

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

Mona Campus

The English Language Proficiency Test Unit
Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy

Test Preparation Booklet for the

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST



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The English Language Proficiency Test

The English Language Proficiency Test is used to assess whether persons applying to pursue **undergraduate degree** programmes at the UWI Mona campus possess a satisfactory level of writing and reading proficiency in English for academic purposes. Applicants' test results will be taken into consideration by individual faculties before offers of entry are made.

About the Test

The test lasts for approximately three hours and consists of the following sections:

Section A – Grammar (Time allowed: 40 mins.)

Candidates will be required to answer alternative/multiple choice questions on any or all of the following:

- Grammar of the Simple Sentence
- Grammar of Complex/Compound Sentences
- Idiomatic Usage (diction & structures)
- Writing Mechanics & Spelling

Candidates will NOT be tested on their knowledge of formal grammar but on their ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect structures.

Section B – Reading (Time Allowed: 40 mins.)

Candidates will be required to read one or more passages and to answer alternative/multiple choice questions on any or all of the following:

- Main &/or secondary ideas
- Literal and figurative meaning
- Explicit and implicit meaning
- Writer's primary intention/attitude/tone
- Organizational structure (paragraph/text)

Section C – Writing (2 Tasks – Time allowed: 80 mins.)

Task 1 (45 mins.) This will require candidates to write a 300 word essay in which they provide information and ideas on a topic of general interest.

Task 2 (35 mins.) This will require candidates to write approximately 250 words describing numerical data contained in a table or in a graphical illustration.

(N.B. 15 mins. of the duration of the test will be reserved for test administration)

Grammar

Specimen Questions

Instructions: For each question, select the correct answer and shade in with your pencil the box on your answer sheet that corresponds to the number of the answer selected. There is no penalty for incorrect answers, so if you cannot decide between the choices, make an intelligent guess and move on quickly.

a) Grammar of the Simple Sentence

Each of the boys _____ a haircut.

1. need 2. needs

b) Grammar of Complex/Compound Sentences

He asked her what _____ doing.

1. she was 2. was she

c) Idiomatic Usage (diction)

We in the Caribbean do not pay sufficient _____ to environmental issues.

1. attention 2. notice

d) Idiomatic Usage (structures)

At thirteen, a girl is really not capable _____ a baby.

1. to look after 2. of looking after

e) Writing Mechanics

An animal will use _____ body to show emotions.

1. it's 2. its

Answer Key for Grammar Specimen Questions:

- a) Ans. 2 d) Ans. 2
b) Ans. 1 e) Ans. 2
c) Ans. 1

Reading - Specimen Question

Instructions: Read the following passage carefully and answer the accompanying alternative/multiple choice questions. For each question, shade with your pencil the box on the answer sheet that corresponds to the number of the answer selected.

The status of the author is not what it was. Society, as people say, takes a dimmer view of him than it used to do. Possibly authors themselves are not what they were. It is an argument easy to use, and we often meet it. But it misses the point, even if we are now nothing but so many scribbling midgets. If there arose among us a young novelist who

5 was a greater genius than the Dickens of the early Victorian period, he could never triumphantly capture the country as Dickens did. He would face too much competition, not merely from other books but from T.V., radio, films; there would not be sufficient attention and excitement to spare to afford him his triumph; the public of today would not cooperate as the Victorians did. (In passing, let me add that it has long been my view that

10 a deep-seated and passionate public need has an immediate effect upon any form of art. This explains the astonishing development of Elizabethan drama, the 19th century novel, and even the silent film, which between 1910 and 1925 made amazing progress.) We can bring this nearer home. The public now would not cooperate as it was doing even in the 'twenties and early 'thirties. At the present time it does not want to create this particular

15 sort of reputation, with the result that no such reputations are made. During the last ten years, the flood of new books has been in full spate, but where among the new writers are those whose names are now household words? We have our post-war public figures, but how many of them are authors?

Questions

1. The writer _____ that view that "...authors themselves are not what they were." (Line 2)
 1. agrees with
 2. disagrees with
 3. expresses no opinion on

2. The term 'scribbling midgets' (line 4) refers to _____
 1. childish and irresponsible writers
 2. untalented writers
 3. writers who produce a small number of works
 4. inexperienced amateur writers

3. Why, according to the writer, did the silent film make amazing progress between 1910 and 1925? (line 12)
 1. It did not face competition from television or radio.
 2. It was more exciting and entertaining than books.
 3. The general public derived fulfilment from it.

4. “The flood of new books has been in full spate” (line 16) means that _____
 1. there has been a great demand for authors’ new works.
 2. A great number of new works have been published.
 3. Newly published books have been of an increasingly high standard.

5. Why, according to the writing, is the “status of the author not what it was”? (line)
 1. Authors today are not as glamorous as they were in the Elizabethan and Victoria eras.
 2. People today have a wider variety of interests from which to choose.
 3. There are not as many authors in the post-war era as before.
 4. There has been a deterioration in the quality of the books produced in the post-war era.

Answer Key for the Reading Specimen Questions

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Ans. 3 | 2. Ans. 2 |
| 3. Ans. 3 | 4. Ans. 2 |
| 5. Ans. 2 | |

Writing

In both writing tasks, you will be judged on the style and organization of your writing as well as on sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, writing mechanics and spelling. IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT YOU RESERVE TIME AT THE END FOR MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND CORRECTIONS TO YOUR WORK.

Specimen Question – Task 1

Instructions: Write a formal essay of about 300 words on ONE of the set topics below. You are advised to plan your essay, to support your answer with factual information and examples, and to write clearly and interestingly.

Select ONE of the following types of discrimination and discuss TWO of the chief forms which it takes in your society. Suggest practical ways of curtailing the discriminatory practices identified.

Discrimination on the basis of a) age OR b) class OR c) colour OR d) gender

Specimen Question – Task 2

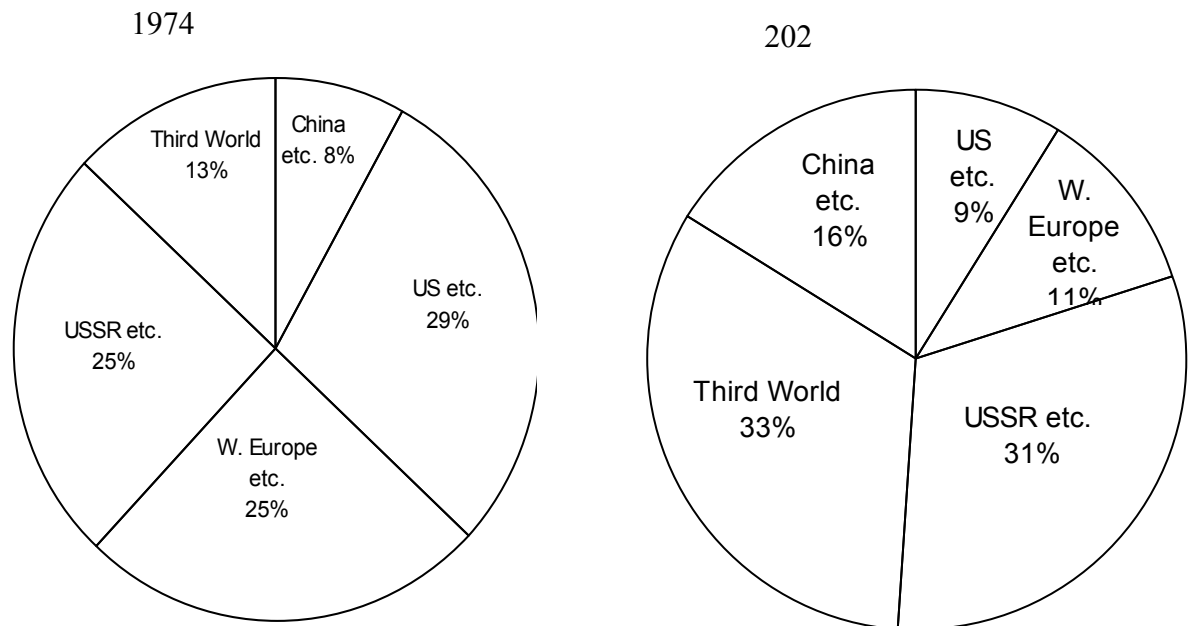
Instructions: You are a member of a Geography Club which is focusing on environmental issues.

Write a short summary (about 250 words) for the Club's monthly news pamphlet in which you describe the information in Figure 1 (below). You should

- i) say what the diagram is about and where the information in it comes from;
- ii) give a breakdown of carbon dioxide production worldwide in 1974;
- iii) point out the global changes that are expected to take place by the year 2025 with regard to the proportions of carbon dioxide emitted by the various country groupings.

Be sure to place the information for i) – iii) in separate paragraphs and to use the figures in the pie charts to support your statements.

Figure 1



Global CO₂ Production (From J. Gribbin, *Future Weather*, Pelican, 1982.)

MARKING SCHEME
FOR
WRITING TASKS

Marking Scheme for Essay Writing Task

The following six levels will be used. Persons assigned to either Level 1 or Level 2 on the essay question will be deemed to have passed the test; those assigned a level 3 (i) or 3 (ii) on the essay will be treated as borderline and will have their scripts reviewed; those assigned a Level 4 or 5 (failing scores) on the essay will also have their scripts reviewed.

Level 1 – high

The answer fulfils the task in a highly satisfactory way. Competence is evident in the selection and organization of content. Writing is coherent and cohesive. An appropriate level of language is fluently and effectively used.

Characteristics:

- content is relevant and accurate
- ideas are well developed & logically organized
- person writes correct idiomatic English (there are **no systematic errors** re. sentence structure, grammar or writing mechanics).
- student uses language effectively and economically (tone & diction are appropriate for formal written English discourse)
- a certain level of sophistication in wording and in the control of sentence structure is evident.

Level 2 – satisfactory

This answer does not reach the level of 1 in content and/or organization and/or expression, but information is arranged coherently and the message is easily followed throughout. For the most part, the language is appropriate, grammatically accurate and fluently used. There are some errors of expression, **but these do not seriously detract from the overall quality of the writing.**

Characteristics:

- content tends to be relevant
- ideas tend to be developed in a satisfactory way
- a satisfactory level of global organization is usually achieved; however there may be instances of poor paragraphing
- there is neither a large number nor a large variety of types of errors – re. Grammar, sentence structure, phrasing, vocabulary, writing mechanics & spelling - & these do not usually recur.

