

ENGLISH 1st LANGUAGE SG Paper 3

An extremely worrying phenomenon was again encountered in the scripts this year. An alarming number of the candidates – at least 50% of them – displayed no knowledge at all of the setwork, **Wordsmiths**, which is examined in the last section of this paper. It appears that many candidates, and possibly some teachers, were unaware of the fact that this fourth setwork is examined in Paper 3. This is the second year in succession that this has occurred, in spite of the fact that I made special mention of it in my examiner's report last year.

As was also the case last year, there was evidence in many scripts that many candidates had not been taught the correct formats and appropriate styles for the various types of writing required by this paper. These candidates lost valuable marks, particularly in Sections B, C and D.

What was also very sad to see was that there were once again candidates who should not have been attempting to write any Senior Certificate English paper, let alone English First Language. These were candidates who did not understand any of the questions, whose scripts were incomprehensible, and who should instead have been taking courses in basic English. Centres and colleges must ensure that students such as these do not waste their time and money attempting Matric English before they have acquired the ability to cope with it.

Section A

Question 1 was a popular choice and the responses were most pleasing when candidates wrote with feeling and sincerity.

Question 2 was also popular, although some of the candidates who chose this topic either forgot to underline the given sentence in the text or used it as a heading instead. Future candidates must be reminded that instructions in a question paper are meant to be followed.

The third question in this section was chosen by very few candidates. Unfortunately, most of those who did choose it were not at all familiar with the conventions of the play form.

While those who chose to answer Question 4 voiced some very firm opinions on the topic, many of them had very little to say when it came to concluding their essays by suggesting *ways in which South Africans can either preserve or achieve what Martin Luther King wanted for his own country*.

Childhood memories (Question 5) produced most of the best writing for this paper. This once again illustrates that when candidates write with sincerity about their own experiences, they invariably write well.

More candidates than in previous years wrote on the photograph-based topics in Question 6. The mother-and-child photograph (Question 6.2) was the most popular choice and produced some good writing. Unfortunately, there were candidates who wrote on the photograph of the motorcyclist (Question 6.1) who produced answers that displayed either no link with the topic photograph or an extremely tenuous one.

Section B

Question 7 produced some good answers, although some candidates spent more time telling their uncle how grateful they were to him instead of using appropriate details to convince him of the viability of the business they hoped to establish. This was an informal letter and so a formal letter format was inappropriate here.

It was clear that many of the candidates who answered Question 8 did not understand the point that MOTHER of Ceres was making.

Most of the speeches produced in response to Question 9 were reasonably well presented – although they often included the usual clichés such as *You have always been there for us* or *You always provided a shoulder to cry on*. A memorable speech, it should be remembered, always says things a little differently.

Those few candidates who chose to answer Question 10 did not provide the clarity, style and detail of a good report.

Section C

The set of rules on smoking (Question 11) was a very popular choice. What was required was a set of clear instructions for the staff, but the rules provided were often contradictory, e.g. *There must be no smoking on the premises* followed by *Smokers must use only the smoking room provided*. Other candidates gave too much attention to moralizing about smokers' lack of consideration or the dangers to one's health. There was also a widespread tendency to refer to cigarette *buds* instead of cigarette *butts*.

Some of those who answered Question 12 treated it as an advertisement placed in the classified ads columns, whereas the question clearly referred to the tricycle as a *product* and stated that the picture would appear in the advertisement. Candidates should be reminded that to persuade readers to consider buying such an item requires more than simply emphasizing the bargain price. Details such as the usefulness of the product, its durability and its safety features are examples of what could have been included here. The advertiser's address and telephone number were also sometimes forgotten.

Candidates who attempted Question 13 were instructed to make their instructions clear and to use the fax format. Few of those who attempted this question were able to fulfil both requirements.

Section D

I have already remarked at the beginning of this report on the fact that an alarming number of candidates knew nothing about these stories from *Wordsmiths*. These candidates scored few, if any, marks because a creative response must demonstrate insight into the story and also include references to the characters and events portrayed in it.