



DEMYSTIFYING KCSE ENGLISH PAPER THREE

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(UNDRESSING THE GHOST OF ESSAY WRITING)

**By Onyango Charles
(Wuodnyochietha)**

Content of English Paper 3

- **Question One:** Imaginative Composition
- **Question Two:** Essay Based on Compulsory Set Text
- **Question Three:** Essay Based on Optional Set Text (Students to attempt one of the set text well prepared on)

The paper is set and marked out of 60 marks.

IMAGINATIVE COMPOSITION

There are different kinds of Imaginative Compositions. They entail Narrative, Expository and Discursive Compositions.

- i) **Narrative Composition** comprises a story beginning or ending with a given statement, a story relevant to a given title or proverb, and a descriptive composition.
- ii) **Expository Composition** entails expounding on a given topic. This type of writing is where you expound on a given topic in details with relevant examples/illustration to support your assertion and understanding of the given topic
- iii) **Discursive Composition** involves presenting and supporting an argument on a given motion and making a stance.

NARRATIVE COMPOSITION

A narrative composition requires you to tell a story or to give an orderly account of events. You should find it the easiest type to write because you practice storytelling oftentimes.

STEPS OF WRITING A NARRATIVE COMPOSITION

- ❖ Choose a story relevant to the given statement or title/proverb
- ❖ Plot your story that is the introduction, complication and resolution.
- ❖ Give your story a relevant setting(place and time)
- ❖ Appropriate choice of characters
- ❖ Development of the conflict/plot through characters.
- ❖ Convincing resolution of the conflict to bring out a moral lesson.

NOTE

- a)The story should be relevant to the question or the topic given.
- b) Your story should be realistic, logical and convincing.(original,imaginative,interesting)
- c)Use familiar experiences in writing your stories.
- d) Keep the topic in focus when writing your story.
- e) The body is where you tell the story.
- f) Develop characters in the body.
- g) Fold up the story in the conclusion. Do not introduce new ideas at the conclusion.

THE 7 PARAGRAPHED NARRATIVE COMPOSITION

- 1st paragraph; setting of the story, introduction of the main character and inciting action of the story.
- 2nd paragraph; the flashback or background information that led to the conflict.
- 3rd, 4th and 5th paragraph; systematic development of the conflict through twists and turns.
- 6th paragraph; the falling actions leading to the resolution.
- 7th paragraph; Resolution, that is, the moral of the story. Punishing evil and rewarding virtues.

The First Paragraph: The Setting

- Setting refers to the place and time of actions in a story.
- A good story must have a definite setting
- A good story should have a restricted setting in terms of place and time
- A good composition should not take more than a day. The best story is told within an hour. An excellent story can be told in five minutes.
- The place of action should not go beyond a compound. An excellent story is best told in a room of a house or an office.
- The paragraph should also introduce the protagonist or antagonist of the story.
- It is also in this paragraph that the source of the main conflict is introduced, also known as the inciting action.

The Second Paragraph: Background Information

- This is the paragraph that sets the stage to the main conflict.
- It expounds on what led to the inciting action.
- The events in this paragraph happens in the past of the currenting setting of the story.
- It should provide a foundation upon which the conflict is built.
- It should give birth to a single conflict that is to be developed.
- It should create tension that would sustain the readers attention to the story.
- It should not preempt the next course of action but rather form a question to be answered next.

Paragraphs 3,4 and 5: Twists and Turns

- These paragraphs contain a series of interrelated conflicts leading to the climax.
- They refer to the various obstacles that block the path of the protagonist in his or her attempt to heroism
- On the other hand they may be the vicious actions of the antagonist to frustrate the protagonist from achieving his or her objectives.
- The conflicts should be sequential; one leading to the other with the latter on a higher degree than the former.
- At the end of each conflict, that is, unexpected yet a convincing turn of events should suffice.
- The aim of all this twists and turns is to heighten the suspense/climax of the story.

Paragraph Six: The Climax

- This is the epitome of the conflicts
- It is the volcanic eruption and emission of gases in the story.
- It is the point of make or break in the life of the protagonist.
- It is the point where the antagonist is convinced that the protagonist has reached the dead end.
- It is the highest point of readers' disappointment as they feel their expectations are not met.
- This is the paragraph where the readers should be crying with the protagonist and cursing the antagonist.