Level 3 (i) - unsatisfactory

In this answer, there are recurrent – although **not pervasive** – errors of expression which **seriously detract from the overall quality of the writing. HOWEVER**, the person displays **for the most part** satisfactory competence re. giving focus/direction to the writing and developing and organizing ideas. The writing is coherent and the message can be understood.

Characteristics:

- there are grammatical errors at the level of the word (mostly typically re. Concord, verb forms & tenses, plural & singular forms, participles).
- error at the level of the sentence are chiefly sentence boundary errors, i.e. comma splice, sentence fragment & run –on sentence errors.
- there are punctuation & spelling errors.

Level 3 (ii) - unsatisfactory

In this answer, there are recurrent – although **not pervasive** – errors of expression which **seriously detract from the overall quality of the writing. IN ADDITION**, the person displays only partial or unsatisfactory competence re. giving focus/direction to the writing and developing and organizing ideas. The writing is fairly coherent and the message can be generally understood.

Characteristics: same as Level 3 (i) above

Level 4 - most unsatisfactory

This answer does not fulfill the task satisfactorily due to one or more of the following reasons:

- there are serious and recurrent sentence structure problems (sentence breakdown) which affect the **FLUENCY** of the writing and/or the **COHERENCE** of the message.
- there are **RECURRENT** grammatical &/or mechanical errors of different types at the level of individual words. These occur **AT A HIGH LEVEL OF FREQUENCY** (i.e. pervasive).
- idiomatic expression/vocabulary is generally very poor; this seriously affects the fluency of the writing and/or the comprehensibility of the message. There is frequently evidence of Creole interference.

Level 5 – inarticulate

This answer is characterized by poor coherence or incoherence. Whole sections of the message either cannot be followed or can only be followed with great difficulty.

Marking Scheme for Statistical Analysis Task

➤ LEVEL 1 (High)

EXPRESSION

Writing is coherent, fluent, idiomatic and grammatical. The register is formal. Very few, if any, errors appear; those that occur are NOT systematic.

CONTENT & ANALYSIS

- a) Information is described concisely but completely. Source is identified.
- b) Trends are correctly identified with *adequate, relevant and accurate* supporting figures.
- c) Reports of fact are not confused with trends.
- d) Percentage figures are not confused with raw figures.
- e) Continuous data are not confused with discrete data.
- f) There is Objective Reporting only i.e. no personal interpretation of, comment on the data (e.g. suggested reasons for/explanation of/reaction to data). There may, however, be a SHORT concluding remark re. The importance or value of the data.

ORGANIZATION

- g) There is a satisfactory global (macro) structure: 3 paragraphs incorporating the requested introduction & two trends
- h) There is a good paragraph (micro) structure: link words and cohesive devices are effectively used between paragraphs and within paragraphs (i.e. sentences are interrelated).
- i) There is no listing whatsoever.

➤ LEVEL 2 (Satisfactory Expression)

EXPRESSION

Writing is coherent and generally satisfactory re. fluency and idiomatic expression. There may be errors re: grammar, sentence structure, phrasing, vocabulary, writing mechanics and spelling, but these are not of a high frequency and *do not seriously detract from the overall quality of the writing*.

CONTENT/ANALYSIS/ORGANIZATION

Re. Features a-i described above: These MAY or MAY NOT be satisfactory.

➤ **LEVEL 2/3 (Borderline Expression)**

EXPRESSION

Coherence is generally achieved; HOWEVER, there are recurrent - although not pervasive - errors of expression **which seriously detract from the overall quality of the writing**. These are the same as those outlined in the mark scheme for Question 1 in the section detailing characteristics of Level 3i and 3ii essay scripts re. expression.

Many of the 2/3 scripts reveal (i) an inability to make sense of concepts represented in the data, e.g. continuous vs. discrete data, and (ii) an absence of the appropriate terms used in the language of reporting/describing numerical information.

CONTENT/ANALYSIS/ORGANIZATION

Re. Features a-i described above: These MAY or MAY NOT be satisfactory.

➤ **LEVEL 3 (Unsatisfactory)**

EXPRESSION

This answer does not fulfill the task satisfactorily due to one or more of the following reasons:

- 1) There are serious and recurrent sentence structure problems (sentence breakdown) which affect the FLUENCY of the writing and/or the COHERENCE of the message.
- 2) There are RECURRENT grammatical &/or mechanical errors at the level of individual words. These occur AT A HIGH LEVEL OF FREQUENCY (i.e. pervasive).
- 3) Idiomatic expression/vocabulary is generally very poor; this seriously affects the fluency of the writing and/or the comprehensibility of the message.

CONTENT/ANALYSIS/ORGANIZATION

Re. Features a-i described overleaf: These MAY or MAY NOT be satisfactory.

➤ **LEVEL 4 (Low)**

EXPRESSION

The answer is characterized by poor coherence or incoherence. Whole sections of the message either cannot be followed or can only be followed with great difficulty.

CONTENT/ANALYSIS/ORGANIZATION

Re. Features a-i described overleaf: These MAY or MAY NOT be satisfactory.

SAMPLE TEST
MATERIAL

SAMPLE ESSAY SCRIPTS

QUESTION –Discuss what you think are the TWO or THREE most significant contributions – local and/or worldwide – that are being made by sporting organizations, sportsclubs and/or sportsmen and sportswomen.

Sample Level I Response

Undoubtedly, few would dispute the great contribution that sporting organizations and sportsmen and sportswomen have made to Jamaica, both on a local as well as on an international level. Sporting organizations, sportsmen and sportswomen have individually as well as collectively played and indeed continue to play a pivotal role in our history. They have contributed to our island home in many areas, but perhaps this contribution peaks in the areas of educational opportunities, contribution to economic development and the enhancement of national pride and unity.

Many young Jamaican men and women faced with immense financial constraints but possessing great ability both in sports and academics alike, have received the opportunity to pursue higher levels of education abroad. These opportunities often are awarded to them by American Universities through scholarships, grants and other forms of financial aid, and are awarded when these American Universities realize that these individuals have great sporting potential. Time would inhibit us to mention [sic] all these individuals who have become beneficiaries of these forms of assistance, nevertheless, we shall mention a few, namely Dionne Rose, Gillian Russell, Fabian Davis and Dionne Hemmings. All these individuals have gotten the opportunity to realize their sporting potential which will decline as chronological maturity increases and yet at the same time further their education whose benefits will [last] or would have lasted for a much longer period of time.

When Jamaicans participate in international competitions such as the World Championships and the Olympics, there exists a tremendous marketing opportunity to be capitalized on – and it often is. International sporting commentators and analysts will often not only mention the name of the individual competitor, but will often highlight some geographical cultural and any other feature of importance about that country. As is the case with Jamaica, Bob Marley and our reggae music will usually be mentioned. By so doing a free ‘infomercial’ is given which jogs the memory of the attendants [spectators] of the event. This as the Jamaica Tourist Board will verify often results to an increased number of visitor arrivals. The more visitor arrivals of course will bring with it greater foreign exchange earning capacity, and it must not be forgotten that tourism still continues to be the greatest contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) being the total value of good and services produced within an economy within a given year).

It is of course a statement of fact that these sporting organizations, sportsmen and sportswomen trigger national pride and by extension national unity. When the Jamaican National Football Team, affectionately referred to as the ‘Reggae Boyz’ became the first member of the English speaking Caribbean to enter the Worldcup Competition. The National Arena became a sea of black, green and gold as the jubilant Jamaicans came out in their national colours to support their team. Never a time in Jamaica’s history was there a greater sense of national pride.

COMMENTS:

The above essay (written under examination conditions) has addressed the question of the personal and national contribution of sportsclubs and organisations and/or sportsmen and sportswomen in a highly satisfactory manner. It is particularly strong in content, analysis and organisation.

After the introductory remark that “few would dispute the great contribution of sporting organisations and sportsmen and sportswomen to Jamaica”, the writer in about 500 words, elaborates on their personal and national benefits in the areas of “educational opportunities ... economic development and in the enhancement of national pride and unity.”

Paragraph two affirms the positive contributions in the well-constructed statement that they “have individually and collectively played and indeed continue to play a pivotal role in our history.” This thesis is immediately followed by the forecast sentence preparing the reader for what aspects the body paragraphs will develop.

The topic sentence of the next paragraph picks up on the educational advantages – the first of the benefits given in the forecast statement. Actual examples are given of Jamaican athletes who have been awarded scholarships to pursue their academic education abroad while honing their athletic skills. As the writer points out, these scholarships ensure that the athletes will have professions to fall back on when their athletic careers come to an end.

The following paragraph expands on the economic advantages the country gains when its athletes are highly ranked in world competitions since the publicity goes to their country of origin as well as to the athletes themselves. As the writer puts it, the country (and its culture) gets “a free ‘infomercial’ resulting in an increased number of visitor arrivals” boosting the island’s tourism and in turn its Gross Domestic Product.

The third body paragraph focuses on the national pride and display of unity inspired by sporting organisations and by sportsmen and sportswomen. Here the supporting example used is the country’s response when our National Football Team – the Reggae Boyz – became the first English speaking Caribbean country to enter the World Cup Competition. As the writer describes it,

the arena became a sea of black
green and gold as the jubilant
Jamaicans came out to support
their team. Never a time in
Jamaica’s history was there
A greater sense of national pride.

Admittedly the essay’s organisation is weakened by the lack of a conclusion and the need for a contrast link between the first and second paragraphs. It is also true that it would have been wise for the writer to omit the mention of sportsclubs and organizations as there was no focus on these in the essay. But strengths in style and mechanics, despite the time constraints, are fair compensation. Grammar and writing conventions of punctuation, spelling and capitalization are generally controlled. There are a few errors in spelling and punctuation, a couple of incorrect prepositions and one sentence fragment but these do not impede the meaning and there are no systematic errors in sentence structure, grammar or writing mechanics.

Diction is generally appropriate, tone and register fittingly formal but not pretentious. Sentences are varied in length and structure. Finally, although there are some flaws, this essay is a highly satisfactory response to the question, well done for a first draft given the limited time allotted.

