

HEINEMANN EXAMINATION SUCCESS SERIES

# CATCH-UP

English Language  
for SSC/ELC

Brake / Break

Mail / Male

Road / Reed

Sun / Son

Check / Cheque

One / Won

Pain / Pane

Blew / Blue

Fore / Four

Him / Hymn...

C. D. Chandra

D. G. G. G.

A. M. M. M.

H. D. D. D.

C. D. D. D.

H. D. D. D.

Heinemann Educational (India) Pvt. Ltd.

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# The Features of the SSCCE and the UMF English Language Papers

There are three papers in the SSCCE English Language Examinations:

Paper 1 (3½ hours)	Essay Writing, Comprehension and Summary	60%
Paper 2 (1 hour)	Multiple Choice Questions	25%
Paper 3 (45 minutes)	Test of Oral	15%

Paper 1, the written paper, is the main test of language. The essay section is designed to test the ability of the candidate to use English as an effective means of communication to express himself with clarity and coherence in a concise, appropriate and convincing form. Five or six questions are set, each of which the candidate must answer and the questions cover a wide variety of writing skills such as explanation, narrative, expository, evaluation, and persuasive/imaginative/creative writing. Papers are carefully selected to fit with the candidate's experience of knowledge and ideas and to be read or through reading.

The comprehension and summary questions assess competences that should be of interest to candidates. All the questions on the comprehension and summary passages must be answered. A candidate who does well on the comprehension and summary questions should achieve a good knowledge of language. The skills which you would require to tackle the comprehension and summary questions very effectively are very well trained with age.

Paper 2 is a multiple choice test, multiple choice (objectively) test consisting of 100 questions. All correct and 60 structural items. Each question has

four options, labeled A to D (WABC) or five options (WABCD) or E (WABCE).

The test on tests explores the candidate's understanding and the ability to respond to some relations in the use of synonyms, antonyms and homonyms. Also, the candidate's understanding or knowledge in the appreciation of literary or expressive or figurative usage of language may be tested in this way. In addition to their reading knowledge, the candidate's knowledge of every day, common, literary and general vocabulary, candidate's knowledge of more general vocabulary associated with various fields of human activity.

The test on synonyms is designed to test the candidate's ability to identify:

1. the patterns of changes in word forms which include -er, -ness, -ly, -ness, -ness;
2. the patterns in which different categories of words regularly appear in a form; and
3. the patterns in which different categories of words regularly appear in a form; and
4. the patterns in which different categories of words regularly appear in a form; and

10. the correct use of grammatical words, e.g. conjunctions, articles, determiners, prepositions, etc.

For you to do well in this part of the test you have to show a good understanding of the structures, their functions and how they operate in sentences.

Paper 3 of the SSCB English Language is a test of Orals. It is a multiple-choice (objective) paper of 50 items testing a wide range of areas of aspects of Oral English. The Test of Orals covers the following areas:

Section	Area/Feature	No. of Items
1	Vowels (10 pure vowels, 5 diphthongs)	15
2	Consonants (including clusters)	15
3	Allyments	5
4	Stress (1-15 int's & word)	7
5	Intens (25-30 English words)	8
6	English transformations patterns & sentences	5
7	Phonetic symbols	10
	Total	60

The skills and techniques you require for a very good performance in all the three SSCB English Language papers are carefully treated in this book.

## 1.2 The UME/TCF Test of English (Oral)

As is well known, English is the language of academic and technical communication in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. The UME/TCF Test of English (Oral), therefore, designed to facilitate the selection of candidates who have the basic requirements of English for tertiary education. In this paper, the candidates' ability to read, comprehend, interpret and summarise material in various registers and styles and their knowledge of the structure,

idiomaticity, idioms and sound patterns of English are tested.

The paper, which is a multiple-choice examination, comprises two sections: Section A consists of comprehension (four passages of varying lengths not exceeding 400 words) and a cloze passage, which normally contains five words from page 2, the comprehension passages. The passages usually reflect such as, types of material, description, account, narrative, exposition, drama, etc., and cover various subject areas like literature, science, engineering, social science, language, education, philosophy, politics, etc. The paper is a test of a candidate's ability to understand the language and content of an approximate level of language can expect of candidates coming to examinations. The linguistic content is, therefore, comparable to the level of language used in the specific level of language used. The sentence structure passages test the candidates' comprehension of the whole or part of the passage and their ability to summarise and explain the information through oral communication. The passages also test the candidates' knowledge of the contextual meaning of English words and phrases logically through deduction or by drawing inferences from available information.

Section B, on the other hand, consists of 1400 and Structure and Grammar. It tests the candidates' knowledge and usage of words and expressions in their own language, figurative and idiomatic contexts. Such questions are based on the candidates' knowledge of the language. Some questions (about 10%) are designed to test the candidates' ability to use the language.

Specifically, the structure section tests the candidates' knowledge and usage of parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, etc.) and their functions. Also tested are grammatical features such as mood, tense, aspect, voice, number, degree, question and answer tags, direct and reported speech, punctuation, spelling and all else.

In the Test of Orals, the candidates' knowledge of vowels, consonants (including clusters), stress (word, sentence and suprasegmental), rhythm, intonation (complete) and fluency is tested.





[illegible]

Regrettably, however, unfortunately the evaluation instrument was not a distraction and they are the expressions that are utilized are fraught with. Regrettably, very few learners of English make sense of it, even to those that speak standard English as a second language. In fact, "even a third class, the third, a small number of them and less so, and these are the remaining half is low. ABLE, NOT, and a few of understanding are low, however that is not a good thing either."

The *Test of Ours* also comes with its own peculiar implications. It must be recognized, clearly, in the current circumstances of linguistic wars, whether by winning the argument or conceding or whether by giving the information to a third, or another, person, that neither party may be held fully responsible for the matter. In a 1996 interview, I asked what he made the *Test of Ours* for. The time was recorded by using his own words to the word "nothing," which he pronounced as "nothing" instead of "air" as he had done before. He said that he had been trying to do this since 1976, but he was not sure if he was doing it right. He said that he was not sure if he was doing it right, but he was not sure if he was doing it right. He said that he was not sure if he was doing it right, but he was not sure if he was doing it right.

[illegible]

One other aspect of U.S. English was mentioned in informal yet often mistaken conversation with several international teachers. The EFLM syllabus and on the curriculum list in Hindi, if ever, says a secondary school syllabus appropriate for the SSC and the UMR. Candidates have very little knowledge of interaction, which most teachers own and difficult to understand, a decision to teach Hindi is on the EFLM syllabus. So, it is not too difficult to extend on it.

We have so far been discussing features of the JAMT (JAM-PC) Use of English test and have mentioned quite a number of things. The summary of our discussion is that:

2. the **ESOL SUBJECT** Use of English test is designed to facilitate the admission of students who have the basic requirements in English for tertiary education;
3. the standard is higher than that of the **ESOL English Language Aid**;
4. the **ESOL SUBJECT** Use of English test is **comprehensive** and **comparable** to the **ESOL English Language Aid**.

## The Art of Writing

Writing is a means of communicating, and using the English as a Communication Language (ECLA) style of writing should be understood as the best way to achieve a top ranking in the exam. It is not a matter of writing in a particular style, but of writing in a way that is clear, logical and easy to understand. It is a matter of writing in a way that is clear, logical and easy to understand. It is a matter of writing in a way that is clear, logical and easy to understand.

Now, I suggest to the writers that, in the production of a communication, they "write as if the reader would be a fool" and that you must always be not like a fool. The expectation is that a writer of the reader does start by giving you a "fool" view. When you speak, or write, with a like view, you communicate in an effective way. You can say, or even be, a fool anywhere at any time to emphasize a point, you can "fool" your friend, thing, or a dog, but you must not "fool" the reader when you can't put it down in words. In the case of your own words, you should not "fool" anything and, similarly, you have no responsibility to the responsibility of your words. The responsibility is yours, and you must give your reader "fool" like to write with words. You must not "fool" the reader.

[illegible]

...and the ... ..  
... ..

Verfahren, um die Qualität der Daten zu verbessern, indem sie durch die Verwendung von mehr Datenpunkten und die Verwendung von mehr Variablen verbessert werden. Die Verwendung von mehr Datenpunkten ist eine Möglichkeit, die Genauigkeit der Daten zu verbessern, indem sie durch die Verwendung von mehr Datenpunkten verbessert werden. Die Verwendung von mehr Variablen ist eine Möglichkeit, die Genauigkeit der Daten zu verbessern, indem sie durch die Verwendung von mehr Variablen verbessert werden.

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rect_w = 0.8
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[illegible]

It is important to understand that the decision to use a particular type of computer is not a simple one. It is a decision that involves a number of factors, including the nature of the work, the size of the organization, the budget, and the availability of personnel. The decision to use a particular type of computer should be based on a careful analysis of these factors.

Some researchers claim that the use of self-reported data is problematic because of the well-known tendency of people to over-report positive behaviors and under-report negative behaviors. However, the use of self-reported data is still the most common method for collecting data on health behaviors, and it is important to understand the strengths and limitations of this method.







arranging of line units for emphasis.  
He lived during the Renaissance.  
People have different views about the  
meaning of the "Mona Lisa" smile.  
They all agree that it is a great  
painting.

This is a paragraph, but because there is no pattern  
in it, the sentences are not related in the way that  
can be the "flow" can be arranged to make a  
coherent paragraph, without a topic.

The Mona Lisa was painted by  
Leonardo da Vinci in the 16th century.  
She lived during the Renaissance. The  
reason for the painting is smiling and  
mystery even not about the meaning  
of the smile for centuries. People  
have different views about it.  
Nevertheless, all agree that the Mona  
Lisa is a great painting.

This arrangement makes an acceptable  
paragraph for two reasons:

1. It has a logical pattern. It is a topic sentence,  
paragraph, sentence with a topic sentence,  
then giving to reader the evidence of  
the topic and concluding with a concluding  
sentence.
2. The sentences have been joined together in  
certain ways.

- (1) Some of the more complex sentences have  
been joined to make a longer sentence.
- (2) Linkers have been incorporated to relate  
the ideas together. The painting  
was not a "The Mona Lisa" but  
for women, "it" to her smile, "it" to  
people. "Nevertheless" suggests a  
contrast between the evidence and the  
conclusion about "The Mona Lisa" in the  
end of the paragraph. The last sentence  
is a concluding sentence.