Paragraph 7: The resolution

- This is the ultimate(final) paragraph of your story.
- This is moral lesson paragraph
- It is the paragraph where evil is punished and good is rewarded
- It brings out the amicable resolution to the major conflict heightened in the climax of the story
- Death is not a resolution to a conflict; the dead tell no stories and learn not.
- The resolution should not contradict the accepted societal norms, for example, you cannot resolve a bank robbery case through mob justice.
- A good resolution is pegged on a suspense where the readers are left to fill in what happened next; however, suspense should not be confused with unresolved conflict.

What makes Students to Fail in this Question

- Wrong choice of story
- Creating so many conflicts that remain unresolved
- Retelling of a known story
- Lack of creativity
- Poor paragraphing
- Wrong use of vocabulary
- Lengthy stories
- Use of contracted forms of words
- Poor punctuation
- Poor handwriting
- Obscenity and vulgarity
- Promoting evil in their stories
- Unnecessary killing of characters
- Undefined characters
- Irrelevant titles
- Mother tongue influence or direct translation
- Wrong spelling of words.

Earning merit ticks/Seducing good marks in Composition Writing

- Good choice of story
- Proper paragraphing
- Correct use of vocabulary
- Correct spelling of words
- Sentence variation
- Good use of dialogue
- Free flow of ideas
- Use of vivid description
- Proper punctuation
- Good handwriting
- Creativity
- Promoting virtue and condemning vices
- Use of euphemism
- Not so lengthy stories
- Captivating conflict.

Style

Use vivid descriptions, flashbacks, figures of speech, metaphors, similes, paradox, oxymoron, humour, hyperbole etc. to make the story interesting and colourful.

END OF PART ONE

PAIN POINTS TO NOTE ON GRAMMAR

- a) Make an appropriate choice of vocabulary.
- b) Use a variety of vocabulary making sure to use words you are sure of. Vocabulary does not mean big/bombastic words that the reader has to keep checking from the dictionary.
- c) Vary sentences. Use simple, compound and complex sentences.
- d) Avoid lengthy sentences
- e) Use a simple language but tell an interesting story with a moral lesson relevant to the question.
- f) Avoid clichés.
- g) Avoid redundancy.
- h) Check handwriting. It should be legible and letters properly shaped.
- i) Check spellings.
- j) Observe punctuation, especially in dialogues
- k) Do not mix tenses
- l) Check on paragraphing, subject-verb agreement, choice of words and usage, sentence construction, use of synonyms, proper reference to pronouns etc

ESSAYS BASED ON SET TEXT

Introduction

We have the compulsory set texts and optional ones. The compulsory set texts include H.R. Ole Kulet's Novel, *Blossoms of the Savannah* and Henrik Ibsen's Play, *A Doll's House*.

The optional texts are: John Steinbeck's novella, *The Pearl*; David Mulwa's Play, *Inheritance*; and an anthology of Short Stories, *Memories We Lost*.

The compulsory set text are tested in question two of paper three while optional ones are tested in question three of the same paper.

The two compulsory set text are tested alternating every following year.

The optional set texts are all tested every year and a student chooses the one he or she is best prepared on.

The Structure of an Essay Question Based on a Set Text

The essays based on set texts take the format of an expository essay.

Expository essay is a type of writing where you expound on a given topic in details with relevant examples/illustration to support your assertion and understanding of the given topic

The three components of such an essay are **introduction, body and conclusion.**

Areas Tested in the Essays

There has been a shift in the way essays based on set text are tested.

Traditionally, the essays were based on themes, features of style and characterisation in the text. However, the current KNEC trend has focused on **virtues (good deeds) propagated (praised/extolled)** and **vices (evils/bad deeds) condemned** in a text.

This is cognizant of the fact that literary works are meant to instil morals in the society by rewarding good and punishing evil.

It is, therefore, vital for a students to highlight virtues and vices in the set texts.

Interpretation of the Essay Questions

The essay questions are structured in such a way that they cover three key areas: **the issue (the virtue/vice), the outcome (reward/punishment) and the characters involved.**

A student needs to identify these three key areas before writing the essay.