QUESTION - Select ONE of the following types of discrimination and discuss TWO of the chief forms which it takes in your society. Suggest practical ways of curtailing the discriminatory practices identified.

Discrimination on the basis of a) age OR b) class OR c) colour OR d) gender

Sample Level 2 Response

Today we live in a very discriminatory society. Discrimination comes from many angles and spheres of our society. However, falling among the more common discriminatory patterns is that of gender discrimination.

Concerning this type of discrimination, it is most commonly committed against females. However, needless to say men face this problem too.

The bias towards masculinity can be perceived clearly in the job world. There is a classification of jobs in terms of what type of job is suitable for males and what is suitable for females. In some cases the man is given preference over the woman when applying for some jobs because of the assumption that the male would do a better job. This can be the case, for example, if they were applying for the post of a security guard. The argument used to justify such a preference is that of the physical built of the man as opposed to that of the woman. Also, that a woman's place is in the home, an excuse that seems to be outdated with the many Women's Rights Organizations spring up across the world today.

In the case where both, that is, the male and the female, are occupying a similar job position, the male is given preference, in that, his salary is higher. This is a clear and blatant show of discrimination.

Not until those at the top of the business ladder change their way of thinking and rationalizing things then the problem will remain. The government should also play an important role in helping to curtail these patterns. Government has the power to pass laws in order to cut this pattern.

However the have to be willing to do so. Therefore the change should first take place among the leaders of the people because the Prime Minister was chosen by the people and for the people and for the people and the Prime Minister is the head of government. Constitutional changes have been made in the past to favour women therefore there is no reason why more changes cannot occur today in order to totally liberate the woman by giving her equal rights, that is, not showing bias toward either sexes.

COMMENTS: An attempt made to address the topic in terms of providing examples of the problem; the solution proposed is somewhat vague however. Fair global organization although internal structure suffers from several instances of poor paragraphing. Some flaws re. sentence structure and grammar, but these satisfactory for the most part. Idiomatic expression awkward in parts.

Sample Level 3 Response (Same Question as overleaf re. Discrimination)

In this society of which we live in and so cherish that we call it our own, there are a number of hindrances to its improvement and development. Two of the main hindrances fall under the heading of discrimination of colour.

There is the problem of people not being able to fit comfortably into society due to the fact that they may be black. Likewise people of the same said colour are sometimes denied as capable for certain jobs or promotional posts. In Jamaica both of these problems exist and are very vividly identified.

Quite often it is noticeable the way in which a black person is treated, as opposed to a person of a clearer complexion. In times such as these all the attention is focused on the "brown skin" person as the average Jamaican would say, or the white person. In times of conversation or discussion the black person's voice is disregarded as nothing of next to nothing. The brown-skinned is looked up to as the person with the brain.

This therefore leads to the discrimination in the work place. Because those of a clearer complexion tend to get all attention, best regard and respect as opposed to other people, the problem is also extended in the work field. There are many times when the black man/woman is looked down at, or made to feel inferior in the work field. They are made to feel that the job of higher position is way beyond their reach. This creates a problem where as that person then becomes mediocre and accepts nothing but the less. The effect of this is seen in the business places that we may enter.

COMMENT: Topic directly addressed with clear evidence of an attempt to develop two distinct points; message can be followed, but consistent errors of sentence structure, idiomatic expression and grammar seriously mar overall quality of writing.

SPECIMEN QUESTION 2 & SAMPLE RESPONSES

QUESTION 2 – Time: 35 Mins.

In this question, you will be judged on the **style** and **organization** of your writing as well as on **sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, writing mechanics** and **spelling**. You should therefore ensure that you reserve time at the end to improve your work.

Instructions – In NO MORE THAN 250 WORDS write **three (3) factual paragraphs** summarizing the information in Figure 1.

IMPORTANT! YOU WILL BE PENALISED IF YOU OFFER EXPLANATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, OPINIONS, OR ANY INFORMATION OTHER THAN THAT SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED IN i - ii BELOW. YOU WILL ALSO BE PENALISED IF YOU WRITE MORE THAN 250 WORDS, IF YOU WRITE IN NOTE FORM OR IF YOU PRESENT TABLES/DIAGRAMS OF ANY SORT.

You should do the following:

- i. Say exactly what Figure 1 (below) is about and where the data in it come from.
- ii. Point out two trends (or patterns) evident in the data in relation to category of crime, frequency of crime and geographical region.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Population who are Victims of Crime in Urban Areas with more than 100,000 Inhabitants 1988 – 1994.

	Vehicle Crime	Burglary	Other theft	Crime against the person	All crime
Western Europe	34	16	27	15	60
North America	43	24	25	20	65
South America	25	20	33	31	68
Eastern Europe	27	18	28	11	56
Asia	12	13	25	11	44
Africa	24	38	42	33	76

Source: United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute 1995, Criminal Victimization of the Developing World (data based on a sample of 74,000 persons in 39 countries)

QUESTION 2 - REQUIREMENTS

1. Question 2 requires that the candidate organize the response according to specific guidelines. The response should be written in no more than 250 words and should consist of three short factual paragraphs. The first paragraph is an introduction to the summary in which the subject matter and the origin of the illustration are identified. In the other two paragraphs, the trends are discussed according to the guidelines given. No listing or diagrams are permitted.
2. This question tests the candidate's ability to express the information in correct and appropriate language. Particular attention must be paid to diction, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and spelling. These are the major factors that determine the grade that will be assigned.
3. The response should demonstrate candidates' understanding of the task. Hence, the appropriate vocabulary for reporting and describing numerical information should be used. If the data are continuous, then terms such as 'fluctuation', 'steady increase' and 'sharp decrease' MAY be relevant, but this vocabulary is usually inappropriate for discrete data as in the case of the sample question below.
4. Candidates are asked to discuss trends; that is, they are expected to identify general patterns or directions which are apparent in the data.
5. Personal opinions, explanations or any other type of subjective response should be avoided.

Analysis of Sample Candidate Responses Explaining Grade Levels Assigned

SAMPLE RESPONSE A – LEVEL 1 (good expression/content)

In 1995 the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute published a report entitled “Criminal Victimization of the Developing World”. The data in the report was based on a sample of seventy four thousand (74,000) persons in thirty nine (39) countries. This revealed the percentage of population who are victims of crime in urban areas with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants during the years 1988-1994.

It is evident that the continent of Africa has outdone all others with a total of seventy six percent (76%) all crime. It is notable however, that North America has outdone all continents in Vehicle Crime totaling forty three percent (43%) thereby breaking the African trend of having the highest percentage in all the four areas covered. South America with sixty eight percent (68%), North America totaling sixty five percent (65%) and Western Europe accounting for sixty percent (60%) have all made it in the top four. Meanwhile Eastern Europe with fifty six percent (56%) and Asia totaling forty four percent (44%) are at the bottom respectively.

The trend reveals that across the board Asia is least affected by crime. Asia reports the lowest Vehicle Crime and Burglary, while sharing the lowest rate of Crime against Person with Eastern Europe of 11 %. (210 words)

ANALYSIS

Response A has good content and expression. The writer provides the required information in the introductory paragraph and attempts to discuss two trends, one in each of the subsequent paragraphs. Although this response is good, there are aspects of the content and analysis that need improvement.

In paragraph one, the writer correctly identifies Africa as the continent with the highest percentage of crime, both overall and in three of the four crime categories. This is an important trend. However, s/he then proceeds to rank the regions, and this irrelevant ranking substitutes for the supporting figures that the writer should have included in order to highlight the identified trend. The reporting of these figures would involve comparing, category by category, the percentages for Africa with those for the other regions. Additionally, in paragraph two, in illustrating another important trend, that Asia is the continent least affected by crime, the writer omitted ‘Other Theft’ from the list of Asian categories with the lowest rates. Moreover, the supporting figures - those that illustrate (category by category) the low rates in Asia as opposed to the rates in the other regions - were not provided.

The writer shows good control of sentence structure and produces correct idiomatic English utilizing a formal register. The writing is fluent, the tone objective, and language use is generally effective. There are a few errors of omission, the preposition ‘of’ is misused, and the singular verb “was” is used with ‘data’, a plural noun. The writer uses the word ‘respectively’ unnecessarily (parag.2) and there is some loose diction, ‘across the board’ and ‘outdone’. However, the errors are sporadic and do not seriously detract from the quality of the writing. This is a good response under examination conditions; it was therefore awarded a level 1.

SAMPLE RESPONSE Bi – LEVEL 2 (satisfactory expression/content)

In the table labeled figure 1, the percentage of the population who are victims of crime in urban areas, with more than 100,000 inhabitants is shown over the period spanning from 1988 to

1994. The source from which this data was cited is Criminal Victimization of the Developing World compiled by the United Nations International Crime and Research Institute.

It is evident from the data that more vehicle crime is committed in the more developed regions, North America having the highest incidence (43%) and Western Europe the second highest incidence (34%). This contrasts with the relatively low figures for Eastern Europe, South America, and Africa, which are 27%, 25% and 24% respectively.

From the data it can also be concluded that crimes against person and theft along with burglary are more prevalent in the lesser developed regions such as Africa as this region accounts for the highest incidence in four of the five categories: Burglary (38%), Other Theft (42%), Crime against the Person (33%) and All Crime (76%). Also it is seen that more developed regions have less crime being committed, the one with the least being Asia, which has the smallest percentage of people who have been victims of crime in all the categories. (205 words)

ANALYSIS

Response Bi has satisfactory content and organization and fairly good expression. Most of the important information about the figure (e.g. title/source) is present in the introductory paragraph, although the number of countries involved (39) and the six specific regions represented are not reported. Two trends are identified and each presented in separate paragraphs.

The writer makes sense of the data by classifying regions according to level of development, based on his/her own general knowledge. This classification is then used in identifying patterns, wherein two of the more developed areas are seen to have the most vehicle crime, while a less developed area, Africa, is seen to have more crime overall. The writer's use of level of development as a basis for analysis is acceptable since this is suggested by the title Criminal Victimization of the Developing World.