There are no rules for length in paragraphs.  
However, the paragraph must not be too short. Also,  
you should avoid repetition. You should use  
various words than using a word or phrase again.  
Repetition makes your writing clumsy and  
boring.

The qualities of a good essay are never  
exhaustive. A good piece of writing is an indication  
of an educated and enlightened mind. The quality of your  
writing is an indication of your personality. Some  
skills and whose skills can be learned. Any good writer  
has an own style. There is no doubt that by the  
time you have conscientiously gone through this  
book, you would have acquired the skills and  
requirements for good writing. And on the way to  
becoming a more and more experienced writer.

## Kinds of Writing

### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, we defined writing as a means of communication. In the SSCFL, you will be presented with four or five essay questions from which you will choose one. Each question will include a type of writing. In this chapter, we shall be discussing the types of writing through which the communicative convenience of a student is tested in the SSCFL. There are

- Letter Writing
- Speech Writing
- Narrative Writing
- Descriptive Writing
- Argumentative Writing
- The Article
- Imaginative Writing

Many students are not aware that there are different types of writing, and that different elements, such as the vocabulary, sentence structure, etc., are used in each. Each student should understand its own kind of communication, its own lexical and grammatical forms, and its own style. More important than the above differences, however, are the things like how to use time, how to present well, specify the audience for it, etc. when you are writing. The more you understand the article, letter, speech, and its purpose for the implied or explicit reader.

It is that evaluation which comes over writing. So, you must be paying attention to the speed for each type of writing as stated in the question. As to style,

The advantages and disadvantages of the extended form of writing could be stated as:

- (1) a letter or a pen-friend;
- (2) an address for a company or;
- (3) a communication for a magazine or national;
- (4) a speech made by the president of a youth club's membership;
- (5) a debate.

Each type of writing would differ in its own way, and all of these would be a long time to use. So, instead of a question card, list and table the grammar and what you needed to do. You will be judged by your degree of success in answering the question card. If you are able to find more of the words, the answer would be a good one, and you would be a good student.

At the end of the discussion on each kind of writing, we will feature a 'model' question and a 'model' answer. To use at the end of 'model' answer, we will give you a sample. There is no one like 'model' of writing as every person is expected to have his own unique style. So, the 'model' way of writing a letter or speech is model only in the sense that it is judged acceptable by the author and conforms with the requirements of the examination. You can develop your own style. The following are a few examples of writing. You will be judged by your degree of success in writing. From the point of view of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and expression of data.







holding the office through it, is addressed to the person holding the office. In the informal letter, you know the person you are writing to and usually you have a close, warm relationship with the person. In the formal letter, you may not know the person you are writing to nor have any relationship with him or any formal end of any governmental, academic, cultural or official for making a complaint or a request. It is a formal letter, it also is a letter to a newspaper editor or any other formal person. Now that you are about to study how to write formal letters, let us have already seen the general form of your writing the type of letter.

#### *The Structure of the formal letter*

- (a) name of writer and date
- (b) designation and full address of receiver
- (c) salutation
- (d) title
- (e) the body of the letter
- (f) subscription
- (g) signature
- (h) full name
- (i) address of the writer

#### *(a) Address of Writer and Date*

The format are the same as discussed under the informal letter.

#### *(b) Designation and Full Address of Receiver*

The designation and full address of the receiver is written on the top left side of the page on the date line.

#### *(c) Salutation*

Immediately after the designation and full address of the receiver, comes the salutation. The accepted forms are 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam'.

#### *(d) Title*

A title of the letter usually follows immediately after the name and the full address. For example, the letter is about a letter to the editor.

#### *(e) The Body of the Letter*

The opening paragraph should introduce you and refer by relating it to the topic you are there to discuss. You should have a good knowledge of what you need discussing, when your point of view is required, you should be as convincing as you can. The body of the letter is the main part of the letter, you should understand the subject and discuss it.

Your point of view should be properly explained and expressed. The language should be clear and in the register formal. You should not use slang or colloquial forms. There should be a judicious choice of length and structure, and it is appropriate to state that you should be able to convey your views and thoughts.

#### *(f) Subscription and Closing*

The acceptable subscription closing for the formal letter is 'Yours faithfully'. Note the 'y' of 'Yours' must be capital and 'faithfully' must be full and 'y' must be a small or lower case 'y'. Thus, neither of 'Yours faithfully' or 'yours faithfully' or 'your faithfully' would be correct.

#### *(g) Signature*

The signature and the full names of the writer are two elements that must be present in signing off the formal letter. The signature is crucial and is a personal and informal letter that is not signed by the sender and is anonymous or even 'blind' if a letter is given 'blind' to any person or given any question. The signature gives the identity of the writer. So in a formal letter, after you write the letter, do not forget to sign it and write the name of the person who signed it. This is important.

The following is a copy of the 'A' and 'B' of a formal letter.

Mr. John Doe  
 Section One  
 1234 Main Street  
 New York, NY 10001  
 12/12/2012

The Chairman  
 State of New York  
 Albany, NY

Dear Sir,

Yours State of New York in 12/12/2012

Yours faithfully  
 John Doe  
 Mr. John Doe





10. California Flammery Co. Inc. v. United States

2000年12月28日  
 2000年12月28日

4. 10. 2001

Majority to minority ratio

צדקה:

## References

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October 2017

More Choice, Inc.

How are you? How is your family? Hope everybody is fine and fine.

Charles, you must tell me, how could I have my  
"University" Material on Ten members of "union  
members" - any reasonable university, you will want  
to require, and so from you. Well, anyone ready  
to give me 1000 items was fine - and I have good  
evidence of the "Federal University of Technology,  
Osaka" along with Charles, that day I had with  
him. Usually to go to give his Professor, I sent  
him Larry and Materials Researcher. As you  
predicted, they would make a request which  
"they will make for you much" - or you.

Uncle, my friend Charles, whom I told about my  
I. introduction recently, is a human geography. His  
parents are very poor and it was with much  
suffering and hardship that they were able to see  
him through secondary education. He certainly  
has a high university education beyond  
the capacity of the parents and unless they do help  
from somewhere, his further studies will be a  
jeopardy. He has three brothers who are already  
facing the danger of leaving school for lack of  
money. In fact, Uncle, the boys and about 20% of  
them, there is something to hope of Charles continuing  
his education. I don't, you are the only person who  
can do it for him. I can give financial assistance  
if you help I want to educate these poor boys you,  
to be an eye for an eye.

I have known Charles at various throughout his life. I have seen him struggle to be a successful businessman, to continue schooling, to be a successful doctor. He has been a success in many ways, but I have never seen him as a man who is not a success in any way.

to find "pure water." He does not know, adding, that this was useless when his father died, as most are. And he has been passing the examination with flying colors. He has, with the help of his parents, managed to scale through the secondary school, but that's about the limit of progress. He said, "You can stop as well if help does not come from anywhere. Maria, I feel I can save your mother and let her see all our efforts go to waste if she doesn't shatter her more than I do, but any help from us, from you."

I have always appreciated a few people who do the right thing and well enough to be able to say the word "no" to a friend you say, "I want to help you." Tomorrow, he might become an important person. What if, well, he goes out and says, "I'm sorry, I'll know that his success in life was due entirely to you." I will not go to know that his success in life would not have been possible if you had not chosen to give me that opportunity in life.

Uncle, I'm sure you'll give me the best. Father and I have had Uncle, but if you can try your best to help him I would appreciate it, even as much as he would. He will, of course, be able to enjoy you but I hope to see him again, and I'll be there in heaven.

Please kindly send my greetings to members of your family. I'd then be wishing them a happy and successful New Year.

May His Blessing be on all your endeavors.

14. [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

On 10/10/2014

## Contents

The requirement of his letter is for the writer to comply with his request and to sponsor the submission of an article and financial contributions to the journal.

“was changed” by the community. He is a low-maintenance individual, but he digests things, and the pressure of his self-sustaining education is somewhat greater than that of a typical low-maintenance person. He is a person on the part of his own education. He is a person who is a person.

These requirements have been successfully met both in this letter. The indifference of the friend required a changed form of communication to convey my message to him. There is no doubt that all the best information is provided by the writer for his purpose and with the desired response being made by him. At the end of the letter, it must have been the receiver's

## Discussion

The much very formal features of the informal style are expressed within a formal frame (e.g. a title, a name). Yet, conversely, these are not written in a standardly written style. Also, the points are well structured. There is a logical sequence in the presentation of material, which is regarded as being a logical and ordered analysis.

## Discussion

The author has a good command of the English language. The main problem is that the author has a limited knowledge of the English language. To improve the quality of the manuscript, the author should pay more attention to the grammar and spelling. The author should also use more specific and detailed language to describe the research results.

### 3.6.3.3. *Mercurius Aquarius*

Let's enter it, we can spell/growd occasion are quite good. I have seen fainter, it has a good sense of life in it.

## II The Final Letter

## Overview

There is some concern about the potential for a  
"leakage" of information from the  
program to the public. The  
program is designed to be  
a "closed" system, with  
information being shared  
only among the participants.

[illegible]

Government Executive School  
#444 132  
Bismarck, North Dakota  
505-326-1000  
505-326-1001

The *Journal* is available  
Directly from Local Government Offices  
Main Office  
or from the  
Public Library

1111

Received for consideration, December 19, 1967  
 Received revised manuscript, February 19, 1968

and the success of the school at the decision of the Board of Education. Local Government Council to close the Community Primary School, Samba. The school is the only one that serves the local community and the closure is not only causing the school children to be sent to other schools but also the parents of the pupils to be uprooted.

It is not necessarily a new way that I can not credit to this country. There was long proof of it, and why the old government took to it. The first school, the school has been doing well since its establishment, just because you know that only way to get the pupils into the classroom and so on, and that for a long time, and regarding schools. The second reason is that the teachers in the schools are not usually present in the classrooms, and if they engage in private business when they are supposed to be with their pupils, a man who is always for showing the school, and the local government is not very happy, and we are all that with a very serious matter.

"The Haryana Government should ensure that any education in the field of education should cover the only primary school that is the only school in the district and progress in the country's living conditions."













