

CHAPTER THREE**ARTICLES AND SPEECHES**

Format of an Article	..	..	..	..	..	..
Language of an Article	..	..	..	..	..	..
How to write a good speech	..	..	..	..	..	..
Format of Speeches	..	..	..	..	..	..

ARTICLES

Articles are written specifically for publication in a newspaper or a magazine. This of course implies that articles are written with a particular kind of reader in mind. For example, a college magazine is written specifically for students while magazines such as “The Punch”, “Guardian” are news article read by mature readers of the middle and upper class.

When writing an article, you must also bear in mind what the purpose of the article is. Articles are written for different purposes; to inform, to educate, to entertain, to instruct etc.

Again, you should take into consideration the circumstances which call for the writing of the articles that is the situation. It may be on issues that have arise in the country.

Finally, you should realize that you are writing for the public. You will have to entice your reader to read. You must know how to capture your reader and make him/her stay with you until the end. Even if you are writing on a serious topic, you can still find ways of adding fun to it. You should assume that you are with the readers, in body as well as in spirit and they are listening to you.

FORMAT OF AN ARTICLE

Writing an article is different from writing an ordinary essay. An article is not a letter and so should not be written as a letter. When writing an article just go straight to the issue to be discussed.

The first paragraph of the article should clearly define the situation and purpose of writing. After you have fully established the conditions which brought about the article as well as the purpose for which you are writing you should use the succeeding paragraphs to discuss your points of view. Use the closing paragraph to summarize, round off, and conclude. Then write your name in full, the town fro which you are writing on the right hand corner of your paper.

LANGUAGE OF AN ARTICLE

The style of writing you choose is a very important part of writing articles. Remember that writing articles for publication is a serious business and if you want to improve your readership, language and style should be of paramount importance.

Slangs are not acceptable in article writing. Be precise and polite in expressing your thoughts. Do not use insulting language even when you disagree with someone’s opinion.

SPEECH WRITING

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD SPEECH

A speech means a formal talk or an address given to an audience. A speech in its primary form, is supposed to be delivered orally to an audience. However, when a speech has to be written before it is delivered, the language becomes nearer to that of a formal essay. You, as a speech writer, must know the following:

- WHO you are writing your speech for (the audience)
- WHAT your speech is going to be about (its topic)
- HOW long it needs to be.

FORMAT OF SPEECHES

The basic speech format is simple. It consists of three parts

1. An opening or introduction
2. The body where the bulk of the information is given
3. The conclusion

A speech should be made for a good reason. To inspire, to instruct, to rally support, or to lead to action, etc. It is necessary to begin by greeting the officials at the occasions as well as other members of the audience. You may also start with an opening statement that will grab the attention of the audience.

Then build the body of the speech which should contain the details of the issue. You are aware that people are listening to you, rather than merely reading. This you should show by using such personal pronouns as “I”, “You”, “We”, etc quite occasionally and by using shortened forms once in a while.

End the speech with a powerful punchline and give other audience a sense of completion. This can be done by starting the last paragraph with a strong, declarative sentence that makes your point.

Finally, you should acknowledge the people present before going to your seat.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS**Question 1**

Write an article for publication in your school magazine on: “*The evil effects of examination malpractice in our society*”.

(WASSCE 2002)

Answer

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN OUR SOCIETY

Do you know that examination malpractice in our institutions of learning is on the increase and it has eaten deep to the fabrics of our national life? The high rate of examination malpractice has reached its peak in Nigeria and the Nigerian certificates are neglected in foreign countries.

During the advent of the 19th century there was nothing like examination malpractice. People wrote independently during examinations. This discipline continued until the mid-thirties when corruption and the desire to get rich quick became the order of the day in the lives of Nigerians; this made them deviate from the discipline we were noted for.

It is no doubt that, examination malpractice, has its evil effects in our society today. Due to the greed for money on the part of examination bodies, special centres, teachers, parents and even students exam questions are exposed before time. In Nigeria today examination is no longer the true test of ones knowledge due to this increase in cheating.

A first class degree in Medicine and Surgery in Nigeria has to go through tough examination and aptitude test before he or she is recognised overseas, but this is not the same with a first class degree holder in Ghana, because our country is very corrupt and we have displayed these characters to foreign countries.