One can note two weaknesses in terms of analysis. The first is an anomaly relating to the treatment of Asia. This continent is classified as one of the 'more developed regions' with regard to the low percentage of crime in all categories (parg. three), but in paragraph two, the more developed regions are described as having a high rate of vehicle crime while Asia has the lowest by far (12%). The writer should therefore have indicated that Asia was an exceptional case in this respect. One might also question the classification of Asia as a 'more developed region'. Additionally, paragraph three needs to be better unified; the use of 'Also' (first word, line two) might lead one to believe that the writer is stating a new trend in mentioning that fewer crimes are committed in the more developed regions, whereas s/he was actually continuing to illustrate the trend that a region's level of development has implications for the prevalence of crime.

The writing, although not without flaws (note awkwardness/incorrect sentence combining in second sentence of paragraph one) is coherent and, for the most part, fluent and idiomatic. The writer uses a formal register and the sentence structure and grammar are good. Moreover, the tone is objective. This is a fair response under examination conditions and was therefore awarded a Level 2.

SAMPLE RESPONSE Bii – LEVEL 2 (satisfactory expression/weak content)

The table gives a statistical report of Victims of Crime In Urban Areas over the period 1988-1994. This report was taken from the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute 1995, And Criminal Victimization of the Developing World.

The data shows that Africa had the highest overall reported crime of 76%. Followed by South America. North America had the third highest overall crime rate with the highest reported Vehicle crime. Western Europe had an overall crime rate of 60% the fourth highest crime rate. Eastern Europe had the second lowest crime rate while Asia reported the overall lowest crime of 44%.

Africa reported the highest crime rate for three cases which are Burglary, Theft and Crime against person with a statistic of 38%, 42% and 33% respectively. Asia reported the lowest vehicle Crime and Burglary. While sharing the lowest rate of Crime against person with Eastern Europe of 11% reported cases. North America and Asia had the lowest Theft cases of 25%.

The Lowest crime rate in Western Europe came from crime against person. Vehicle crime was the lowest reported crime in Africa. Both North America and South America had their lowest reported cases of 20% in Crime against person and Burglary respectively. Asia and North America reported the same number of cases for Burglary, while South America reported the same number for Vehicle Crime of 25%.

ANALYSIS

Response Bii is generally satisfactory in expression, but there are weaknesses in content and organization. It is divided into four instead of three paragraphs, and the trends are not clearly identified. Though the content is accurate and easy to understand, there is a lack of transitional devices within and between paragraphs which affects the coherence of the response.

The introductory paragraph gives some of the required information, but omits mention of the number of countries involved (39), the six specific regions represented, the time period of the survey (1988-1994) and the criterion used in selecting the urban areas (those with more than 100,000 inhabitants). Paragraph two is irrelevant, being a ranking of the regions by crime rate. Paragraph three is disunified, two trends being hinted at in the information selected for inclusion, these being that Africa and Asia have the highest and lowest crime rates respectively. These patterns needed to have been explicitly communicated in separate paragraphs. Paragraph four seems to be an attempt to identify the crime category accounting for the lowest percentages in general (which is Crime against the Person –lowest in four of the six regions) but as in paragraph three, this trend is not openly stated. Moreover, information unrelated to this trend is included in the paragraph.

The writing is generally fluent and idiomatic. Although there is satisfactory language use, there are a few errors. . There are two sentence fragments ‘Followed by South America’ and ‘While sharing the lowest’. There are also omitted definite articles (Crime against Person), poor word choice/phrasing (‘cases’ for ‘categories’, ‘lowest theft cases of 25%’, ‘lowest reported cases of 20%’) and errors of punctuation and capitalization. However, these do not detract significantly from the quality of the writing or the coherence of the message. The errors are neither systematic nor pervasive. On the basis of acceptable expression, the candidate was awarded a level 2.

SAMPLE RESPONSE C – LEVEL 2/3 (borderline)

The tables represent a percentage of victims of Crime in urban areas such as: Western Europe, North America, South America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. Crimes such as: vehicle, burglary, other theft crime against the person and all crimes. The information was taken from the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute 1995. Also, the statistics represents the years 1988-1994.

Over the seven year period, Africa has the largest number of crimes committed in all the mentioned areas except in vehicle crime where Western Europe led them by ten. Nevertheless, Africa still had the highest when all the crimes were added. Asia, on the other hand, had the smallest number of crimes for every category and they only had the same number as North America in the category, other theft, which was still the least amount. Also, they had the same figure as Eastern Europe for the category of, crime against person. Which again, was the lowest figure in the category. (162 words)

ANALYSIS

The above response is too short, and the writer repeatedly confuses number with percentage; however s/he does show some understanding of the data and is able to identify two trends (although with no reference to supporting figures). The response is organized into two instead of three paragraphs, the first of which gives the required background information.

The main problem area is that of expression. Although this is satisfactory in some areas, the writer has made several sentence structure errors; for example, the final statement is a sentence fragment. There is faulty and misleading wording in line one ‘the tables *represent* a percentage of victims...’. Apart from this, there are punctuation errors (notably the misuse of the colon), one subject verb agreement error, a pronoun reference error, tense shifting, omitted words, and a number error ‘tables’ in the first line. Some of these errors recur in what is a relatively short piece. The number and variety of errors result in the person being assigned a Level 2/3, which signifies a level of expression with characteristics of both a Level 2 (pass) and a Level 3 (fail) response.

SAMPLE RESPONSE D: LEVEL 3 (unsatisfactory)

The Figure1 show a table, of the percentage of Population with more than 100,000 inhabitants in our Urban Areas, who are Victims of Crime from 1988 to 1994. The data came from the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute 1995 by way of paper, Criminal Victimization if the Developing World.

Vehicle Crime are the highest in the area of Western Europe and North America, in the other area other theft are the highest, The county with the highest crime rate in ascending order are; Asia, Eastern Europe, western Europe, North America, South America and then Africa. The Crime morely do in Africa are other theft and Burglary the other chief crime is crime against the person, in the area with more money, has in Western Europe and North America Vehicle crime is the highest, follow by other theft.

It can be show be the table that, in the area of money the crime are of Maticle kind in the poor area the crime are against the people of the community.

Has the country have an increases in monye the Crime change to Maticle crime, this is shown be table in number of crime to person change has the country money level go up. (205 words)

ANALYSIS

The writer attempts to organize the content according to the set guidelines giving the required information in the first paragraph, and to identify the trend regarding the relationship between the prevalence of crime and a region's level of development (last two paragraphs). There are, however, a number of weaknesses of expression that make it difficult to understand the content of the response.

Sentence structure errors are evident, as in the misplaced modifier at the end of the very first sentence. There are also recurrent grammatical errors relating to subject verb agreement, verb forms, punctuation, and spelling. Additionally, there are problems with diction, and in fact some of the words used by the candidate such as 'marticle' (material?) and 'morely' (mostly?) are un-English. All of these detract from the writing and distort the meaning that the writer seeks to convey.

Generally, this response demonstrates that the writer has great difficulty in producing idiomatic English. The frequency of errors is very high and these affect the coherence of the response. The writer has some understanding of the concepts, but this is marred by very poor expression. This response is unsatisfactory; it does not meet the required standard and thus it was awarded a level 3.

SAMPLE RESPONSE E: LEVEL 4 (very unsatisfactory)

The data in figure 1 which was obtained from the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute 1995 entitled Criminal Victimization of the Developing World which is based on a sample of 74,000 persons in 39 countries states that in the crimes such as Burglary and crime against the person has a steady increase then a decrease then an increase which means the figures fluctuate and in both cases the figures represented by each country is not as high as the other crimes, such as: Vehicle crime, other theft and All crime.

The category with the highest rate in figures is other theft, vehicle crime just missed it by four countries. The category with the lowest rate is crime against the person compared to the different category of listed.

In the category of geographical region like Asia and ... (140 words)

ANALYSIS

The above incomplete response is not satisfactory in any respect. It is weak in content, organization and expression. The candidate has written two paragraphs and a few words of a third. There are no clear markers to indicate the relationship between and within paragraphs; hence, they lack cohesiveness. The response suggests that the writer perceives the data as continuous instead of discrete, as s/he inappropriately makes mention of fluctuation, steady increase and decrease. The writer does not seem to have an understanding of the figure and trends are not identified and discussed.

Additionally, there is poor expression throughout. There is no control over sentence structure; in fact, paragraph 1 is one long disjointed sentence in which the writer fails to embed and combine various sentence parts to form a grammatically correct sentence. This response demonstrates the writer's weaknesses in comprehension and expression and is characterized by incoherence for the most part. It was awarded a level 4.

The Essay Writing Process

Daily Gleaner *Language Link* Articles for Academic Year 1999/2000

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I. WHAT IS ENGLISH PROFICIENCY?

English Proficiency refers to the ability to use the English Language. Both orally and written, in a grammatically correct, coherent, easily comprehensible manner and to tailor one's output to specific audiences as the occasion demands. Proficiency is important at all stages of the educational process but more so at the tertiary level when students are presumed to have mastered the basic communication skills. They are expected to use these for self-directed learning and transfer of information.

Competence in English is, normally, an accurate predictor of readiness for undergraduate studies and future success or failure, especially in language-related courses. So it is useful to take a quick look at some of the areas of weakness in the work of students who display low English proficiency. These include:

- failure to comprehend what is required to answer an assigned question
- failure to organize material and present it in an effective and appropriate style which reflects conciseness, clarity and originality
- consistent incorrect grammar and expression.

At the university, exposition is the kind of writing most often required. Students are expected to explain rather than narrate or persuade. Many students, especially those who have not sat A-level examinations, have had little practice in producing expository writing which “expounds or sets forth ideas and facts” clearly, objectively and coherently taking into consideration the intended audience. Organization, sequencing of information, development of ideas, appropriate word choice and correct level of formality all contribute to the production of effective expository prose. In these articles, we will explore the characteristics of expository writing and discuss ways of producing an acceptable essay under the strict constraints of a testing situation.

The complexity of the Caribbean/Jamaican language situation often poses problems for users of English. In her book English for Academic Purposes, Barbara Lalla reminds us that most Caribbean speakers speak a creole vernacular or “some variety intermediate between creole and English” so for many, “creole structures are automatic.” This results in interference with English structures.

The grammars of English and Jamaican Creole differ significantly, but because creole uses a large proportion of English vocabulary, the creole speaker believes that s/he automatically knows English grammar. In areas such as tense, pluralisation, and subject-verb agreement there is confusion and students often end up using the wrong form. The problem is compounded by inadequate control of writing mechanics such as punctuation and spelling which often negatively affects meaning and contributes to low English proficiency.

