

X115/201

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2009

FRIDAY, 15 MAY
1.00 PM – 2.00 PM

ENGLISH
INTERMEDIATE 2
Close Reading

Answer all questions.

30 marks are allocated to this paper.

Read the passage carefully and then answer **all** the questions, **using your own words as far as possible**.

The questions will ask you to show that:

you understand the main ideas and important details in the passage—in other words, **what** the writer has said (**Understanding—U**);

you can identify, using appropriate terms, the techniques the writer has used to get across these ideas—in other words, **how** he has said it (**Analysis—A**);

you can, using appropriate evidence, comment on how effective the writer has been—in other words, **how well** he has said it (**Evaluation—E**).

A code letter (U, A, E) is used alongside each question to identify its purpose for you. The number of marks attached to each question will give some indication of the length of answer required.



Why Dickens was the hero of Soweto

In this passage, the writer informs us about the effect that books by Charles Dickens, a 19th-century English writer, had on black South African children during the time of racial segregation (“apartheid”) in South Africa. “Afrikaans” was the form of Dutch spoken in South Africa by some white rulers before the arrival of democracy in that country.

Hector Pieterse was 12 when he died. Today a museum bearing his name commemorates his death—and hundreds of others—which occurred some 30 years ago at a place whose name has come to symbolise uprising against oppression: Soweto.

Hector was one of thousands of black children who took to the streets on June 16, 1976, in protest about schooling under the apartheid regime in South Africa. When police opened fire on the march it brought the word Soweto to the attention of the world. But less well known is the role that Charles Dickens played in events.

The march was in protest at a government edict making Afrikaans compulsory in schools. From January 1976, half of all subjects were to be taught in it, including ones in which difficulties of translation were often an issue.

To pupils accustomed to being educated in English, the Afrikaans policy was the last of a line of insults delivered in the name of “Bantu” or “native education”. They thought being taught in Afrikaans, the language of a regime that had tried to “unpeople” them, would cost them their last remaining freedom—that of thinking for themselves, using their minds.

That is where Dickens came in. Many books were banned under apartheid but not the classics of English literature. Pupils arriving hungry at school every day were captivated by the story of a frail but courageous boy named Oliver Twist.

The book was a revelation. Systemised oppression of children happened in England too! They were not alone. Slave labour, thin rations and cruel taunts were part of a child’s life in the world outside as well.

One former pupil, now in his forties, says of Dickens: “Four or five of us would be together and discuss the stories. And to think he wasn’t banned! The authorities didn’t know what was in these books, how they helped us to be strong, to think that we were not forgotten.”

Not being forgotten was particularly crucial. The apartheid regime had tried to “vanish” black people. Feeling abandoned and isolated, people turned to Dickens as someone who understood their plight.

But there were not enough books to go round. Few of the crateloads of Shakespeare, Hardy and Dickens shipped from Britain reached the townships. Instead, they came to Soweto in parcels from charities. They were read by candlelight, often out loud, shared in a circle, or passed from hand to hand.

At Morris Isaacson School, one of the moving forces behind the Soweto protest, which produced two of its leaders, Murphy Morobe, “Shakespeare’s best friend in Africa”, and Tsietsi Mashinini, there were 1,500 pupils and three copies of *Oliver Twist* in 1976. The former pupils recall waiting months for their turn, with a similar wait for *Nicholas Nickleby*.

But it was Oliver that they took to heart: students at one of the country’s leading black colleges, Lovedale, formed a committee to ask for more.

40 Calling it the Board, after Dickens’s Board of Guardians, they asked for more lessons, more food—and more and better books. Their reward was to be charged with public violence. All 152 “board” members were expelled from the college and some were jailed.

They felt that Dickens was obviously on their side. Descriptions of Gamfield’s “ugly leer” and Bumble’s “repulsive countenance” and Oliver being beaten by Mrs
45 Sowerberry and shoved “but nothing daunted” into the dust-cellar were evidence that this English author understood the plight of black South Africans.

Dickens’s compassion for the poor linked the people of Soweto to a worldwide literature of tremendous importance.

The veteran South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela later chose *Nicholas Nickleby* as
50 his favourite book on a popular radio programme, *Desert Island Discs*, telling the presenter what its author did for people in the townships: “He taught us suffering is the same everywhere.”

The love of books that enabled an author dead for more than 100 years to inspire thousands of schoolchildren came mainly from grandmothers who had educated their
55 families orally, then urged them to read widely and learn all that they could.

It also came from people such as the activist Steve Biko, whose own mentor, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, spent a lifetime working with forest people who had no formal education, teaching them to “name the world their own way”.

That is what the youth of Soweto wanted—a future in their own words. And they got it.

60 “Africans are not dustbins,” declared some of the June 16 placards; and “Beware of Afrikaans, the most dangerous drug for our future.” By the following year, the language had been withdrawn from classrooms as unworkable. And so, thanks to the influence of a long-dead British author, the sacrifices of Hector Pieterse and many other Africans have proved to be not entirely in vain—which Dickens himself would surely applaud.

Adapted from an article by Carol Lee in *The Times*, 10th June, 2006

1. Explain fully any way in which the writer makes the opening paragraph dramatic. 2 A
2. The writer tells us that Soweto “has come to symbolise uprising against oppression” (line 3).
Write down one expression from the next paragraph (lines 4–7) which continues the idea of uprising, **and** one which continues the idea of oppression. 2 U
3. Explain **in your own words**
- (a) what the marchers were objecting to, according to lines 8–10; 2 U
- (b) why this issue was so important to them, according to lines 11–15. 1 U
4. Look at lines 16–25.
- (a) Explain **in your own words** why Dickens’s books were not “banned under apartheid” (line 16). 1 U
- (b) **In your own words** explain why Dickens’s book *Oliver Twist* would have “captivated” the Soweto children. 2 U
5. Explain the purpose of the exclamation mark in line 23. 1 A
6. “But there were not enough books to go round.” (line 29)
- (a) Explain how this sentence provides a link between paragraphs at this point. 2 A
- (b) Explain fully how the paragraph between lines 33 and 37 illustrates the idea that there were not enough books to go round. 2 A
7. Explain why the writer’s use of “reward” in line 41 is ironic. 2 A
8. Explain why the writer’s use of examples from the writing of Dickens in lines 43 to 46 is effective in advancing her argument at this point. 3 E
9. Look at lines 49–52.
Explain **in your own words** why Hugh Masekela thought Dickens was so important. 2 U
10. Explain **in your own words** how the grandmothers referred to in line 54 instilled a love of books in their grandchildren. 2 U
11. Explain how any aspect of the **structure** of the paragraph in line 59 contributes to its effectiveness. 2 A
12. Look at the placard text “Beware of Afrikaans, the most dangerous drug for our future”. (lines 60–61)
Explain why this expression is an effective image or metaphor. 2 A/E
13. Look at the last paragraph of the passage (lines 60–64).
Explain fully why this provides an effective conclusion to the passage. 2 A/E

Total (30)

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

[Open out for Questions]

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