- (iii) result of the accident – number of deaths, injuries, vehicles damaged, etc;
- (iv) rescue efforts by witnesses, sympathisers, police, road safety men etc;
- (v) the cause of the accident – tyre burst, overspeeding, overtaking, etc;
- (vi) suggestions to avoid future occurrences

The points should be clearly, sequentially and logically presented as outlined and highlighted in Chapter Two.

Narrative writing is not a popular topic in the essays of SSCE candidates. The reasons may be because most candidates lack the basic skills which narrative requires: acute sense of perception of events; ability to give vivid account of the incident or the sequence of events; orderly presentation of facts; the command of language to make the narration come alive and mastering of the appropriate tense forms to give a clear picture of the past events.

The opening of the narrative essays of most SSCE candidates is usually dull and flat. It often lacks that punch that should catch the reader's interest. The account which most candidates give in their narratives is often weird and outlandish, lacking credibility. Even if the subject matter of the narration is imaginary, it should at least be credible. The narratives do not often come alive because most candidates suffer from a severely restricted vocabulary.

For you to do well in narrative writing, you should develop a sharp perception of events around you and then be able to recreate them. When you are telling a story, make sure your narration illustrates the topic. If your story does not bring out the expected moral, you will be scored very low.

Also, you must have sufficient stock of vocabulary to be able to find the appropriate word for every event or situation. You can increase your word power by reading very good informative and

educative magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Focus on Africa*, etc, and by listening to radio stations where good, standard English is spoken such as the BBC.

## Question and Answer on Narrative Writing

### Question

*Write a story that ends with the advice: 'Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones'*

### Answer

#### Those Who Live in Glass Houses Should Not Throw Stones

Chief Chima is a well-known business man. He was considered successful until he began to reap the inevitable consequences of his ruthless means of acquiring wealth. 'Chief' as he is popularly called believes that you cannot avoid stepping on the toes of others if you want to achieve success. He even considers it a necessity; something you have to do. After all, do his people not say that if a fish wants to be big, it has to swallow other fishes? So in order to have his way, he does not see anything wrong in oppressing those lower than him in social status or even stepping on some powerful toes.

Though born into a rich family, Chima's desire had always been to make a name for himself. Just a few months after graduation from the university, he set up a company where he does mainly contract jobs. He goes to any length to look for contracts, and knowing very well the rules of the game he enjoys much patronage from the government and other prominent establishment. Whenever he senses that a rival company is being considered for the award of a prized contract, he will not hesitate to "persuade" the company to give up on the contract. His method of persuasion includes bribery, cajoling, and even threats to the lives of his rivals' loved ones.

Using devious methods, he has been able to beat off all opposition and increase his wealth. Despite

the fact that he is already rich, he still uses crooked means to accumulate more and more wealth. He will forcefully buy over any small firm he thinks has great prospects. Thus within a short time he has acquired a chain of companies. He has rendered many rival companies useless while their owners just rave and curse, seeking for ways to deal with him.

However, what Chima did not seem to realise was that the richer he became, the more the number of those that he had trampled under his feet and also those whose toes he had stepped on. He received advice and warning from his parents and other concerned people but these fell on deaf ears. Then those whose businesses he had ruined and whose companies were in danger of collapsing because of his devious methods held meetings and decided to square up to him.

Not too long after, it was reported that the building housing one of his companies, the one in which he had invested most of his resources, was razed to the ground. This made Chima mad with anger but this was nothing compared to the anguish he felt when his only son was murdered on his way back from school. He received several letters threatening his life and that of his wife. Several visits were made by robbers to his house. They carted away most of his belongings. His wealth soon diminished and he was in huge debts after being blackmailed several times. He was so deep in debt that he had to sell off his remaining companies.

While these tragedies were befalling him, Chief Chima had been fingering his main rival, Chief Chike as the brain behind his woes. The intriguing thing is that the two Chiefs, Chima and Chike, attend the same Church. Chima therefore felt that he should bring the matter before the committee of elders of the church. The elders decided to intervene in the matter and a date was fixed.

On the appointed date, both chiefs appeared before the committee of elders to state their case. Chief Chima took some time telling the elders virtually the story of his life and how he became rich mainly due to his business skills and ingenuity. He said he had contributed immensely to the building

of the church and many other acts of charity. It was these that were the envy of Chief Chike who, together with some irresponsible people, planned and executed the various misfortunes that had befallen him. It took Chief Chima almost three hours to state his case. He would have even continued if the Chairman of the committee had not told him to round off and summarise his points.

It took Chief Chike less than five minutes to present his own case. He denied every allegation made by Chief Chima. Then turning to his accuser, he ended his brief submission by saying:

‘My dear Chief Chima, you know that you are suffering the consequences of your past actions. Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones’.

## Comments

### Content

This essay reveals the major problem of candidates who write narrative essays, which is that of finding an appropriate storyline to fit the topic. Usually, the story or the series of events should illustrate the saying ‘Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.’ This particular essay dragged on and on and it was not until the last paragraph that the message became clear.

### Organisation

A well-organised story has a beginning, a climax and a conclusion. This narration starts by giving a picture of the present state of affairs and then recounts how and why the present situation arose. The paragraphing is good, so also is the sentence structure. The climax of the story is at the end.

### Expression

The writer uses vocabulary that reflects the atmosphere appropriate to the events. There is a mixture of short and long sentences as well as variety in sentence patterns. The register is formal. There is a variety, not a mixture, in tense patterns. Some accounts are given in the present simple tense

while the past tense patterns are used to narrate some of the events.

### Mechanical Accuracy

This is a good essay from the point of view of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## 3.5 Descriptive Writing

### 3.5.1 The Nature of Descriptive Writing

Description is writing about the way persons, animals or things appear. In writing a description, a writer, like a painter or sculptor, renders through another medium – in this case, sentences – an accurate copy of what is experienced at one frozen moment in time. Description concentrates primarily on things rather than the actions in which the things participate. The description is made in such a way that the mental picture of what is being described is fully registered in the reader's mind.

### 3.5.2 The Features of Descriptive Writing

In descriptive writing, an object or person is identified in such a way that it is easy to put it apart from other similar objects. What does it or he or she look like? Suitable topics for descriptive writing include:

The personality I admire most

The novel I like best

My favourite food

My country in ten years' time

A paragraph can be descriptive, even a sentence. Consider the following sentence and paragraph

**Sentence:** *My room is small in size, but it contains everything I need.*

#### Paragraph

My room is small but comfortable. My bed is positioned against the wall opposite the door and there is a mat in front of the bed. On the right, there is a small bookshelf in the far corner of the room.

To the left of the door, under the window, there is a table and a chair. My pictures are on the wall opposite the window.

Descriptive writing involves the use of words which give the **qualities of the subject or object of description**: words such as 'dull', 'friendly', 'awkward', 'good', 'bad', 'nice', etc. e.g. *Emeka is a queer person*. Providing details strengthens the description and makes it vivid. For example, we can expand the description in the example sentence to have the following:

*Emeka is a queer person. He usually wears a yellow shirt over an orange vest and smokes profusely.*

The **use of figurative language** gives colour to a description. Two figurative expressions usually employed to make a description lively are the simile and the metaphor. Consider the following sentences:

She looked like an angel

She was an angel

Her dressing was so colourful that she looked more like a masquerade.

Like any other form of writing, a descriptive essay is organised into a structure of introduction, body and conclusion. The points are arranged logically and developed using qualities, details and figurative expressions.

### 3.5.3 Common Errors in Descriptive Writing

#### 1. General Inability to Describe a Phenomenon

The essays of most candidates reveal a weakness in describing a person or object. This may be due to a lack of ability to observe things, situations or phenomena in general. To describe effectively, you have to observe the features of what you intend to describe. This requires some patience or discipline.

Some candidates do not possess the appropriate vocabulary to convey their description. The topics are treated scantily giving rise to hazy descriptions which do not register any impression with the reader.

any intimate friendship with males until we are much older. She cares not only for our academics, she takes great interest in our moral development as well.

Mrs. Imirhe is very friendly. She is one teacher we girls always feel free to discuss our personal problems with. And we always find her advice very useful. I must say that Mrs. Imirhe is one teacher whose style of teaching and way of life have affected us. Though teaching is generally looked down upon these days, a few of us have said that we would take to teaching after our university education, to be like Mrs. Imirhe.

Uduak Essien  
SS 3B

#### Comments

##### Content

From the point of view of content, this is a very good essay. The description of Mrs. Imirhe that is given is sufficient to mark her out from other teachers. Her physical qualities, her mastery of her subject, her unique style of teaching and the warm relationship between her and the students are all pointed out. We are able to have a good mental picture of the teacher. This is why this type of descriptive essay should do.

##### Organisation

The simile that is used to introduce the essay makes the opening interesting and links properly with the second paragraph where the description of the teacher actually starts. The introduction builds up logically into the body of the essay with a good description of those qualities of the teacher that make her the most admirable. The concluding paragraph, particularly the last sentence, leaves a memorable impression of the teacher in the reader's mind.

##### Expression

The writer shows a good command of English

language. The words and expressions make the description flow without being boring. The sentences, though fairly long, are well constructed. The diction that is employed creates warmth, freshness and affection for the teacher in the reader.

#### Mechanical Accuracy

The writer has effective control of his grammar, spelling and punctuation. The sentences are well written.

Overall, this is a very good essay.

### 3.6 Argumentative Writing

#### 3.6.1 The Nature of Argumentative Writing

An argumentative writing is a form of writing in which you attempt to persuade the reader to agree to your point of view on a controversial subject matter. An argument is not a quarrel or a shouting competition. There are usually two sides to an argument and what you do in this type of essay is to persuade your readers by appealing to their feelings and minds. Ultimately, your aim is to convince them to agree with you on the main point of argument and for them to accept a belief they did not hold before.

An argumentative essay would require you to

1. prove a point, or
2. present a viewpoint, or
3. balance two sides of an argument

The following are examples of topics requiring argumentative writing:

- i. Female children are more beneficial to parents than male children.
- ii. Corporal punishment should be abolished in schools.
- iii. Science has done more harm than good to the society.
- iv. Military rule is preferable to civil rule.



- v. The advantages and disadvantages of the extended family system.
- vi. Polygamy is more relevant to our society than monogamy.
- vii. Education should be free at all levels.
- viii. We are happier than our forefathers were.