By this it should be clear that English proficiency encompasses much more than correct grammar. The writer should have control of his presentation at the word, sentence and discourse

levels in order to produce work which is grammatically correct, stylistically pleasing and appropriate to the audience and situation. An understanding of the writing process, methods of defining the parameters of a topic, ways of generating and organizing information and proof reading/editing skills should help students to upgrade their proficiency in English.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXPOSITORY ESSAY

Expository writing, otherwise described as informative writing aims to explain or instruct. Ideas and facts are set forth in a manner which facilitates easy understanding by the reader. This type of writing can be found in textbooks, encyclopaedias, technical and business reports and non-fiction works. The writer is expected to present accurate information which is verifiable by research, expert testimony or personal experience. Successful exposition “communicates a message to a reader for a purpose.”

Exposition differs from narration in that the purpose is not to tell a story. However, exposition often uses narrative anecdotes to illustrate an idea or process. For example, if one is writing an essay entitled ‘Domestic Violence’ a brief anecdote might clarify a point being made. Similarly, exposition differs from argument/persuasion as its purpose is not to convince the reader, by any means necessary, to accept the writer’s point of view. In contrast, it focuses on the subject being discussed in order to inform in a clear, objective yet interesting way.

While expository writing often incorporates description in an attempt to clarify, it is largely concerned with analysis:

- classification (which includes definition)
- comparison (showing relationships)
- cause and effect (explaining why)
- process (showing how)

These are organizing principles and may all be found in one essay. A writer will use definition to explain the identifying characteristics of a particular thing, what it is as well as what it is not. If s/he is writing about Democratic government, for example, its main features will be presented –government by the people through elected representatives, the presence of political parties and legislative bodies such as a House of Representatives and Senate and a Prime Minister or President who is elected by the people. The writer will go on to discuss types of democracy, how they differ from other forms of government such as dictatorship or oligarchy, where and how democracy originated, the circumstances under which it developed, where and how it is presently practised, and its success in relation to other forms of government. However, the audience and purpose would dictate the amount of information to be included.

An important feature of exposition is its structure. Like the narrative, it has a beginning, middle and end and both are laid out in paragraphs, but there the resemblance ends. In exposition there is a main idea that runs throughout the essay and gives it unity. This is usually presented in the introduction which gives the reader a preview of the focus/direction of the essay.

Each paragraph is a unit within itself with a main idea or topic sentence related to the core idea of the essay. The topic sentence is supported by illustrations or examples. Attention has to be paid to proper sequencing of ideas and the avoidance of irrelevance in order to maintain focus. Succeeding paragraphs develop the core idea until the writer's intention is achieved, that is, to give a clear explanation of the topic. Then the conclusion brings closure to the essay.

III. THE ESSAY WRITING PROCESS: Purpose, Context, Audience

A good essay communicates a message to an intended audience for a particular purpose. This might be to get an article published, to pass a test or to get a good grade on an assignment. Overall, the main purpose of an expository essay is to give information on a topic in the clearest possible manner. Whatever the purpose, however, good writing is not automatic even for professional writers. The writing process is a multistage process of "considering alternatives and making choices." An essay usually evolves through the following stages: planning, shaping, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. These might occur concurrently or in succession depending on the individual writer.

There are certain important constraints that affect the way a writer goes about preparing an essay. One of these is the context or writing situation. The following questions should clarify this:

- Is the essay being done for a test or exam?
- Is it an assignment to be completed over an extended period?
- Are there strict time constraints and a stated word limit?
- Are the boundaries of the topic clearly defined? (For example, the task might be directly stated: Discuss the two most important issues facing single parents in your society today. Suggest practical solutions to the problems identified.)
- Is the student free to narrow a broad topic such as 'Domestic Violence' and write on the topic as it affects a particular group, for example men, women or children in a selected location.

In any case, the context will affect the writing process and the final product.

Closely linked to context and purpose is audience. The writer has to anticipate what readers know and what they need to know, what they are interested in and possibly their attitudes and beliefs about the topic. In the case of writing intended for an examiner, the writer needs to consider just how much information is necessary and how much can be taken for granted. Inexperienced writers often assume that the examiner will fill in the missing information. They know exactly what they want to say so they assume that everyone else knows. Remember, however, that one of your main purposes as a writer is to demonstrate knowledge/understanding of your topic.

It is disrespectful to one's audience to present irrelevant material or to use an inappropriate level of formality. For example, it is unacceptable to write "For most men, learning to drive is a piece of cake" when you intend to say "For most men, learning to drive is very easy" or "presents little

difficulty.” On the other hand, it is equally unacceptable to use pretentious language such as “the aforementioned occurrence that transpired” instead of “the event.”

Finally, awareness of purpose, context and audience will go a far way in helping the writer at all stages of the writing process and will influence focus, content, organizing principles and style. The following checklist will assist students to produce writing which is purposeful and audience-friendly:

- Is the major focus of the essay the topic being discussed?
- Is its main purpose to explain/inform?
- Has the audience been considered in terms of content, sequencing, accuracy and completeness of information?
- Is the language clear and concise?
- Is the level of formality appropriate?
- Is the essay interesting?

Do not wait until the Test but begin right now to use these writing tips to evaluate your essays.

IV. THE ESSAY WRITING PROCESS: Thesis, Focus, Unity

One of the features of the expository essay is the presence of a core idea (THESIS) which gives focus and unity to the essay. This idea is embodied in the thesis statement. Troyka (1990) provides an apt description of a thesis statement:

A thesis statement ...the central message of an essay is evidence that you have something to say about the topic. An effective thesis statement prepares your reader for the essence of what you discuss... As a writer, therefore, you [should] compose a thesis statement with care so that it accurately reflects the content of your essay. You want to avoid misleading your reader into an inaccurate prediction.

The thesis statement is usually located in the introductory paragraph in one or two sentences. It should state the essay’s subject, reflect the purpose, include a focus or point of view and be free of vague or difficult terms which might confuse the reader. The thesis may also state the major divisions of the essay. Briefly examine the following examples:

Domestic violence, which affects families in all strata of society, is one of the major problems demanding urgent attention in Jamaica today.

Here the topic, domestic violence is stated. The focus (point of view) is that it is a major problem in Jamaica that demands urgent attention. The purpose is to give information to justify the claims made. The reader will expect that evidence will be presented to show:

- the universality of the problem,
- the high incidence or far reaching consequences which justify its classification as major in relation to other existing problems
- the reason(s) for urgent attention.

Consider the thesis of an essay on Pollution:

Pollution exists in many forms and affects our society socially, politically and economically.

Here we would expect information on the many forms, the social effects, the political effects, and the economic effects. From the beginning we would know the main divisions of the essay. If our expectations are unrealised, the purpose of the writer would not have been achieved.

Some students have problems formulating an acceptable thesis, so the following examples from student essays should be useful:

1. People today are uninterested in politics (Unacceptable).
2. Over the past decade fewer persons have participated in national and local elections. This seems to suggest a decreasing interest in politics (Acceptable).
3. In recent years, the police have suffered great indignity from the members of the Jamaican public (Unacceptable).
4. The lack of confidence, and the loss of respect from the Jamaican public are two of the most pressing problems facing the police in Jamaica today (Acceptable).

The unacceptable examples are limited in scope. Their FOCUS is narrow and we are not given enough information to understand the thrust of the essay. In contrast, the acceptable versions are broad enough to reveal the main concerns and even to show their feasibility.

So far, we have touched on THESIS and FOCUS. Now we will briefly explore the concept of UNITY which is closely linked to focus. Unity is “the clear and logical relationship between the main idea of an essay or paragraph and the supporting evidence for that idea.” For example, if a writer is expanding 4 (above) and the paragraphs focus on the hard work carried out by the police, their low salaries and the risks they face daily without exploring the identified problems, the essay would lack unity.

The topic sentence of a paragraph might be “Citizens no longer call the police when a robbery is committed but rather seek to catch and execute the robber, thus taking justice into their own hands.” One would not expect the supporting evidence to deal with the quick response of the police or courtesies extended to citizens but rather the problems and consequences which are engendered by citizens’ illegal behaviour. By this it should be clear that an essay might start out with a good thesis but fail to achieve its purpose through lack of unity.

V. THE ESSAY: Coherence, Generating and Organizing Ideas

So far we have been examining the “nuts and bolts” of essay writing, the main consideration that writers should have in order to ensure that they meet the needs of their audiences. Today we shall look at another of these – coherence – and then proceed to ways of generating and organizing information.

Coherence

The word ‘coherence’ comes from a Latin root meaning “stick together, remain united,” and refers to discourse “easily followed.” This implies smooth progression from one sentence to another within a paragraph and smooth transition from one paragraph to the next within an essay. We are fortunate that in English there are many words and expressions which act as connectors and facilitate coherence. A few such will readily illustrate the point:

For example, for instance, namely, specifically, therefore, however, similarly, likewise, in the same way, in addition, furthermore, equally important, consequently, finally.

These and others function as bridges from one idea to the next.

Paragraphs in an essay should be linked by transitional sentences. This might involve a reference to the previous paragraph. Sentences taken from a student’s essay illustrate the point:

Paragraph 1 (closing sentence) Two of the most important issues facing the physically handicapped are the lack of employment opportunities and the absence of proper infrastructure within the society to allow for free movement.

Paragraph 2 (opening sentence) The lack of employment opportunities has prevented many able-minded Jamaicans from being gainfully employed.

(closing sentence) Employers often believe that the physically impaired cannot perform as well as able-bodied persons can.

Paragraph 3 (opening sentence) However, in a recent survey conducted by ...it was discovered that forty-five out of a total of fifty handicapped workers at ...were performing at levels far exceeding those of individuals who had no physical impairment and could function normally. Here one gets the idea that the student is maintaining proper focus and unity as the essay develops. We expect progression to the other problem identified and, possibly, suggested solutions to close the essay.

Generating and Organizing Ideas

A major problem expressed by students is the difficulty of knowing what to write, that is, generating ideas. When the essay is to be done over an extended period, research can augment one’s own ideas. However, in a test or exam situation one has to depend on what is already known. That is why it is important to choose a topic which is familiar. In the UWI Mona English Proficiency Test there is a deliberate effort to set questions which are topical and which should be familiar to any progressive entrant. Two ways which will help students to generate ideas quickly are brainstorming and using the journalist’s questions (the 5W’s plus H).