Again this crime has made it impossible to know exactly the capacity of students' intelligence. They carry fake results which they cannot defend. This has a dwindling effect in the society and our economy as a whole. Such a person cannot perform as expected when he or she is employed. Students no longer read because they believe that something must happen in the examination hall.

A reduction in the quality of education in our society today is as a result of examination malpractice. Since examination bodies, teachers and students are toying with it for monetary gains. Most so called graduates are half - baked individuals who cannot defend their certificates.

Nigerian certificates are not recongnized in foreign countries like Great Britain, Spain and France. There is total loss of confidence in our educational system. Majority of our youths who cannot be gainfully employed in Nigeria, move to foreign countries only to engage in crimes such as rape, prostitution, armed robbery just to mention a few. Even in our society too, crime rate is in the increase because of hoodlums who call themselves students.

Therefore, those at the helm of affairs in the society should think twice towards this problem. Parents should stop encouraging their wards by buying examination questions, paying people to write examination for their wards and patronizing special centres.

*Favour Ayodele,
Abeokuta*

Question 2

The rising incidence of road traffic accidents nowadays is alarming. In an article suitable for publication in an international magazine, discuss at least three factors responsible for this and suggest ways of dealing with the problem. (WASSCE 2003)

Answer**THE RISING INCIDENCE OF ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS**

The prevalence of road traffic accident in Nigeria should raise the attention of national and international communities. Road traffic accident has gone beyond tolerance level to which action towards reviewing road safety issues should be considered by the Federal Government. Nigerian Government has remained silent and seemed not to concern itself with daily reports of road traffic accidents.

A road traffic accident is when road vehicle collides with another vehicle, pedestrian, animal or geographical or architectural obstacle. The accident can result in injury, property damage and death. Road traffic accidents occur as a result of one or more of the following factors. Human factors, vehicle factors, road and environmental factors.

Most of these accidents occur on federal Highways which is under the purview of the Federal Road Safety Commission. The poor road safety enforcement by the Federal Agencies can be obvious on roads like Tafa in Niger State, Mararaba along Abuja - Keffi, Lagos - Ibadan expressway.

What are the causes of this road traffic accident on our highways. Most Highways are littered with broken down vehicles creating obstacles to free flow of traffic and endangering the lives of road users and vehicle occupants. The Federal Road Safety Commission lacks the leadership to save road users from this ugly trend. It is necessary that the FRSC be located on highways to ensure that the roads are free from road traffic obstructions. Both the Federal and State agencies on matters of road traffic should work harmoniously.

Nigerian drivers are the worst in the whole world. Some are drunk while driving and at times with vehicles that are not in order. Faulty pedestrian attitude, driving faster or slower than the flow of traffic - which may or may not accord with the posted speed limit, has robustly been demonstrated to increase the likelihood of road traffic accidents.

Poor road conditions and transport systems is another factor militating against road safety. Most state government do not see it as a point of duty to repair roads. Billions of Naira has been allocated to the FRSC since its inception but the safety of road users cannot be guaranteed.

Nigeria has what it takes to ensure safety of road users. Nigeria and the international communities should for the sake of humanity rise to the challenge of tackling road safety issues.

*Sylvia Onyema,
Lagos*

Question 3

Write an article for publication in your school magazine, discussing the reasons why children in your area drop out of school and suggesting ways of minimizing this negative trend.
(WASSCE 2004)

Answer***REASONS CHILDREN DROP OUT OF SCHOOL***

School drop outs are children who left the confines of the school before completing their studies for reasons other than death, and without transfer to any other school. This is a negative trend that is gaining root in the society and something must be done to curb it.

Out of school adolescent are found in every nook and cranny of the society. Some of these may have been forced to leave the school before completing their studies as a result of adverse social circumstances beyond their control. Inadequate finances and low level intelligence are the two main reasons for school dropouts. Poverty is a cankerworm that is eating deep into most families. Some families cannot afford a decent meal, not to talk of seeing their children through education.