As you can see from these topics, there are always two sides to the subject of an argumentative essay and your mode of presentation will depend on the way the question is set. Usually, you would be told whether to write on only one side or both sides of the topic. When you are to write on only one side, you should even do so with due cognisance of the view of the other side at least to show that you are aware of the opposition. However, your points should be logical enough to lend support to the side you are supporting.

### 3.6.2 Features of Argumentative Writing

#### A. Presenting a Viewpoint

##### 1. Appropriate Introduction

If the medium of expressing the argument is a debate, then it should have some of the features of a writing that is to be delivered orally. The introduction should begin with the usual vocatives:

“Mr. Chairman, panel of judges, accurate time keeper, co-debaters, ladies and gentlemen. I am here to propose the motion that education should be free at all levels.

##### 2. Definition of Proposition Background Information

What you do next is to define the subject matter of the debate or give some background information on the controversy. Here, you may sketch the history of events leading up to the present argument. Since it is often the case that disagreements or misconceptions arise because people are poorly informed, the background component of the argument becomes very important. Getting people

to change their minds is sometimes simply a matter of providing them with additional information upon which to base their conclusions.

For the topic at hand, the definition of proposition and background information could be something like the following:

“First, let us get it clear what we mean by free education. Actually education, or any commodity or service cannot be free. Nothing, in terms of goods or services, is free. Somebody has to pay for it. What we mean by free education is that education at all levels should be regarded as a social service to be borne by the government. My reasons for proposing that the cost of education should be borne entirely by the government and at no expense whatsoever to the vast majority of our already impoverished populace are as follows:...”

##### 3. Proof of the Proposition

This is the use of logical proofs to change the reader or audience's mind. Logic is the art of drawing inferences or conclusions. Where possible, you may use facts or statistics to support your argument. The arguments may be numbered for clarity and the conclusion should be able to support your stand. There should be good paragraphing, coherence and a logical sequence of ideas.

##### 4. Disproof of Competing Arguments

One of the marks of a skilful debater is the ability to anticipate the competing argument of the opponent and then disprove it. By doing it, you are able to pull the rug from under the feet of your opponent. In the language of logic and argument, this is called refutation. The following is an example of refutation:

“My opponent may argue that the government alone cannot bear the burden of education at all levels and that any responsible parent should be able to bear the cost of educating his child. What we are saying, Mr. Chairman, panel of judges, is that this our great country is blessed with abundant natural resources. Also, revenue accruing from the resources is paid directly into government coffers.

All the government needs to do is to make good planning for the scheme and make budgetary allocation for the programme from the resources paid directly into its coffers. Education benefits the society generally and so the question of responsible or irresponsible parenthood does not arise..."

Thus to argue effectively, you should first reckon with the opposition, make some concessions to his point of view, and then 'demolish' that point of view with a superior argument.

### 5. Concluding the Argument

The concluding paragraph summarises all the points that have been made and also restates your stand very convincingly:

"... Yes, Mr. Chairman, panel of judges, ladies and gentlemen, even my worthy opponents; I can see from the smiles on your faces that I have been able to convince you that the education of every young man and young woman of this our great nation should be free at all levels."

### B. Balancing Two Sides of an Argument

An essay that requires you to present a balanced view of two sides of an argument would have features that are somewhat different from those of a debate where you are articulating a particular point of view. Let us consider a question like this one:

"Write an article suitable for publication in a cultural magazine on the advantages and disadvantages of the extended family system."

Your **introduction** in this type of essay should first define the term extended family system: that it is a feature of traditional African society where the concept of family refers to a network of blood relationships and not just the immediate family of mother, father and children.

In the **body** of the essay you should be able to give at least **two** advantages and **two** disadvantages, adequately discussed. If you write on only one aspect of the question, you will be marked down considerably. You are not expected to take a side; though you may subtly and skilfully show your bias.

You are to present your argument in a very orderly manner; you may give the advantages first, followed by the disadvantages. Nothing, however, prevents you from dealing with the two aspects side by side. Your register should be formal; slang is out of place. The medium calls for expository prose that exhibits appropriateness of vocabulary and collocations, clarity of expressions and variety of sentence patterns.

### 3.6.3 Common Errors in Argumentative Writing

Debate, like speech, is not a favourite topic in the SSCE English Language essays of candidates. Candidates do not appear to have the ability to effectively handle topics that require presenting a point of view or balancing two sides of an argument. The points they give are usually not cogent enough to support their arguments. More often, there is the tendency towards drawing a general conclusion from a single incident. Arguments are often illogical and the conclusions often do not follow from the reasoning that had gone before. Most candidates do not have the appropriate vocabulary to put across their point of view.

### 3.6.4 Model Question and Answer on Argumentative Writing

#### Question

You are a speaker in a debate on the topic:

"Civilian rule is better than military rule."

Write out your contribution for **or** against the motion (WAEC, June 2001)

#### Answer

Mr. Chairman, panel of judges, accurate time-keeper, co-debaters, ladies and gentlemen. I am here this evening to propose the motion that 'Civilian rule is better than military rule.'

The history of our country since independence

in 1960 shows that military rule has been alternating with civilian rule in the governance of this country, with the military being in charge of government for 30 out of our 42 years so far of independence. Having experienced both rules, I am sure we have the benefit of experience to judge which is better.

Freedom is an inalienable right of the individual. Democracy, which is government of the people by the people and for the people, is an expression of the right of the people to choose who to govern them. Military rule, which derives its legitimacy from force, is an infringement of the fundamental rights of the people. So, a regime which comes to power by the overthrow of the people's right cannot be better than a regime that is the legitimate expression of the will of the people.

Whenever the military comes to power, one of their reasons is usually that the civilians were corrupt and that the economy had been mismanaged. But our experience has shown that the level of corruption has been far worse under the military than under civil rule. The military rulers just steal our money and nobody would have the courage to question them. And so, instead of curing the corruption which was the basis of their coming to power, they indeed become more corrupt. It is not just that the military rulers become more corrupt, they indeed entrench corruption in the system. Is it then surprising that our country ranks very high on the corruption index as one of the most corrupt countries in the world?

The economy is usually mismanaged under military rule. This is because the rulers are trained to protect the country in times of wars and not in the art of governing. Government essentially entails management of resources and this is done better by civilians. Military rule is usually characterised by high level of unemployment. Even those that are already employed are forcibly retired. Whereas programmes that create employment are initiated by civilians, the military men create unemployment by the dismissal and forcible termination of the appointment of those already employed.

There is usually free and open discussion of issues under democratic civilian rule. This is not so during military rule where one of the first things they do is

to enact draconian decrees with the aim of stifling any critical comment.

My opponent may argue that civil rule is very expensive because of the cost of paying the representatives at all levels of government – federal, state and local government – and their numerous advisers. One thing my opponents forget is that under military there are always ministers and advisers, so these costs and expenses are also incurred. The people so appointed by the military rulers are selected at the whim of the leader. Under civil rule, the representatives are elected by the people and those that are made ministers and advisers are always approved by the elected representatives.

Civilian rule is a civilized concept of governance. Military rule takes us back to the dark ages.

Mr. Chairman, panel of judges, ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that with the above points, I have been able to convince you that civil rule is better than military rule.

## Comments

### Content

The arguments are well stated and adequately developed. In an argumentative essay written under examination condition, three or four arguments that are well-developed should be enough for a good mark. The important thing is for your stand to be clear, as is the case here. If you argue for both sides of the proposition you will score a very low mark.

### Organisation

The introduction has the usual vocatives expected at the beginning of a debate. The points are well put. There is good paragraphing as well as coherence and logical sequence of ideas. The conclusion is apt and re-emphasises the proposition.

### Expression

The speaker shows a good command of language. The correct use of speech techniques is evident. You will notice that slang is not used. Note also the

writer's choice of vocabulary and sentence types. This should, as in the case here, be able to carry conviction.

### Mechanical Accuracy

The speaker has an effective command of the mechanics of English Language – spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## 3.7 Expository Writing

### 3.7.1 Nature of Expository Writing

Exposition is detailed explanation. Expository writing explains a process, an idea or a feeling. It is somewhat like a descriptive essay in that it contains a great deal of description, but it also explains how things work or operates and shows their relations with other things. The aim of expository writing is to inform, to instruct or to bring someone else to see one's point of view. The following are topics for expository writing:

1. The preparation of my favourite food.
2. A traditional marriage ceremony
3. How the telephone works
4. The 6-3-3-4 system of education

When you write an expository essay, you are writing on a topic that you know or are supposed to know. You have to know the subject matter for you to be able to explain it. The subject matter does not allow you to be vague or lose yourself in abstract thought or to wander from point to point. Neither does it demand much imaginative power; but just the ability to describe a simple process or series of events clearly in logical order. So, if you are not very familiar with the subject matter, you should avoid it.

### 3.7.2 Features of Expository Writing

Like other forms of essay, expository writing is written with the standard structure of introduction, body and conclusion. Your explanation should be

clear and couched in simple language.

Expository essay is written quite often in the present tense which involves the use of the active voice. The present tense is generally preferred because the process, concept or idea being explained has relevance not only for a particular time but for most, if not for all, times.

Clarity and precision are required in expository writing particularly where you give instructions or explain processes. There may not be much need for the use of figurative language. However, expository writing demands systematic thinking, succinct language and orderly marshalling of points.

### 3.7.3 Common Errors in Expository Writing

Expository writing is not a favourite of most SSCE candidates. For the few who write on it, their exposition is usually scanty, revealing a very shallow knowledge of what is being discussed. In most cases, a step by step explanation of the process is lacking, resulting in write-ups that are difficult to comprehend. They do not seem able to begin at the beginning and proceed step by step to the end, but continually miss out steps in the chain of events. By so doing, they revert to points previously made thereby filling their essays with unnecessary repetition and confusion.

Another flaw in the expository essay of candidates is poor paragraphing. Candidates often don't know how to organise the points and processes in paragraphs. It is in this kind of writing that you find one-paragraph essays as candidates lump all the points and processes in a single paragraph. At the other extreme, some candidates use a paragraph for each step, thereby presenting essays that have up to ten or more paragraphs.