An example of an essay: "Characters in the play, *A Doll's House*, make ultimate sacrifices for the sake of their family members." Write an essay illustrating the truth of this statement using Henrik Ibsen's play. (20 marks)

Continuation...

In the above example, the key areas of the essay are:

- a)the sacrifice made'*
- b)who made the sacrifice, and*
- c)how did the sacrifice help the member of the family.*

These three key areas will help the student correctly interpret the question.

They will also help the student to come up with relevant topic sentences and illustrations drawn from the related text.

Planning of an Essay

1. Use the three key areas to come up with relevant topic sentences; at least five topic sentences.
2. Identify **relevant illustrations** that support the topic sentences; at least three per topic sentence.
3. Identify the **outcome** of the issue; a specific **reward** or a **punishment**.
4. Arrange your points in order.
5. You are now well-equipped to write your essay.

Here, you can come up with the skeleton of your essay

Writing the Essay

AREA	MARKS AWARDED
Introduction	2 marks
Body	12 marks
Linguistic Ability	4 marks
Conclusion	2 marks
TOTAL	20 MARKS

Marks awarded on grammar solely depend on your score on the content/body of your essay.

Introduction

This is the **first paragraph** of the essay.

It demonstrates the student's understanding and interpretation of the question.

It is between two to three statements.

It should be tied to the text in question.

Depending on the question, an introduction can be two-tier or three-tier.

Types of introduction

1. **Contextualized** introduction.

a) Introduction by outlining

b) Introduction by paraphrasing

2. **General** introduction (highly discouraged).

3. **General- specific** introduction (wasteful).

The Body

Contains at least 4 paragraphs and at most 6 paragraphs.

Students are advised to pick 4 paragraphs and fully develop other than have 6 underdeveloped paragraphs.

Each paragraph should contain **a topic sentence, background information, actions and reactions , the outcome and a clincher statement.**

A topic sentence is a statement that captures the demand of the question in relation to the text. For example, *Nora Helmer borrows 250 pounds from Krogstad in order to save the life of her sick husband.*

Continuation...

Background information refer to the details of what transpired that led to the issue at hand. For example:

After their marriage, Helmer resigned as a barrister so as to concentrate on his new family. He overworked himself and soon fell ill. The doctor treating him advised that he needed to be taken to the south for further treatment. This would cause a lot of money that the family cannot afford.

Actions/activities refer to the things done by the character(s) to achieve his/her/their objectives. For example:

Nora persuades her husband to borrow a loan for his treatment but he adamantly refuses. Nora goes against the laws of the land that prohibits women from borrowing money without the consent of the husband or father, to borrow 250 pounds from Krogstad . She even forges her father's signature to sign the bond for securing the loan.

Continuation ...

The outcome is the reward or punishment that the character gets as a result of his/her action. For example, *Nora succeeds in taking her husband to Italy where they stay for a year and they come back with Helmer full of life and as sound as a bell.*

The Clincher statement is that which summarises the paragraph. For example:

By making this sacrifice Nora saves the life of her husband the family enjoys a happy marriage life.



Hurray! We are on our...

Conclusion

This is the last paragraph of the essay and marks the end of discussion.

It must begin with a connector of summary: *In conclusion, To conclude, ...*

You can conclude by **recapping the main point, giving a moral lesson, appropriate proverb, a philosophical statement, personal opinion.**

Points to Note

1. Do not define terms in the conclusion.
2. Avoid textual errors such as *wrong spelling of characters' names, mixing up pronouns referring to characters, using characters from a different text- referring to Nora as Juana, non existing illustrations.*
3. The essay must be in present tense because literature is alive.
4. Avoid sweeping statements; catchy statements with no textual evidence.
5. Have a full plot of the set text; reread the text at least 20 times.

THANK YOU!

The developer of these notes/slides is a teacher of English and Literature, writer and trainer.

For more information, contact:

Onyango Charles Wuodnyochietha on/at

WhatsApp: 0764-311 964

Calls /SMS: 0723-311 964

Facebook: Charles Onyango (Wuodnyochietha)

E-mail: obunyango@gmail.com

Thank you good people for there are no bad people; we only have good people doing bad things and that makes them bad.