Brainstorming

This involves making a quick list of all the ideas associated with your topic which come to mind. There is no need to arrange or analyze them; that will come later. Nor do you have to write in sentences; just list words or phrases. Use the following steps:

- Make a list, group into categories,
- Set aside ideas that do not fit into your groups.
- Consider your organizing principles e.g. least important to most important or vice versa, specific to general or vice versa, problem to solution, cause to effect, chronological sequence.

From this you can make a plan/outline and proceed to writing your draft/essay.

The following list is a student's listing on the topic 'Divorce':

Financial problems, arguments, personality conflicts, being on your own, pressure from parents, sexual problems, loss of friends, incompatibility, children's reactions, sharing possessions, living alone, expensive, finding a lawyer, court battle, rejection, having to start over, hurt and disappointment, fear of loneliness, criticism.

Looking through, one can detect a cause and effect pattern as well as an element of process. The student should decide on the breadth of the essay. S/he may choose to stick with the cause and effect, or brainstorm further to expand the process theme. Items such as personality conflict, incompatibility and different tastes can be dealt with as one cause since they overlap.

Task: Try your hand at organizing other items in the list and see how they suggest paragraph structure. There is more than enough for a five paragraph essay which is usually what is required for a 500 word essay.

The Journalist's Questions

These force a writer to explore a topic from different perspectives and do not waste time but rather establish focus and suggest a useful framework for an essay. Returning to the topic 'Divorce', we will use the journalist's questions to probe the topic:

WHO divorces? Any special class? Occupation? Age group?

WHAT does divorce entail?

WHEN do people usually divorce? child rearing years? periods of economic depression? after children leave home?

WHERE is divorce most prevalent? city? rural areas? particular country?

WHY do people divorce? List reasons.

HOW do people obtain divorces and/or cope with the effects of divorce?

The use of the two methods discussed will prevent students from spending valuable time staring at a blank page in a test or exam and will provide a wealth of information in a five to ten minute prewriting/planning period, leaving them free to develop a well rounded essay.

VI. THE ESSAY WRITING PROCESS: Drafting/Writing

After the prewriting/planning stage of the writing process comes the drafting stage during which ideas are written in coherent sentences and paragraphs. In the revision stage which follows this, the writer rereads and evaluates the draft, rearranging ideas, adding or deleting information and making sure what is produced is what was required by the question. Then comes editing and proofreading in which we ensure that our essay is free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors and spot omissions or ambiguities which might alter meaning or confuse readers.

To many students, it seems easier to shortcut these stages. As soon as they see the question, they rush into frenzied writing but usually run out of ideas and spend time staring into space. Others write for the allotted time but present jumbled, disorganized ideas. The writer who stops to plan and organize is not wasting time. Indeed, many students discover that during brainstorming, the essay takes shape as one idea leads naturally to another. Some writers make a formal outline, others number their grouped ideas in the order they wish them to appear in the essay and then write a topic sentence which embodies the main idea of each paragraph. The next step is to develop the thesis statement and write the introductory paragraph.

This is where many writers panic. They want to say things just right, to make profound statements. So they keep making false starts. Some Composition theorists encourage the writer to leave space and write the body paragraphs then return to the introduction when the mind is more composed. However, once the writer has formulated a good thesis statement it is easier to write the introduction. A shaky start is usually the result of unclear understanding of the topic and the information required.

An effective introductory paragraph prepares the reader for what will be presented in the essay. The thesis may be placed at the beginning or end of the paragraph. The writer can choose introductory devices to stimulate interest or arrest the readers' attention.

Introductory Devices

- relevant background information
- a brief anecdote to grab attention
- pertinent statistics
- a provocative question
- an appropriate quotation
- a useful analogy
- definition of a term important to the reader's understanding of the topic.

An essay on Acid Rain might open with a definition, background information or a brief anecdote based on the adverse effects of the topic. Likewise, the introduction of an essay on AIDS or teenage pregnancy might be enriched by relevant statistics which reveal the magnitude of the problem. An essay on Human Rights might begin with an appropriate quotation from Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela. This depends on the writer's background knowledge/familiarity with the topic, highlighting the importance of reading widely and keeping abreast of current events to increase available options.

Things to avoid in introductory paragraphs

- statements such as “In this essay I will discuss the problems of teenage pregnancy”
- self-critical statements like “I do not have much background but will try to give my opinions.”
- Clichés and overused expressions such as “All men are equal but some are more equal than others.”

Identify the devices used and the thesis statements in these introductions from students’ essays:

- (a) A person who is physically handicapped is unable to care for himself due to physical impairment. It may be a person who is unable to see or hear, walk or speak or who has lost the use of a limb. The lack of persons who are able or willing to care for them and sufficient facilities that will provide a better quality of life are two of the most important issues affecting the handicapped.
- (b) The rise of computer technology can be compared to the opening of Pandora’s box. It has unleashed many problems: jeopardized national security, facilitated mass destruction in wars, and in the view of many, eroded the ethics of modern society. However, it has also provided tremendous possibilities for the wellbeing of mankind. The recent computer applications in medicine, engineering and architecture are adequate testimony to this fact.

IMPORTANT! In an essay examination, excessive time/space should not be wasted on elaborate introductions. You should ensure that your thesis is clearly stated and spend most of your time on developing the points contained in the body of the essay.

Once an essay is properly planned, students usually find it easy to write body paragraphs but conclusions often pose a problem. A good conclusion may:

- briefly summarize the main points of the essay (in different words from those already used in the body of the essay)
- call for action/solutions
- point to future possibilities

Things to avoid

- introducing a new idea
- listing the main idea of each paragraph
- restating the thesis
- announcing what was done and making unwarranted claims
- apologizing for possible weakness

Next we shall focus on the revision and editing/proofreading stages and include a few suggestions for writing under strict constraints.

VII. THE ESSAY WRITING PROCESS: Revision, Editing/Proofreading

Revision, as the name implies, means “taking another look” in order to upgrade or improve. When a writer has the time/opportunity to write a rough draft, revision usually takes place before the final rewriting. However, in a test there is no time for rewriting, so drafting and revision take place simultaneously. Working from an outline facilitates this as constant rechecking of the outline makes the writer aware of inconsistencies in sequencing, main points and examples or loss of focus. The following questions are useful aids to revision:

1. Have you answered IN AN OBVIOUS WAY the SPECIFIC QUESTION SET ON THE TOPIC.
2. Does your thesis provide focus?
3. Have you observed the time limit, word limit or other special requirement?
4. Is the essay logically organized?
5. Do the main ideas of your paragraphs support your thesis?
6. Do your introduction and conclusion fulfill their purpose?
7. Have you omitted all irrelevant material?
8. Are your style and word choice appropriate and audience-friendly?

In a few cases, I have marked examination scripts in which students numbered their paragraphs in the order they wanted them read, as a result of their revision, thus relocating or deleting material which did not suit their purpose. In most cases, this added rather than detracted from the final grade.

Editing/Proofreading

This stage is often overlooked due to time constraints or because students are anxious to be done as soon as possible. However, in the UWI Mona English Language Proficiency Examination, editing/proofreading is vital. That is when careless mistakes are spotted and ambiguities are discovered. Technical correctness, proper punctuation and spelling are important components of good writing. The following checklist should assist student/writers:

1. Check for grammatical correctness e.g. noun, pronoun and verb agreement, pronoun reference to antecedent noun, person/number agreement, use of tenses.
2. Check spelling.
3. Check punctuation – commas, semicolons, apostrophes, quotations marks, capital letters.
4. Check sentence structure. Are there fragments, run-on sentences, ambiguous sentences? Are sentence boundaries clear or are there comma splices where periods should be? Are the sentences clear and smoothflowing?

As you practice more frequently, sensitivity to these areas will become a natural part of your writing process.

Time Management Skills

In the Proficiency Test, 45 minutes are allotted for a 300 word essay. The time constraint does not allow for a lengthy discourse so conciseness is necessary. Delve right into your topic after a brief definition or introduction. Make sure your thesis is clear. Plan well as there will not be time to rewrite the essay. Spend about five to seven minutes brainstorming and working on an outline. Then allot at least thirty minutes for writing time. By all means, reserve the last five to seven minutes for proof reading to spot omissions, and grammatical/mechanical errors. These few minutes might well hold the key to success or failure. Examiners are kindly disposed when there is evidence of effort to present a well-written essay.

Next we shall explore some common structural problems which plague students' writing and suggest ways of avoiding them.

VIII. SOME COMMON SENTENCE PROBLEMS: Fragments, Comma Splices, Run-on Sentences, Ambiguous Sentences.

Words and sentences are the “building blocks” of an essay. If the blocks in a building are misaligned, the finished product will be structurally unsound. So it is with the essay: if words are inappropriate and sentences are faulty, the essay will not reflect the knowledge and expertise the writer wishes to display. Sensitivity to common problems will assist the writer to use words and sentences effectively.

Sentence Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete sentence which is punctuated as though it were complete.

Examples:

Incorrect

- (1) The boy who lives in the red house. Though far behind in his studies, managed to pass his examination.
- (2) Andrew's mother was very angry. When she returned from work. His room was still very untidy.
- (3) The man was injured. Because he walked into the path of a moving vehicle.

The underlined portions are fragments.

In (1), the first segment is a dependent clause which cannot stand on its own. The second has a missing subject and is therefore incomplete. To remedy the problem, combine the two segments by removing the full stop and the capital letter which follows it and place commas after house and studies.

Corrections

- (1) The boy who lives in the red house, though far behind in his studies, managed to pass his examination.

In (2) the fragment is sandwiched between two independent sentences. Here there are two options:

His mother was very angry when she returned from work. His room was still very untidy.

His mother was very angry. When she returned from work, his room was still very untidy.

Example (3) requires the removal of the full stop and capital letter and combination of the two segments to form a complete sentence. To determine whether or not there are fragments in your work, test to see whether each “sentence” can stand on its own and still make sense. An effective way of doing this is to read the paragraph in reverse order; that is, read from the last sentence to the first. Doing this allows you to concentrate on the structure of the sentence, rather than its meaning and its link to the sentence before it.