### 3.7.4 Model Question and Answer on Expository Writing

#### Question

*The Home Economics Club in your school has*



invited entries for an essay competition on the topic:

*"The processes involved in the preparation of my favourite food."*

*Write your entry.*

#### Answer

##### The Preparation of Fufu and Egusi Soup

Food is a necessary ingredient for life. Good food is essential for good health. All over the world, people have different types of food and the food the people eat depends on what the weather and the environment allows them to produce. Here in Nigeria, there are many types of food such as rice, beans, yam, garri, fufu, etc. Among all these, my favourite food is fufu eaten with egusi soup.

Fufu as it is known in the western part of Nigeria or akpu in the eastern part of the country is made from cassava tuber. Different types of food can be made from cassava tuber but the most common are garri and fufu. Fufu is eaten all over Nigeria though it is eaten more by people in the South than in the North. There are many processes before cassava transforms into fufu. The cassava tuber is peeled, washed and put in water for three days for it to ferment. It is then washed and sieved into a container where it forms a sort of paste. The paste is put in a jute bag for the water to drain off. The whitish paste then becomes somehow thick ready to be cooked to become fufu.

There are many methods of cooking the raw whitish paste into fufu but I will be describing the way it is made by the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. Put water into a cooking pot and allow it to boil. Mould the raw fufu into ball-like shapes and put into the pot of boiling water. The level of the boiling water should cover the fufu. Let the fufu stay in the boiling water for about 15 minutes. Bring out and pound in a mortar until it becomes a little malleable. Mould again, though this time a little flatter; make a hole in the middle and put again in the water that remains boiling on the fire.

After boiling again for another 15 minutes, bring out the fufu and pound a second time. Pound

continuously till you get the correct texture, not too soft or too strong. The fufu is now put into a plate if it is to be eaten immediately or wrapped in cellophane packets if it is to be preserved. This wrapping makes the fufu to remain warm for a long time, and can be preserved for a day or two.

To prepare egusi soup for 5-6 persons, you need the following ingredients: a milk-cupful of ground egusi, 3-kitchen spoonful of red oil, ground fresh tomato and pepper, a tablespoonful of salt, ground crayfish, pumpkin vegetable leaves locally known as 'ugu', castor oil seed locally called 'ogiri' by the Igbos, 'iru' by the Yorubas, and 'dawadawa' by the Hausas, dry fish, and a kilo of beef meat or chicken.

In the preparation of the soup, pour the red oil in a soup pot and fry for 2 minutes. Then pour in the ground fresh tomato and pepper, letting it remain on the fire. After about 3 minutes, add the milk cupful of ground egusi and stir properly to make sure that the egusi mixes well with the tomato and pepper. Add about a litre of water and stir again. Put the meat already cut to required sizes and allow to cook for 10 minutes. Then, put the dried fish, the vegetable (the pumpkin leaves properly cut), the crayfish, and the iru or ogiri or dawadawa. Put salt. Add about another litre of water and allow to cook for another 10 minutes. Stir the soup, taste it for salt, and then dish. The egusi soup is served with the fufu that had been prepared earlier.

Fufu contains mainly carbohydrates but served with egusi soup, prepared as described above, you will have a food that contains the other vitamins needed for a balanced nutritious meal. Fufu makes a person physically strong. People who eat it regularly are those who exert much physical energy in their daily activities. That may be why some people call a meal of fufu 'six to six', meaning that if you eat it at 6 a.m., it can sustain you till 6 p.m.

#### Comments

##### Content

The writer shows sufficient knowledge of the subject matter. He starts by stating the importance

writer's choice of vocabulary and sentence types. This should, as in the case here, be able to carry conviction.

### Mechanical Accuracy

The speaker has an effective command of the mechanics of English Language – spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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### 3.7.4 Model Question and Answer on Expository Writing

#### Question

*The Home Economics Club in your school has*

of food to life and good health before mentioning his favourite food. He situates the chosen food within the context of the national food culture and then goes on to describe how the fufu is made from its raw material. After that, he gives us detailed information on how fufu and egusi soup are prepared. The essay is rich in content.

### Organisation

The essay is well organised. There is a suitable introduction, and the body gives a step by step explanation of the processes involved. The concluding paragraph highlights the nutritious value of the favourite food as well as giving an interesting attribute of the meal. The ability to describe the series of steps very clearly and in logical order is evident.

### Expression

The writer uses the appropriate words and gives local names of some of the ingredients so as to bring the exposition clearer to the reader. The active voice predominates, as is required in this type of essay. The writing shows a good knowledge of the register of cookery. There is a mixture of long and short sentences.

### Mechanical Accuracy

Generally well written, from the point of view of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## 3.8 Article Writing

### 3.8.1 The Nature of an Article

An article is a piece of writing specifically for publication in a newspaper. The subject of an article cuts across the different kinds of writing we have been discussing so far – narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, etc. – because it serves various purposes. These include:

- i. to educate or inform;
- ii. to entertain;
- iii. to explain the process or guidelines of doing something;

- iv. to argue a point or to prove a case or to balance two sides of an argument.

An article is not a letter. This is a mistake most candidate make. It is more or less an essay on a particular subject matter. So, when, in your SSCE essay, you choose to write an article for publication in a newspaper or magazine, make sure you do not write a letter to the editor.

Like other types of writing, an article has its peculiar features. What you are writing is for the public at large. So, you must have the reader in mind. Your writing must have a heading for the readers to know what you are writing on. You should also state the purpose and establish the setting for writing the article in the introductory paragraph. You may, for instance, be writing to express your view on an issue of general concern or to make your contribution on a subject which has been generating some controversy. In the body of the article, you discuss your point of view developing an idea as a sub-theme in each paragraph. The style of writing should be formal.

When writing for the public, you should endeavour not to hold extreme views. You can still put across your views convincingly without using rude or impolite language. As much as possible, try to recognise the other or the alternative view. Make your points very clear and without beating about the bush. Do not make your readers overstretch themselves in the bid to comprehend your message. People do not have time to waste in comprehending a difficult message.

The concluding paragraph should summarise your point of view or restate the stand you have taken. You should give your name at the end of the article and indicate your address. Editors don't publish anonymous articles.

Most candidates usually misconstrue an article for a letter to the editor. This automatically results in

perceived leaders of the strike action.

On the other hand, the members of the police should know that they belong to a disciplined force. Their strike action sends dangerous signals on the stability and security of the nation. For the few days that they were off duty, armed robbers had a field day, banks could not open as there was no police security to accompany bullion vehicles and guard the banking premises, and there was total bedlam regarding the traffic situation. Most importantly, it tells very badly on the ability of the government to control the affairs of the nation.

Let us hope that never again will such an action occur. The government should ensure that matters concerning the welfare of all categories of workers, whether in civilian or military employment, are promptly resolved before they degenerate to conflicts or reach an impasse. We all have a stake in the peace, security and stability of this country.

(Signature)

Mohammed Idris

15, Ali Akilu Road,

Kaduna

### Comments

#### Content

The article is very rich in content. The writer defines what a strike is, establishes the setting for his discussion, and then gives the probable reasons for the strike. Though his sympathy seems to be with the striking policemen, he, nonetheless, seems to suggest that the strike action could have been prevented. There are sufficient points to guarantee this article a high score for content.

#### Organisation

The article is well-organised. There is a suitable introduction, and the body of the essay contains very logical arguments. There is good paragraphing while the conclusion clearly summarises the point of view of the writer. Note that the writer gives his name and address at the end of the article.

### Expression

This is a well-written essay. The register is formal, the vocabulary is appropriate, and the expressions flow. There is an effective use of rhetorical questions. The sentences, though fairly long, are well constructed.

### Mechanical Accuracy

This essay should score high from the perspective of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

## 3.9 Imaginative Writing

### 3.9.1 The Nature of Imaginative Writing

More often, candidates are presented with essay topics such as those listed below:

1. Write a story, real or imagined, which illustrates the saying: "Make hay while the sun shines."
2. Write a story that ends with the advice: "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones."
3. Write a story which illustrates the saying: "Every disappointment is a blessing."
4. Narrate an experience you have had or heard about that illustrates the saying: "Where there is a will, there is a way."

An imaginative essay is a type of narrative in which the student writes on an experience or event that is not real but imagined. Imaginative writing calls for creativity and thoughtfulness. Very few candidates choose this type of writing in the SSCE.

### 3.9.2 The Features of Imaginative Writing

An imaginative essay follows the same standard structure of all prose writing – introduction, body and conclusion. It has the same features as the narrative essay but here the writer creates the person, event or experience in his mind and discusses it as if it were real.



In assessing the imaginative essay, it is not usually easy to predict what the candidate may come with, but the important thing is that the ending or moral should follow naturally from the story. The plot or story-line should be easy to follow.

The story should have a beginning, a climax and a conclusion. The paragraphs should be fully developed and well-linked. A good story-teller must have a good command of language. If you are writing an imaginative essay, you must possess the ability to choose the appropriate words and images, to create the desired atmosphere, and to set the correct tone for your story. An interplay of the various sentence types is also needed to avoid monotony and to sustain the interest of the reader.

### 3.9.3 Common Errors in Imaginative Writing

Usually the best essays in the SSCE English Language come from the few candidates who choose imaginative writing. Some candidates, however, are unable to tackle this type of essay as required. More often than not, the ending or moral does not follow naturally or logically from the story; in most cases, it just depicts an irrelevant appendage.

The rendition in most stories is usually flat; no suspense is created, no climax. Also, most candidates do not have the command of language to give freshness and life to their stories. Figurative expressions are rarely used.

To do well in imaginative writing, you need to be creative, imaginative and reflective. Do not choose an imaginative essay if you do not have these qualities.

### 3.9.4 Model Question and Answer on Imaginative Writing

#### Question

*Write a story, real or imagined, to illustrate the saying:*

*'Where there is a will there is a way.'*

#### Answer

Where there is a will, there is a way

Friday night, I sat staring at the calculus problem which has proved insoluble. But I was determined to solve the problem. During the maths lesson earlier in the morning, I had solved a tricky problem which even Sola Ogundipe, the most brilliant girl in the class, could not. Sola and I are friends but when it comes to mathematics, we become rivals.

Sola and I are recognised by everybody in the class as the best mathematicians. So when Sola could not solve the problem that morning and I did, my rating soared and Sola's plummeted. I felt a little bit cocky. "There can only be one mathematician in the class," I said, as everybody congratulated me. I became the undisputed mathematics champion of the class.