Poverty, gender unfriendly classrooms, early marriage, lack of security both in and outside school are some of the reasons for school drop outs. Very poor academic achievements, school phobia and juvenile delinquency also contribute to this phenomena. Most of them are not skillfully equipped for any meaningful job, they loaf about as street children or road side hawkers.

Girls are highly affected as a result of unwanted pregnancy, and female sexual trafficking. Most of them are convinced to leave school by the traffickers who transport them to some European countries as commercial sex workers to make financial gains. This is dehumanizing and degrading to our social fabrics.

There is a need for concerted effort by all stakeholders to ensure that adolescents benefit from the school by learning necessary skills and acquiring knowledge for a sustainable national development. The government should provide free education, establish trade and technical schools as we have exceptional children. Adequate teachers and guidance counselors should be provided in all schools.

Some of these dropouts should be rehabilitated, trained in certain vocational skills so as to be useful to themselves and to the society.

Finally, both parents and teachers who emphatically understand children and adolescents with the problem they face as a result of rapid physical growth should guide and infiltrate the total development of in-school children.

*Chuks Anyanwu,
Lagos.*

Question 4

The rising cost of tertiary education in your country has become a serious problem. Write an article for publication in any national newspaper discussing this problem and suggesting measures that could be adopted to deal with it. (WASSCE 2005)

Answer

THE RISING COST OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Tertiary education in Nigeria is very expensive. Nowadays it is the exclusive preserve of the rich in the society. Unless one is a genius to earn a scholarship, you will need to pay thousand of Naira a year for education. The cost can also be greatly affected by which institution you choose.

The problem starts from the time JAMB form is purchased. Its rising cost each year makes matter worse.

Candidates wait for admission, only the rich ones are picked and not the intelligent ones. The children of the rich secure admission first. Recently, I heard of a case of a student in a Nigerian University who lost a full year of his studies because of tuition fee which he couldn't afford. His case is just one of a many.

The tuition fee of many Nigerian public owned Universities is exorbitant and unaffordable. Many children from low-income earning household struggle to pay this. Some families spend all their life-savings to train a child through university.

The so called private universities is not helping issues. These schools are there just for the elites in the society. Their school fees are just unaffordable for the common man. It is agreed that good education cost money. But then, we are not talking of a university owned by a private sector whose primary aim would be to raise money. The gainers now use private planes and jets to fly high in luxury.

The solution to this is not far-fetched. In many European and North American countries, students usually contribute financially to their education. Students work for a specific number of hours each. Government should also facilitate loans, which are repayable when employed after graduation. The higher institutions also need to take a pro-active step in creating sustainable on-campus part-time jobs for registered students.

*OBI GEORGE, J. A,
LAGOS.*

Question 5

Recently, there has been a heated argument in your country on whether or not to abolish the use of commercial motorcycles. In an article suitable for publication, express your views.
(WASSCE 2006)

THE BAN ON COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLIST

Commercial motorcyclist is one of the major means of transportation in both the Urban and Rural areas of Nigeria. "Okada" as it is popularly called finds it way as means of commercial transportation in Nigeria in the late 80's and early 90's. But before this period, it was used mainly as a private means of mobility to fetch water, firewood, palm fruits as well as to run errands. The reasons adduced to have led to the proliferation of motorcyclist operators in some areas are poverty and unemployment.

Inspite of its popularity, there has been heated argument in the country as to whether to abolish the use of commercial motorcyles. One of the policies of some state governments that is generating public concern and discourse in so many quarters is the ban on commercial motocylists. In a number of state capitals commercial motorcyles are about to be banned or has been banned.

When one take a cursory look at both the advantages and disadvantages of commercial motorcyclist, the latter, far out weights the former.

There are thousands of motorcycle operators in Nigeria, both family men and youths who depend on this medium of transport to feed themselves and their families, And if abolished, the Government will take away food from their mouths. In this case crime rate and unemployment

would be on the increase, because this “Okada” business is a product of unemployment most people doing it had to resort to it as a last alternative to ensure that food is on their table.

Again, commercial motorcyclist is one of the easiest but not safest mode of transport. It avails the public the opportunity to overcome the ever increasing and constant traffic jam on our roads. It carries its passengers to all nooks and crannies of the country.

