focused on in their teaching.

9.6 Candidates understood the irony but it was not that simple to discuss the irony for the full 3 marks. The marking guideline did not allow for alternative examples of irony that many candidates mentioned which could be considered valid in the context.

SECTION C: DRAMA

ESSAYS

In 'Othello' and 'Hamlet' the nature of the manipulation and deception is so complex that many candidates resorted to narrative in their attempt to explain these concepts. The topics worked well for all the essays but it is unfortunate that most candidates were not able to distinguish between 'manipulation' and 'deception' and then link their argument to tragic consequences. Most resorted to generalised comments like 'They all died'.

In the contextual questions candidates clearly do not understand the language especially if they are confronted with an extract which is not very familiar.

A consistent problem is the question on stage direction. Most candidates accidentally stumble upon a 'body language' and 'tone' which is not very convincing in context and they cannot be credited for it. This is perhaps because they do not understand the context of the extract.

QUESTION 11:

CONTEXTUAL: HAMLET

11.1 This is an example of candidates not understanding the language of the question paper which should guide them in their response. A word like 'account' is problematic for many and in this question candidates just paraphrased Hamlet's appearance, lifted from the extract.

11.3 Candidates ignore line references and provide generalised answers

11.4 Similar questions regarding context are poorly answered. Candidates need much more assistance in this.

11.7& 11.8 Extremely poorly answered questions. Candidates just do not display the insight to answer questions that require a critical comment.

QUESTION 12; OTHELLO

CONTEXTUAL

Candidates did slightly better in this drama compared to the Hamlet contextual questions. Questions were fairly straightforward.

QUESTION 14: THE CRUCIBLE

CONTEXTUAL

15.1 Candidates miss the phrase at the end of the question: 'thus far' and lose marks.

15.3 Candidates ignore 'using these lines as a starting point' and give generalised answers.

15.7 & 15.8 were very poorly answered. Again these were responses that required a critical discussion and candidates did not develop their responses for the full mark allocation.

(a) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning

POETRY: Focus on teaching learners to identify and discuss tone, imagery and the message of the poem and to look beyond a literal interpretation of the poem. Candidates should be given more opportunities to practice answering typical questions on unseen poems.

NOVEL: Needs to be READ and understood. Candidates should not rely on film versions or summaries to get them through a Home Language paper. When teaching 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' candidates must understand Victorian society in order to understand how characters respond to their context. In 'Life of Pi' both versions of the story must be clear to the candidates.

DRAMA: Candidates must understand dramatic techniques and understand how an audience is meant to respond to it.

A literary essay is a higher-order writing skill that needs to be unpacked in a systematic way to clarify how logic and format form the basis of this type of writing. It needs to be taught and practiced using the PEEL or similar method. A literary essay is not the platform to moralise or promote personal beliefs. Candidates must be taught to avoid common errors like using the past tense, using the first person, informal language and an inappropriate style. Candidates should have access to the marking rubric so that they are aware of how their essay will be assessed.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

Subject advisors should assist weaker centres by providing standard study guides. Candidates rely on incorrect information from the internet that is not what is expected at the level of this paper.

It becomes apparent to the marker when a candidate has not engaged with the text when the names of the main characters are misspelled. Candidates should be encouraged to read and not just rely on summaries of the plot.

Educators need to assist learners with understanding the language of the question paper so that they understand what response is required especially with questions that are scaffolded.

The dramas are often just understood by its plot and not by the dramatic techniques that is essential to this genre.

Essential to preparing candidates for this paper is coming to grips with writing a literature essay. Too many candidates rely on just re-telling the plot in a disordered manner with very little discussion linked to the question. Candidates must be reminded that adequate planning is essential to writing a well-structured essay. Very few candidates did any planning in the form of a mind-map, etc before attempting the essay question.

The most empowering suggestion to educators who hope to improve on teaching and learning is to make themselves available as markers for this paper. The experience is invaluable, it is where educators can hone their skills and prepare their learners to achieve excellence in this exam