Later, in the afternoon, who did I see come to me? Sola, with a mathematics problem for solution. Has she succumbed so easily to my supremacy? I too had been trying to solve this calculus problem for some two weeks but had not been able to. I tried to work out the problem but at a crucial stage I would get the calculation wrong? "Mathematics champion, why is this problem defeating you?" Sola teased. She perhaps was still smarting from my indiscrete comment after the morning incident. Luckily for me the bell rang signifying the end of classes for the day. Everybody rushed to the dining hall.

I remained in the classroom throughout the day and well into the night trying to solve this problem but to no avail. I had to miss lunch and even supper as I did not want Sola to taunt me again for not being able to solve the calculus problem. I had to leave for the hostel downcast. I had not solved the problem. "I will solve this problem before the Monday morning maths lesson," I said to myself.

Now Sunday night, and I still had not solved the problem which had occupied my time the entire weekend. I had missed the Saturday games and the Sunday service so as to avoid meeting Sola. I had not been to the dining hall either. I had to rely on my private provisions for food, all in the name of

finding a solution to this calculus problem. I had consulted all the calculus textbooks I could lay my hands on. Midnight was drawing closer. I had to go to bed. I would have to face Sola and the class and their ridicule tomorrow.

I lay on my bed but sleep could not come. Then, I had a brainwave and, in a flash of inspiration, I jumped out of the bed, rushed to the switch, put on the light, grabbed a pencil and paper and solved the problem. All the while, a basic but fundamental step was what I was missing out. Eureka! I had solved it. Just then a roar from the far corner by one of the boys in the dormitory made me realise that I had disturbed their sleep. I apologised, switched off the lights, and returned to my bed.

As I rocked myself back to sleep, relishing the satisfaction of having found a solution to the problem, my mind went through the events of the past three days. One should not allow success in any endeavour to get into one's head. One should be modest and humble. For almost three days I was in a maze but with determination and relaxed mind, my will found a way. Surely, where there's a will there'll be a way.

### Comments

#### Content

Imaginative writing demands creativity. The story may be real or imagined but it should be credible. The plot or story-line of this story is easy to follow and the ending follows logically from the story. Besides the moral, a lesson in humility, is also added.

#### Organisation

The story has a beginning, a climax and a conclusion. The flashback technique is used at the beginning, and then the story proceeds in a sort of chronological order. The events relate to one another as the plot thickens. The paragraphs are fully developed and the ideas link effectively.

#### Expression

There is the use of vocabulary that reflects the atmosphere appropriate to the situation. There is

an effective use of dialogue, a mixture of long and short sentences as well as a variety of sentence patterns. The words and expressions used sustain the interest of the reader till the end.

### Mechanical Accuracy

The writer has a good control of grammar, spelling and punctuation. By SSCE standards, it is a very good essay.

### 3.10 Standard Practice Questions

Let it be stressed again that essay writing is essentially about ideas and the way they are expressed. No doubt if you were to write on any of the topics discussed in the 'model' essays we have considered under the different kinds of writing, your approach would, and should, be different. As advised earlier, your approach should show some originality.

Any accomplished writer has a unique style of writing; so, you should develop your own style. You should however, ensure that you operate within the conventions of the English Language in terms of lexis, structure and grammar.

Below are some topics on the different kinds of writing we have treated in this chapter. They are for your practice exercise. They are standard WAEC/NECO SSCE questions. Your essay should not be less than 450 words and you are advised to spend not more than 50 minutes on each question.

1. Your younger sister in SS 2 has written for your advice on what subjects she should study for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. As someone who knows her ability in the different subjects, write a letter to her giving advice on why she should choose certain subjects rather than others.
2. In recent times, the wave of armed robbery, burglary and car-snatching has been on the increase in your country. Write an article for publication in a national newspaper giving reasons for the development and offer suggestions on how it can be curbed.

3. You are the chief speaker in a debate on the topic:  
'Female children are more beneficial than male children to their parents.'  
  
Write out your speech for or against the motion.
4. You are aware of the saying, 'A patient dog eats the fattest bone', but some people now believe that 'A patient dog eats no bone at all.' Write a story, suitable for publication in a national newspaper, on how the latter view reflects the present morality in the society.
5. The frequent scarcity of petroleum products has been causing serious hardship to the people of your country. Write a letter to the editor of a national newspaper expressing your views on the situation and suggesting measures that may be taken to improve it.
6. Narrate an experience you have had or heard about that illustrates the saying: 'Where there is a will, there is a way.'
7. Your brother, who has just completed his studies abroad, has written to say that he wants to come back to take up a job in your country. Write to him telling him about the conditions in the country and why it would be wise or unwise of him to come back home.
8. You have just returned to the city from your village where you spent the last holiday. In an article suitable for publication in your school magazine, compare life in your village with that in the city.
9. There was a riot in your school resulting in extensive damage and the Ministry of Education ordered your school to be shut down. Write a letter to the Commissioner of Education, explaining the causes of the disturbance, and appealing for the school to be re-opened.
10. As your contribution to a debate, write arguments for or against the proposition:  
'We are happier than our forefathers.'
11. Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the topic:  
'How to eradicate drug abuse among the youths in my country.'
12. You have been invited to deliver a speech on the topic:  
'Ethnic clashes in Nigeria today: causes and solutions.'  
  
Write your speech.
13. You are in the final year in secondary school. Write a letter to your uncle, who is an influential person in society, telling him what you intend to do next and asking for his assistance.
14. Write an article suitable for publication in a cultural magazine on the advantages and disadvantages of the extended family system.
15. You are a speaker in a debate on the topic:  
'Military rule is better than civilian rule.'  
  
Write your contribution for or against the motion.
16. As the outgoing president of a youth club in your community, write out the speech you will deliver at the hand-over ceremony.
17. Write a letter to the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency in your country complaining about the environmental pollution of your area and requesting that urgent action be taken to improve the situation.
18. Write a story ending with the words: "... Indeed, it was a blessing in disguise."
19. Write an article suitable for publication in a cultural magazine on the traditional marriage system of your people.
20. Write an article for publication in your school magazine on the topic: "Why I should like to be ..." Choose an occupation or career and give at least **three** reasons why it appeals to you.

## Assessing the Essay/Letter Writing

The major purpose of the essay is to test your ability to communicate effectively in writing. The examiner who marks your paper has been trained to look for certain qualities in assessing your piece of writing. These qualities include the adequacy of treatment of subject matter, originality of approach, appropriateness of language, clarity of exposition, balance and mechanical accuracy.

The qualities mentioned above have been grouped into a number of well-defined aspects with a maximum mark for each aspect. These are Content, Organisation, Expression and Mechanical Accuracy.

### 4.1 Content

What is judged here are your ideas and how you have been able to develop them. The points used to build up the essay should be relevant to the topic. It therefore requires that you should have sufficient points to build up and develop the essay. Make sure you understand the topic you are writing on. Many candidates hastily choose a topic which they frequently do not understand. Consequently, the topic is frequently misinterpreted, distorted or abandoned half-way for lack of acceptable material. For example, a few years ago, candidates were asked to write on the following topic:

"You were recently involved in an incident in which many of your friends criticized your role. Narrate the incident to a close friend and defend the role you played."

Many candidates misinterpreted the question to mean that they were involved in an accident! This automatically led to many candidates producing write-ups that were completely irrelevant to the

question with the attendant loss of marks.

Whatever the topic, the examiner expects you to have **three** or **four** points or arguments, fully developed. Where a question has more than one aspect, make sure you give adequate treatment to each aspect. For example, a June 2001 question required candidates to:

"Write an article suitable for publication in a cultural magazine on 'the advantages and disadvantages of the extended family system.'"

In this type of essay you should give at least **two** advantages and **two** disadvantages, which should be adequately discussed, for a good mark. If you write on either the advantage or the disadvantage without discussing the other, your score under content will be very low.

On the other hand, where the question expects you to write a speech for **or** against the topic "Civilian rule is better than military rule", you will be required to advance at least **three** arguments, adequately developed for **or** against the proposition. If you argue for both sides of the proposition, you will lose marks.

Where the topic demands some creative writing, such as telling a story or illustrating a moral, please ensure that you give an account of a story or a series of events that illustrate the story and that the ending follows naturally from the story. The plot or story-line should be easy to follow. The story may be real or imagined but it should be credible. If the moral does not follow from the story or the story is completely irrelevant, you may be scored zero.

You are therefore, advised to read the essay topics carefully, ponder a little over them before



word classes or part of speech (identification, function and usage), sentence construction, tenses and tense sequence, structure and lexis (antonyms and synonyms), pluralization, subject/predicate, spelling, concord (agreement of noun with verb), punctuation, figures of speech, etc.

Majority of candidates score very low marks under Mechanical Accuracy because of their ignorance of the basic rules of grammar which results in the inability to spell words correctly, punctuate sentences correctly or handle grammatical structures with a reasonable degree of competence.

#### 4.5 Common Errors

You should be able to avoid committing the class of errors listed below:

1. *Wrong Spellings and Usages* (especially confusion between words with close phonetic affinity) e.g.

- (a) their for there (and vice versa)  
"Their are many students in our school."  
"Femi and Kunle invited us to *there* house."
- (b) greatful for grateful. "I am very *greatful* for the advice you gave me."
- (c) break for brakes "The *break* of the car failed."
- (d) latter for later "He said he would visit us *latter* in the day."
- (e) savely for safely "We arrived *savely*."
- (f) cause for curse "He may be *caused* for disrespecting elders."
- (g) were for where "I went to the airport *were* I saw many aeroplanes."

Other confusions/common errors include had/heard; lacking behind/lagging behind; dinning hall/dining hall; taking/taken; cut/caught; sit/seat; feel/fill; in other/in order; quiet/quite; believe/belief; course/cause/cursc; right/write; lose/loose; been/being;

formally/formerly.

2. *Wrong Concord*

- (a) Our club *help* (helps) people *which* (who) are less fortunate.
- (b) I am happy to write you *these* (this) letter.
- (c) Our functions *is* (are) quite different.
- (d) We donate food and clothes to those who *needs it* (need them).
- (e) We hold our meetings every *Saturdays* (Saturday) or more appropriately 'Our meetings are held every Saturday'.
- (f) He told her (his) wife to come home.