REMEMBER:- Although some professional writers use fragments for effect, fragments are unacceptable in academic writing.

Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

Comma splices and run-on sentences are two versions of the same problem – uniting independent clauses inappropriately. A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined by a comma; a run-on sentence uses no separating punctuation.

Examples:

Incorrect

- In speaking there is opportunity for instant feedback, there is also the tendency to repeat information. (comma splice)
- In speaking there is opportunity for instant feedback there is also the tendency to repeat information. (run-on sentence)

To correct the comma splice, simply replace the comma with a full stop. A full stop after “feedback” will also correct the run-on sentence. Here are a few examples which demonstrate other ways of correcting comma splices and run-ons.

A. The economy has deteriorated, the dollar has been devalued.

B. The economy has deteriorated the dollar has been devalued.

Corrections:

- Use a semicolon to join related ideas: The economy has deteriorated; the dollar has been devalued.
- Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction: The economy has deteriorated, (as/so) the dollar has been devalued.
- Make one clause dependent upon the other: Since the devaluation of the dollar, the economy has deteriorated.

Ambiguous Sentences

An ambiguous sentence is unclear and can be interpreted in different ways. When students reread their drafts, they tend to read what they intend rather than what is on the page. Readers, however, become confused by ambiguities. The following sentences illustrate different types of ambiguity.

- (1) Heated to boiling point, you see a white foam on top of the mixture. (Who or what is heated? You or the mixture?)
- (2) Shocked by the rising crime rate, migration is the best option for Jamaicans. (Who or what is shocked?)
- (3) Individuals who love children make better teachers. (Better implies a comparison – who or what is being compared?)
- (4) After you swim vigorously for two hours, painful cramps are experienced. (Do you or someone else experience the cramps? The shift to the passive voice suggests that it is someone else, not the ‘you’ at the beginning of the sentence.)
- (5) Regardless of training and experience, the interview is an occasion when an employer gets an impression of the candidate. (Whose training and experience? The employer’s or candidate’s?)
- (6) People enjoy walking on a cool day, but on a hot day, walking makes you miserable. (Does walking on a hot day make you miserable but not people in general?)

Revise these sentences to make them reader friendly. Monitor your work for these and other kinds of errors as you continue to develop good writing skills.

Critical Reading

Daily Gleaner *Language Link* Articles for academic year 2000/2001

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I. CRITICAL READING 1

Throughout this series the importance of reading as a ‘meaning-making’ activity has been reiterated. Although memory/recall is a vital part of the reading process, the exercise will be non-productive if all a reader does is regurgitate what has been read. Comprehension and assimilation, whereby the ideas gleaned can be accommodated to a wide range of purposes, is not only desirable but also imperative. The human mind is not merely a receptacle for knowledge, but working machinery which uses stored knowledge as raw material for originating new knowledge and fresh ideas. This highlights the need for critical analysis of text in order to ascertain the quality, value and accuracy of written material in order to determine what should be accepted or rejected.

If the reading process is conceptualized as an abstraction ladder, at the base there would be literal comprehension, which is concerned with the basic understanding of words, ideas and sentences in context; e.g. “There are six mangoes on the tree” or “A democratic government is one in which the people elect representatives to administer the affairs of their country for a specified period of time.” The surface meaning is there for the reader to grasp. S/he does not have to probe for the meaning. The reader might desire or request further information such as “Are the mangoes ripe or green?” or “How are people elected?” or “For what period?” But the information given is quite clear with no underlying meaning.

The next rung would be the interpretive/inferential stage which involves reading between the lines and discovering hidden meanings not directly stated in the text. For example, in the recent articles on the Y2K bug, the bug under discussion is not really an insect which is susceptible to insecticide spray, but an occurrence/situation which creates serious problems, discomforts and hardships for persons affected. Even if the articles did not include a definition of the term, the expected consequences – disruption of electricity and water supplies, malfunctioning of appliances, from cash registers to aircraft mechanics – should indicate to the reader that the bug is not a mere insect, but something electronic and mechanical. The word ‘bug’ would therefore be taken figuratively, not literally, and the headline, ‘The Millennium Bug Did Not Bite’ would be understood in a metaphorical context.

The highest rung of the comprehension ladder is critical reading, which requires the reader to pass judgement on the text after carefully evaluating the explicit evidence presented. The reader does this by using criteria or standards developed through previous experience. In other words, critical reading incorporates *but goes beyond* the other two levels of comprehension. The reader is expected to approach the text with a questioning attitude rather than one which accepts printed material as gospel truth. Acceptance should come only after critical appraisal which rests to a great extent on the following:

- 1) competence and fluency in reading
- 2) perception of different levels of meaning &
- 3) a repertoire of environmental experiences which assist the reader to conceptualise and generalize from text.

In addition, there must be the ability to differentiate between fact, opinion, inference and judgement as well as to perceive the relationships between evidence and conclusion.

SPECIFIC READING SKILLS

- i) identifying the author's point of view and purpose
- ii) interpreting figurative and other non-literal language, e.g. slang, simile, metaphor, colloquialism
- iii) reacting to sensory images and symbolic language
- iv) anticipating outcomes for and generalising from evidence
- v) making logical judgements and drawing conclusions
- vi) comparing and contrasting ideas
- vii) identifying time/space, sequencing & cause and effect relationships
- viii) understanding the use of diction for effect as in irony, satire, parody

II. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN READING: Demystifying the Numerical Code

One of the tasks required of students writing the UWI Mona English Language Proficiency Test is a 200-250 word commentary "describing numerical data contained in a table or in some form of graphical illustration." This poses great difficulty for many students who have performed well in their studies at the secondary level. Erickson (1979) describes the problem: "Many students who are bright with anything but numbers freeze up when numbers come along. They don't even try to cope; instead they immediately succumb to 'data phobia'. It is interesting that twenty years later, in this age of cyberspace and computer literacy, the statement still rings true. Erickson notes the classic symptoms of data phobia: averted eyes, staring helplessly at the table or skimming the page quickly, hoping that somewhere in the text the author has given the needed information. Things become even more complicated when the table is unsupported by text, as happens in a test/examination. Much has been written about 'writing anxiety' and 'writer's block' where the writer goes blank when faced with a writing task, but we can also speak of 'reader's block' which often occurs when readers encounter graphical or unfamiliar material.

But before throwing up their hands in despair, readers need to remember that in the same way that the alphabet code in reading can be cracked, so can the numerical code be demystified. For a start, some simple ground rules must be applied:

- 1) Read figures as carefully as you would read words, remembering that your objective is to make meaning of them. Apply common sense and orderly reasoning.
- 2) Consider what background knowledge of the area you have and whether it is essential to your understanding of the table or graphic illustration being studied.

- 3) Do not confuse simple data analysis with mathematics. What is being sought is the presence of patterns within the data from which you can generalize or draw conclusions.
- 4) Be aware that tables and other graphical illustrations are economical presentations designed to help the reader. They can “show at a glance the central meaning of a set or some part of a set of data,” highlighting differences and similarities.

In summary, careful observation, ability to spot patterns, compare, contrast and identify trends are very important in reading/analysing data. The following example will attempt to demonstrate:

TABLE 1

RETURNEES TO JAMAICA FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES (1993 – 1999)

YEAR	U.K.	U.S.A.	CANADA
1993	800	900	275
1994	1100	1000	330
1995	1000	875	275
1996	1000	810	290
1997	1000	750	230
1998	775	625	200
1999	580	425	125

(These figures are approximations and are used only for illustrative purposes)
By observing the data we can make the following generalizations:

- 1) Of the three countries listed, most returnees to Jamaica, during the years 1993 – 1999, came from the United Kingdom: 6255 as against 5385 and 1725 from the United States and Canada respectively. The U.K. dominated the figures each year, with the exception of 1993, while Canada had the least number of returnees each year.
- 2) The year 1994 had the highest number of returnees from each of the three countries (1100, 1000 and 330) whereas 1999 recorded the lowest numbers (580, 425 and 125).
- 3) After 1994, there was a steady decline in the total number of returnees. However, the figures for individual countries showed fluctuation. Figures for the U.K. declined slightly in 1995, held steady for the next two years, then declined to the end of the period. After decreasing in 1995, Canada figures reflected a marginal increase in 1996 but declined steadily thereafter. The U.S. maintained a steady downward trend after 1994.

The analysis employs comparison/contrast for the listed countries in terms of numbers of returnees and movement of people in specific years. Words such as ‘most’, ‘least’, ‘decline’, and ‘increase’ reflect this. The third generalization reveals the differences between the total picture and trends affecting individual countries. Words such as ‘steady’, ‘slightly’ and ‘marginal’ comment on the degree of development which has taken place. It is noteworthy that very simple mathematical calculations are required. The ability to discern patterns in the data is all-important. Note also how much information is contained in the table and consider the economy of time and space in displaying the information in a table instead of written text. If a graph or pie chart were used, the comparison/contrast would have been even more striking. As the saying goes “A picture is worth a thousand words.” With an enquiring mind and an objective stance which refuses to be intimidated, data analysis can be a pleasant and informative exercise rather than an ordeal to be avoided.

III. CRITICAL READING 2: EXPECTATION, ANALYSES, EVALUATION

Previously, we discussed critical reading in the context of reading in general. We also demonstrated how careful observation, comparison and contrast assist the reader in making sense of numerical data without undue dependence on written text. This article will deal with the importance of identifying the author’s purpose, his attitude towards his subject and some of the tools used in passing on ideas and information.

In critically analyzing reading material, it is vital to discover the author’s purpose. In some cases, purpose is clearly evident in the case of a textbook, for example, where the intention is to inform/instruct. Compare an article on a topic like “The depletion of the Ozone Layer” in Time or Newsweek where the intention might be to raise consciousness and modify behaviour. Fictional writing such as Tom Sawyer or To Kill a Mocking Bird will have a different purpose -- to entertain and/or provoke an emotional response.