3. *Indiscriminate Use of Capital Letters*

(especially C, S, I, O, U in initial positions) e.g.

You Should not Control my movement Under any Circumstance.

4. *Use of Smaller Letters in Proper Nouns*

mary and olu travelled to aba

5. *Wrong Amalgamation* e.g.

inspite of	for	in spite of
afterall	for	after all
somany	for	so many
infact	for	in fact
atimes	for	at times

6. *Wrong Splitting of Words*, e.g.

can not	for	cannot
more over	for	moreover
non the less	for	nonetheless
in deed	for	indeed

7. *Punctuation* (especially inappropriate use of comma)

- (a) Use of comma to end a sentence, e.g.  
"The principal advised us to take our studies seriously, Any student who does not will be expelled."

- (b) Use of comma between a transitive verb and its object, e.g.  
“John told me that, he would visit us tomorrow.”
- (c) Redundant comma after ‘although’, e.g.  
“Although, I didn’t believe him, I agreed to take part in the plan”
- (d) Failure to insert a comma between items in a list, e.g.  
“The robbers took away our radio TV set a wall clock and mummy’s jewellery”
- (e) Inappropriate use of the apostrophe, e.g.  
“The dog would not move *it’s* legs”  
“*Thing’s* are hard these *day’s*”
- (f) Omission of the apostrophe where mandatory, e.g.  
“Each students speech would last ten minutes”  
“Dont be annoyed with me”

#### Wrong Plural Formation

“They had all their *childrens* in that house.”

“He gave us many *informations* about that town”

“The man has three *wifes* and lots of *furnitures*.”

#### Grammatical Forms and Usage

“all *this* things” (these)

“all *what* they did” (that)

“one of my *friend*” (friends)

“the *whole* guests” (all the guests)

“don’t be *surprise*” (surprised)

“the teachers *which* are not qualified... (who)

Your essay should be able to show that you have a good grasp of the mechanics of written English, that is, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

## Spelling and Punctuation

### 5.1 Introduction

Spelling and punctuation are very important features of the writing process. An essay or letter fraught with spelling and punctuation errors will no doubt make an uninteresting read. That is why for every spelling or punctuation error you make in your essay or letter, half a mark is deducted under mechanical accuracy. In this chapter, you will be introduced to these two essential writing skills which you have no choice but to master if you must be a good writer.

### 5.2 Spelling

Because English has come in contact with many other languages like German and Latin, its spelling has become complex. For instance, there are about thirteen different ways of spelling the sh sound /ʃ/: “sharp”, “sugar”, “brochure”, “ocean”, “ration”, “schnapps”, “mansion”, “anxious”, “fuchsia”, “conscious”, “suspicion”, “nauseous”, and “assure”, and at least six different ways of spelling the diphthong /ea/: “care”, “pair”, “there”, “wear”, “their”, and “barbarian”. In spite of this complexity, you can master spelling by paying attention to the features described below.

#### 5.2.1 Homophones

Pay attention to words that are similar in sound but whose spelling and meaning are different (i.e. homophones):

all ready:	everybody is ready
already:	before now
all right:	(standard spelling)

alright:	(non-standard)
altar:	a place of worship
alter:	to change
all together:	as a group
altogether:	entirely
ascent:	climbing or going up
assent:	to agree
bare:	without shoes on (“bare foot”)
bear:	a large wild animal (or to give birth to)
brake:	device for stopping a car
break:	to damage
cite:	to give an example
sight:	seeing
site:	location
complement:	serving to complete
compliment:	to express admiration
council:	a group of people elected to lead
counsel:	(advise; to give advice)
descent:	going or coming down
dissent:	to disagree; disagreeing
dying:	(present participle of the verb ‘to die’)
dyeing:	the process of colouring something
fair:	just or right
fare:	price of transport
principal:	a top school official; chief
principle:	a belief or rule of conduct
plain:	simple; flat surface
plane:	airplane; flat surface
rain:	water from the sky

rein:	something to control a horse
reign:	period of rule
stationery:	writing materials
stationary:	not moving
waist:	part of the body
waste:	to squander
wear:	to put something on
were:	(past tense of 'to be')
which:	(relative pronoun)
witch:	woman with supernatural power

Apart from homophones, the following pairs are also often confused: as/has, is/his, advice/advise, try/trial, cease/seize, practice/practise, fate/faith, loose/lose, sit/seat, coarse/coerce, am/I'm, respective/respectful, you're/your, who's/whose, faithful/fateful, works/walks, literally/literarily, rite/right, accent/assent, moral/morale, diffuse/difuse, elusive/illusive, site/cite/sight, piece/peace, release/relies, cause/curse/course, cloths/clothes, device/devise, diary/dairy, forth/fought/fourth/fort, hear/here, personal/personnel

### 5.2.2 Words Commonly Misspelt

Take time to look at the wrong spelling in each of the following words and try to learn the correct version.

<i>Wrong Spelling</i>	<i>Correct Version</i>
Accross	Across
Ocasion	Occasion
Trully/Truely	Truly
Arguement	Argument
Pronounciation	Pronunciation
Maintainance	Maintenance
Infered	Inferred
Atheletics	Athletics
Disastrious	Disastrous

Grievous	Grievous
Interprete	Interpret
Lenght	Length
Mischevious	Mischievous
Quaters	Quarters
Strenght	Strength
Disatisfied	Dissatisfied
Occured/Ocurred	Occurred
Refered	Referred
Recieve	Receive
Decieve	Deceive
Concieve	Conceive
Proffession	Profession
Priviledge	Privilege
Generousity	Generosity
Greatful	Grateful
Secretry	Secretary
Febuary	February
Continous	Continuous
Tommorrow	Tomorrow
Enviroment	Environment
Gorvernment	Government
Suprise	Surprise
Seperate	Separate
Accomodation	Accommodation
Harrass	Harass
Embarass	Embarrass
Commision	Commission
Comittee	Committee
Omission	Omission
Army robber	Armed robber
Oportunity	Opportunity
Illiterate	Illiterate
Begining	Beginning
Immediatly	Immediately
Delibrate	Deliberate
Writting	Writing



### 5.2.3 Distinguishing Between British and American Spelling

Many English words are either British or American. A good dictionary should tell you whether a word is British or American. Many speakers of English in Nigeria use British and American spellings inconsistently. In fact, many do not even know whether the words they are using are British or American or whether a particular pronunciation is typical British or American English. Yet, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) or the National Examinations Council (NECO) requires you to be consistent in the use of either variety. That is, if you choose American spelling, do not for any reason switch to British spelling and if you choose British spelling do not under any circumstances change to American spelling. If you fail to abide by this instruction, you will be penalised. Here is a short list of British and American spellings.

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. British – ac, oe | American – e          |
| anaemia             | anemia                |
| anaesthetize        | anesthetize           |
| paediatrics         | pediatrics            |
| faeces              | feces                 |
| foetus              | fetus                 |
| 2. British – our    | American – or         |
| labour              | labor                 |
| colour              | color                 |
| flavour             | flavor                |
| favourable          | favorable             |
| odour               | odor                  |
| clamour             | clamor                |
| neighbour           | neighbor              |
| 3. British – re     | American – er         |
| theatre             | theater               |
| centre              | center                |
| fibre               | fiber                 |
| sabre               | saber                 |
| sombre              | somber                |
| 4. British – ue     | American ‘ue’ omitted |

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| analogue                   | analog                       |
| prologue                   | prolog                       |
| 5. British – me            | American ‘me’ omitted        |
| programme                  | program                      |
| programmed                 | programed                    |
| program (in computing) (n) | programme (n)                |
| program (computing) (v)    | program (v) (also programme) |
| programmed (computing) (v) | programed (v)                |
| 6. British – e             | American ‘e’ omitted         |
| annexe (n)                 | annex (n)                    |
| annex (v)                  | annex (v)                    |
| adze                       | adz                          |
| 7. British – s             | American – z                 |
| analyse                    | analyze                      |
| 8. British – xion          | American – ction             |
| connexion OR               | connection                   |
| inflexion OR               | inflection                   |
| 9. British – ll            | American – l                 |
| travelled                  | traveled                     |
| levelled                   | leveled                      |
| 10. British – ou           | American – o                 |
| smoulder                   | smolder                      |
| plough                     | plow                         |
| mould                      | mold                         |
| 11. British – ise          | American – ize               |
| criticise                  | criticize                    |
| improvise                  | improvize                    |
| apologise                  | apologize                    |
| civilise                   | civilize                     |

Note: Words in this category are used interchangeably.

**12. Equivalent words/terms**

British	American
aerial	antenna
cheque	check
lift	elevator
kerosine (kerosine)	paraffin
ground floor	first floor
petrol	gasoline (gas)
exclamation mark	exclamation point
full stop	period

**Exercise**

1. Give **five** examples each of British and American spelling.

Punctuation is to writing what intonation is to speech. Good punctuation is essential for writing to be easily understood. It can be said that punctuation is the soul of grammar; for you have to master the appropriate use of the various punctuation marks for your written English to be sound and for it to make good reading. If you do not punctuate well, you will communicate badly, and indeed, wrongly. Careless punctuation brings about problems of interpretation.

In the marking of the essay question of the SSCE English Language test, every error of punctuation is usually penalised. Punctuation errors that are penalised include a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark omitted or wrongly used; a comma used where a full stop or semi-colon is required; insertion of comma between subject and verb, subject and object verb and complement. Also, each capital letter undeniably misused is penalised.

Unfortunately, it is much easier to check spelling than punctuation. A look into any dictionary tells us clearly how a word is spelt; but there are no dictionaries for punctuation. What we have are some firm rules and guidelines.

**5.3.1 Capital**

The 'initial capital' means a capital letter used as the first letter of a word. An initial capital is used

- (a) for the first word of a sentence, e.g.  
My sister is eight years old. She likes animals. Yesterday, she went to a zoo
- (b) for proper nouns – such as names of
  - (i) persons – Adamu, Ngozi, Akande
  - (ii) days of the week – Sunday, Thursday
  - (iii) countries – England, Nigeria, Cameroon
  - (iv) months – January, June, December
  - (v) streets – Ereko Street, Palm Avenue
  - (vi) towns or cities – Lagos, Ikeja, London, Calabar
  - (vii) institutions – University of Ibadan, United Nations Organisation
  - (viii) the Deity and sacred writing – God, the Almighty, Allah, the Bible, the Koran, the Holy Spirit.
- (c) for titles of books, plays, films, newspapers, e.g. *Things Fall Apart*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Guardian*

**5.3.2 The Full Stop**

The full stop is used at the end of a sentence that is not a question. The full stop is used in the following circumstances.

- (a) *To Mark off Complete Sentences*

A complete sentence is a group of words containing at least one main verb, and making complete sense by themselves. The full stop is used to mark such sentences.

**Examples**

John came here yesterday.

If it does not rain this evening, I will come to your house.

The girl hopped, skipped and jumped with delight.

### (b) Abbreviations and Contractions

You can use a full stop or not for:

- (i) abbreviations ending with the same letter as the full word

Examples: Dr. or Dr for 'Doctor', Rd. or Rd for 'Road'

- (ii) abbreviations of countries and organisations.

Examples: U.S.A. or USA for United States of America;

U.N.O. or UNO or UN for United Nations Organisation;

B.B.C. or BBC for British Broadcasting Corporation;

W.A.E.C. or WAEC for West African Examinations Council;

N.E.C.O. or NECO for National Examinations Council;

W.H.O or WHO for World Health Organisation.

- (c) Internet and e-mail addresses (pronounced 'dot')

Examples

heinemannbooks@yahoo.com

http://www.oup.co.uk

- (d) The decimal point

£60.50, 1.77 mm, 67.65 metres

### 5.3.3 The question mark (?)

It is used at the end of a direct question; that is, where the actual words used are quoted.

Examples

What is your name? Are you here already? Care for a cup of tea?

**Please Note:** A question mark is not used after a

question reported in indirect speech: that is, where not all the actual words spoken are quoted.

Examples:

He asked me where Bayo had gone. My mother asked her whether she would stay for two more days.

**Also note:** A question mark replaces a full stop. Do not write a full stop and a question mark together at the end of a sentence unless the full stop is indicating an abbreviation.

Example: Are you a regular listener to the B.B.C.?

### 5.3.4 The Exclamation Mark (!)

The Exclamation Mark is used to express surprise, joy, anger, shock, indignation, fear or any strong emotion. It may occur after one word, or a few words, or at the end of a sentence. If the exclamation mark is after only one or two words, you may or may not start the next word with a capital.

Examples

Help! Throw me a rope!

Really! What a wonderful idea!

Stop! We've left the light on!

Hurray! I've got the job

Whatever you do, he's certain to win!

**Note:** Question marks and exclamation marks replace full stops. Do not use a full stop as well as an exclamation mark – unless the full stop is indicating an abbreviation.

Example: I've passed my LL.B!

### 5.3.5 The Comma (,)

#### (a) Importance of the Comma

The comma is used to separate the items in a list or

to show where there is a slight pause in a sentence or speech. The comma is about the most important punctuation mark and most candidates often do not know when to and when not to use it. Indeed, it is believed that two equally experienced punctuation 'experts' might well have different opinions on some uses of the comma in a particular sentence.

Commas mark some of the pauses made in speech. If you read your sentence aloud, where you pause, you may need a comma. But you do not need to use a comma for every pause. Some pauses need other punctuation marks. Some pauses need no punctuation marks at all.

### (b) Rules and General Guidance

There are no firm rules as such on the use of the comma, but there are some general guidelines. Whether to use a comma or not may depend on:

- (i) the length of the whole sentence or parts of it;
- (ii) the emphasis you want to give certain words;
- (iii) what other punctuation marks you are using in the sentence.

One general rule is worth remembering: commas should be used for a purpose. Unless a comma is needed to make the sense clearer, it is best to miss it out.

### (c) Uses

The comma is used in the following circumstances:

- (i) *to separate items in a list of words or word groups*

#### Examples

- The candidates were told to come to the examination with a pen, a pencil, an eraser, a sharpener and a writing sheet.
- We found the box, opened it, looked inside, but it was empty.
- For her eighteenth birthday, Biola's father bought her a blue skirt, a gold

wristwatch, a leather shoe, and a complete volume of Shakespeare's work.

- My new car is fast, roomy, and quite economical.

- (ii) *to separate two or more adjectives qualifying the same noun*

#### Examples

Sade is a nice, lovely, little girl.

Nigeria is a large, multi-religious, and ethnically diverse country.

- (iii) *to separate phrases or clauses*

#### Examples

- He got up from bed, said his prayers, brushed his teeth, had a bath, took his breakfast, and then left for school.

- After many attempts, she finally passed the bar examinations.

- (iv) *before and after non-defining clauses. A non-defining clause gives additional, but not essential, information about the noun it follows.*

#### Examples:

- The girl, who came here last week, has travelled to London.
- The students' attack on the principal, old enough to be their father, is sacrilegious.

**Note:** The meaning of a sentence may be altered by the use of commas. The two sentences below are correctly punctuated.

A. The schoolchildren who have their meals at school are well fed.

B. The schoolchildren, who have their meals at school, are well fed.

But they have different meanings:

(A) means that some children eat at school, and these are well fed; while (B) means that all the children eat at school, and are well fed.

Therefore, you should always be careful to make sure you have punctuated your sentence so as to get across the meaning you intend.

(v) *to separate main clause, especially long ones, linked by a conjunction such as 'and', 'as', 'but', 'for', 'or'*

– It was a very long vacation, but we enjoyed it.

– The driver was speeding very fast, and the passengers enjoyed it all the more.

(vi) *to separate a tag question from the rest of the sentence*

*Examples:*

– He came here yesterday, didn't he?

– Mary was not careful enough, was she?

(vii) *before or after 'he said', etc, when writing down conversation*

*Examples*

'Give me a call when you get home,' he said.

'Get up from the bed,' she shouted.

(viii) *before a short quotation*

He smiled and said, 'All's well that ends well.'

al, old  
lege.

The semi-colon is used to indicate a pause that is stronger than a comma but shorter than a full stop. It is used to separate parts of a complicated sentence or to join more closely two or more related statements which are really complete sentences in themselves.

*Examples*

– To err is human; to forgive is divine.

– We should not rest on our oars; we should

continue the struggle until victory is won.

– The restaurant is not open yet; it is too early.

The colon is stronger than the semi-colon. It is used to introduce a list, a summary, an explanation, or before reporting what somebody has said.

*Examples*

– She passed the SSCE with distinction in all subjects: English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, economics, geography, literature, everything.

– You are to answer five questions: two from section A, two from section B, and one from section C.

– Success: that is our mission.

– The Nigeria Civil War was fought on the slogan: To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done.

– My name was not on the pass-list: I was not surprised.

The apostrophe is used to show that a letter or letters have been missed out, and also to indicate possession

(a) **Letters Missed Out**

*Examples*

we'll for we will

I won't for I will not

she's for she is or she has

can't for cannot

(b) **Possession**

My brother's car for the car of my brother

plural of a letter or number

### Examples

How many r's are there in 'lorry'?

How many 2's are there in 8?

### 5.3.9 The Inverted Comma (Quotation Marks) ( " " ) ( ' ' )

Quotation marks are used to separate words actually spoken by someone from the rest of a sentence. You may use single ( ' ' ) or double ( " " ) quotation marks but whichever you adopt, you should be consistent. Also, if you start with single, you should end with single; also, if you start with double, you should end with double.

The quotation marks are used in the following circumstances:

(a) to enclose words and punctuation in direct speech

#### Example

'What's your name?' the teacher asked.

'Aminu Tanimu', replied the pupil.

(b) to draw attention to a word that is unusual for the context

#### Example

Emeka failed in all the subjects he sat for in the SSCB and his father 'congratulated' him on his 'wonderful performance'.

(c) to enclose the titles of books, poems, plays, articles, newspapers, etc

#### Examples

Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' is a classic.

Have you read 'The Second Coming' by W.B.

'Remember what you promised last week: "I'll buy you a gold wrist watch for your birthday." Was that not what you said?'  
"Have you read Ayi Kwei Armah's 'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born'?"

### 5.3.10 The Hyphen (-)

A hyphen is used

(a) to form a compound word from two or more other words, e.g. hard-hearted, mother-to-be, anti-communist, Anglo-saxon

(b) when writing compound numbers between 21 and 99 in words: forty-four, sixty-seven, eighty-three.

(c) After the first section of a word that is divided between one line and the next: Let us ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

**Note:** Be careful to divide a word by syllables, without separating letters which belong closely to each other.

#### Examples

**Correct:** During the summer, we occasionally went to the park.

**Wrong:** During the summer, we occasionally went to the park.

**Correct:** Nigeria is a very big country

'The Punch' is my favourite newspaper.  
**Note:** If you have to place one quotation within another quotation, you should change from single to double quotation marks, or the other way round, as you place the quotations.

#### Examples

'Remember what you promised last week: "I'll buy you a gold wrist watch for your birthday." Was that not what you said?'  
"Have you read Ayi Kwei Armah's 'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born'?"

**Wrong:** Nigeria is a very big country.

### 5.3.11 The Dash (—)

A dash is used to indicate that what follows is a summary or conclusion of what has gone before.

#### Examples

Men were shouting, women were screaming, children were crying — it was chaos.

You've admitted that you lied to me — how can I trust you again?

A dash is also used before or after a list of a collective word is used.

#### Examples

We brought some new crockery — cups, plates, saucers, dishes.

I need some new clothes — a couple of shirts, a pair of trousers, and shoes.

Cameras, binoculars, jewellery, perfume — all sort of expensive goods were hidden in the smuggler's car.

Singly or in pairs, a dash may introduce an explanation or a comment or an afterthought from the rest of the sentence.

#### Examples

Tunde did not switch off the lights in the office after the close of work yesterday — another example of his carelessness.

My uncle Segun — he himself was a star footballer — donated a cup for soccer to the school.

The guard was not there when the robber struck — or so he said.

### 5.3.12 Dots or Ellipses (...)

Three dots are used to indicate that words have been omitted, especially from a quotation or at the end of a conversation.

#### Examples

To be or not to be, that is the question...

... and they lived happily thereafter.

*Please ensure that you apply the correct punctuation in all your writing. Good punctuation is a mark of good writing and an indication of skill in the use of English.*