In each case, different strategies and methods of reading must be activated, and the reader will certainly have different expectations of the material. In reading a novel, the emphasis will be on plot and theme. The reader should expect the use of emotive, subjective language, similes, metaphors, personification and irony as a means of conveying and emphasizing the author’s point of view. There will also be explicit and implicit meanings. In Tom Sawyer, for example, the situations described and the interaction (or lack of it) between Huck Finn and certain members of the community signal the presence of discrimination although the author does not say it outright. The reader is expected to infer meaning, to “read between the lines.” The tone or attitude of the author may be humorous, sad or sarcastic. The author’s presentation will help the reader to decide whether the audience being targeted is a general or specific one. The reader will assess the events and characters by their closeness to reality or suspend reality if s/he is reading a fairy tale or science fiction, for example.

In the article on the Ozone Layer, which by its source suggests a general audience, the reader will expect that, in accordance with the author’s purpose, the material will be more objective. The audience is being asked to take action based on information received. The word choice will, therefore, be denotative, that is factual, literal and largely unemotional. There will be a clear

thesis or focal point which gives unity to the piece and each paragraph will develop a main idea or topic sentence supported by examples, illustrations or statistics. There might be the use of jargon or scientific terminology which might be defined or explained in the text, as well as a modicum of persuasive language in view of the intention to influence behaviour. The tone might be concerned or despairing depending on the perception the author wishes to convey. However, an overly alarming tone in the absence of supporting data will negatively affect the credibility of the piece.

For a textbook, the subject area and the intended audience will influence critical reading of the material. In a History text, for example, the reader will expect chronological sequence and a level of interpretation of events. The word choice will depend on the intellectual maturity of the intended audience, A text intended for Grade Seven students will be simpler than an A Level text. It will also be more narrative and less analytical. In both cases, the presence of overt bias will compromise the material. Even where persons and events are portrayed negatively the reader should expect views to be supported by relevant evidence rather than personal opinion.

A text from the Social or Pure and Applied Sciences usually relies more heavily on jargon and statistical data. The intended audience (introductory or advanced) will influence the choice of words, inclusion of definitions and contextual clues. Since the author's intention is to explain/instruct, the reader should pay special attention to main ideas, illustrations and examples as well as tables, diagrams, formulae or other supporting data. The presentation should be objective and unbiased.

In summary, critical reading requires the reader to identify different kinds of text, to analyze them according to their characteristic features and to evaluate their effectiveness.

IV. TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL READING

I hope that you have been putting the strategies and method so far presented to work, and that reading is no longer perceived as a chore. Even the best methods are useless unless they are applied so please remember that reading is an active process and the reader should act rather than be acted upon. Note also the value of a good dictionary as an aid to proficient reading. With this in mind, in all our English Language courses at UWI, students are allowed the use of a dictionary in examinations. This article will critically examine the following passage:

PASSAGE 1

Change – or the ability to adapt oneself to a changing environment – is essential to evolution. The farmer whose land is required for housing or industry must adapt himself: he can move to another place and master the problems peculiar to it: he can change his occupation, perhaps after a period of training or he can starve to death. A nation which cannot adapt its trade or defence requirements to meet world conditions faces economic or military disaster. Nothing is fixed or permanently

stable. There must be movement forward, which is progress of a sort, or movement backwards, which is decay and deterioration.

In this context, tradition can be a force for good and evil. As long as it offers a guide (without insisting that its path is the only one), it helps the ignorant and uninformed to take a step forward and, thereby, to adapt themselves to changed circumstances. Tradition, or custom, can guide the hunter as effectively as it can influence the nervous hostess. But if we make an idol of tradition, it ceases to become a guide and becomes an obstacle lying athwart the path of change and progress. If we insist on trying to plot the future by the past, we clearly handicap ourselves and invite failure. The better course is to accept the help tradition can give, but, realizing that it necessarily has its roots in the past, to be well aware of its limitations in a changing world.

It is wise to do a quick initial reading to get the gist of a passage and to determine **the author's intention**. In this case, it is clearly to show the importance of change in "evolution" or development. This is **the main idea** which is embodied in the first sentence – the **thesis statement** which sets the stage to the rest of the passage. A brief definition is given highlighting the role to the individual in the process. The rest of paragraph one provides **supporting details** which explain and expand the main idea. The writer uses an **example** which should be easily understood by the general reader a "farmer whose land is required for housing or industry" and then goes on to reveal three available options, two of which are **positive**: "move to another place...master the problems peculiar to it," "change...occupation...after a period of training," or a **negative** self destructive extreme, "starve to death." In the first two options, the individual is empowered by the experience, so although the author does not articulate it, the reader should grasp that these are the viable options. Having shown that adapting to change is vital at the **personal level**, the author then demonstrates its importance at the **national level**: "A nation which cannot adapt its trade or defence requirements to meet world conditions faces economic or military disaster." S/he moves back to the main idea, change (movement) is inevitable, whether forwards "progress of a sort" or backwards "decay and deterioration." And the preceding examples have amply identified the best choice.

The **topic sentence** of paragraph two sets up a foil or **contrasting idea** "tradition" versus "change, stating that tradition can be both good and bad and stipulating the conditions under which it should function. Then the author deals with the **position aspects** of tradition --- "helps the ignorant and uninformed," can effectively "guide the hunter (in a simple society?) or "influence the nervous hostess" (in a "refined society"). The **negative aspects** are then advanced and emphasized by the **word choice**: idol, obstacle (in contrast to guide), handicap and failure as well as the **image** of someone lying "athwart" or "perversely" across "the path of change and progress." The passage ends with a **balanced view**: "accept the help which tradition can give" but "be well aware of its limitations."

The writer has sought to persuade the reader to accept his point of view not by mere emotive language but by **stating a clear thesis**, carefully **selecting his examples**, moving from the

personal to the national/universal and **juxtaposing** or laying side by side, the **position and negative** aspects of the topic under consideration. There is persuasion by logic rather than emotion, and objectivity rather than subjectivity in the illustrate and examples which are closely related to the experiences of the reading public. The writer's willingness to explore both sides of the issue contributes greatly to the overall effectiveness of the piece.

V. CRITICAL READING :_FACILITATING MEANING THROUGH CONTEXT

The previous analysis was designed to show how an author can structure a piece to achieve his/her intention while maintaining objectivity and supporting a point of view based on feasible evidence. As in our article on demystifying the numerical code, the reader's ability to identify patterns was very important. This article will examine ways in which the reader can derive meaning largely through the use of contextual clues, a skill which is very important especially when one is faced with unfamiliar terminology as in science based passages, for example.

PASSAGE 2

Malaria is transmitted only by the dapple-winged female Anopheles mosquito...She has a tiny, graceful body with dark spots on her wings, three pairs long, slender legs and a prominent tubular proboscis that she uses to draw human blood, which she needs as a source of protein for the development of her eggs. When dusk falls, she goes hunting...

When she finds a victim, she quickly alights and pulls out her armament from her proboscis. She stabs the skin with two needle pointed stylets, then lacerates it with two blades bearing fine teeth as she searches for a small vein. When she finds it, she pierces the vein with a tube through which she draws blood, while sticking a hollow stylet into the wound. The victim in all likelihood will not even feel the bite because at the same time she injects a few drops of saliva to act as an anesthetic. It is the saliva that transmits malaria, for it contains hundreds of microscopic parasites that have been multiplying in her intestines for two weeks after she has bitten someone with the disease.

The malaria organisms head straight for the victim's liver. There they hide out for a week or two and grow. The victim is unaware of their presence. At the end of the incubation period, the infected liver cells rupture and release a vastly increased number of parasites into the blood stream, where they invade the circulating red blood cells. After a couple of days, the cells again burst, releasing more parasites into the blood stream. The parasite reproduces at such a phenomenal rate that it can clog the capillaries in the brain. The red blood cells are quickly destroyed, after causing anemia.

Malaria is brought on by four species of protozoan parasites of the genus **plasmodium**, **falciparum**, **vivax**, **ovale** and **malariae**. While **vivax** is responsible for most infections, the most dangerous form of the disease is caused by **falciparum**. Severity depends both on the species of parasite and on the immunological status of the infected individual. Those who are repeatedly exposed usually develop immunity over time. Some of the worst epidemics have occurred in places where malaria was all but eradicated -- caused

causing people to lose their immunity -- only to return and take many lives when methods of prevention lapsed and the mosquito gained a new foothold.

ANALYSIS

The author's intention here is to inform the reader about the transmission of malaria. S/he identifies the transmitter and provides a sequential description of the transmission process. The passage begins with a description of the Anopheles mosquito using words such as tiny, graceful, slender and dapple-winged (which is glossed by "dark spots on her wings"). This connotes elegance quite to what comes next: "prominent tubular proboscis to draw human blood," which marks out this graceful creature as a dangerous predator. Although the word "proboscis" might be unfamiliar, its function gives clear indication of what it means. The phrase "when dusk falls" implies that the anopheles mosquito is a nocturnal creature.

The second paragraph reiterates the predatory image by the use of "armament", weaponry, which are itemised: two needle pointed stylets, two blades bearing fine teeth, tube for drawing blood, hollow stylet. The procedure for drawing blood is described with medical precision while still maintaining images of violence: "**stabs** the skin", "**lacerates** with two blades", "searches for small vein", "**pierces** the vein", "injects a few drops of saliva to act as an anesthetic." The saliva, in addition to its ameliorative function, is the vehicle through which malaria is transmitted. It "contains hundreds of microscopic⁷⁰ parasites that have been multiplying in her intestines for two weeks" after she has bitten an infected person.

The author had thus prepared us for the growth/multiplication process which is replicated in the victim's liver. The phrase "hide out for a week or two" explains "incubation period" which comes later and prepares us for "rupture and release" of "vastly increased number of parasites" which reproduce at a "phenomenal rate" carrying on the trend begun in the mosquito's intestines. The life threatening nature of malaria is highlighted by "clog capillaries in the brain" and red blood cells "quickly destroyed." So context rather than direct statement transmits the author's message. Having done this s/he proceeds to a more scientific explanation giving the species and genus of the parasites -- **plasmodium, falciparum, vivax, ovale, malariae**. The average reader might not have met these terms before but the preceding context adequately ensures that his understanding will not be retarded. The parasites "responsible for most infections" and "the most dangerous forms of the disease" are identified but there is no further reference to the scientific names.

The author, obviously, does not view this as essential. It is more important to understand the concept "immunological status" and the danger of resurgence of malaria in "areas where it was all but eradicated", due to "lapse of prevention methods." There is no direct entreaty but the context certainly encourages the reader to discover and implement preventive measures.