The activities of some of these commercial motorcyclists is so alarming that one will no doubt agree to its abolishment. They have sent so many people to their early graves as well as themselves, through motor accidents. Some victims are deformed. These motorcyclists simply do not care about other road users and they have proved impossible to control. They always disobey exiting traffic laws. Furthermore it has been posited that some of the criminal activities perpetrated in some areas are usually executed with motorcycles.

As valid as these arguments are, an outright ban or abolishment will result to unemployment which will in turn give birth to youth’s restiveness and crime. Commercial motorcyclists is a more effective way of reducing crime rate because, ‘an idle mind is the devils workshop.

The Government should not that as good as their plans are to abolish commercial motocylists, it should also note that it is going to make a number of people jobless.

Finally, the government should be considerate, sensitive, and re-consider its stance on the abolishment of commercial motorcyrcles given the untold hardship they will face.

Mirabelle Udo,
Uyo.

Question 6

Write an article suitable for publication in your school magazine on the effects of drug abuse.
(WASSCE 2007)

EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse is a situation whereby drug whether, painkiller, alcohol, cocaine or other stimulant is taken without prescription (in excess). Drug abuse is a problem in many countries around the world. In Nigeria things are no different. Many people especially the young. Indulge in drugs like marijuana, cocaine etc.

Drug abuse causes tremendous harm to the alcoholic’s family, the alcoholic himself and a negative toll on the society. Economies are held back, families are made less happy and occasionally, even turn asunder by serious injury or even death.

Nigeria is a traditional society where the young are expected to respect their elders. Drug peddlers often with their power and wealth have little problem ignoring cultural expectations. Some drug addicts have become beggars, and sometimes even steal to support their addiction. They also inhibit self control, thus resulting in risky sexual behaviour for users.

Drug abuse also poses health risk. The abuse of this substance causes a variety of diseases such as, cancer, HIV, liver diseases, heart problems and weakened immune system. Those who develop HIV through drug use have the ability to spread the infectious disease to others. These health problems are expensive drains on the health care industry and economy of a country.

Furthermore, substance abuse contribute to many societal ills, some of the most common are child abuse, domestic violence, violence and crime, cultism. It brings about corruption. Police officers, customs officials and other authorities are heavily bribed to allow the importation and exportation of illegal drugs into and out of the country. This corruption serves further to erode the moral fibre of the society.

Productivity is the largest cost of drug and alcohol abuse to society. It leads to loss of productivity. Drug abuse, is a notorious cankerworm that is prevalent in our society and authorities concerned should put all the machinery in place to put a stop to it.

*Aishat Mustapha,
Kaduna.*

Question 7

Write an article on the topic: Examination malpractice and what government can do to curb it.
(WASSCE 2008)

Answer

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

From the east to west, North to South the menace of exam malpractice is echoed in all nooks and crannies of the country. This disease has eaten deep into all levels of our educational system ranging from tertiary institutions down to the primary level. The malady seems incurable because virtually all citizens in one way or the other are involved in this educational malaise. The youths believe they can't be successful in exams without this malpractice which they have baptized with so many aliases as "help, memory back up, mercenary, missiles, giraffing, dubbing etc.

Exam malpractice is defined as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules. it comes in different forms like the leakage of exam papers prior to examination, impersonation, external assistance, writing the answers on the board and using phones etc.

Laziness, inadequate preparation for examination and students not taking their studies seriously indolence, depending on fraudulent means to make it, with the support of unscrupulous parents and corrupts systems, stand as the root causes of examination malpractice.

Private examination centre are aided and abetted by corrupt examination officials, supported by unscrupulous parents. Most students in this country engage in malpractice. This syndrome poses a great threat to the survival and sustained ability of good and quality education. This hydra - headed monster will facilitate the environment of a mediocre, half-baked, incompetent and corrupt workforce ranging from quack doctors and pharmacist etc. This parasite ravaging our education sector can only be eradicated by a national consciousness. Students should develop an interest in reading and learning. Examination bodies such as JAMB, WAEC, NECO should be sanitized and employ officials of unquestionable character. The government should implement effective penalties for defaulters.

Finally, a step taken now goes a long way to determine the future of our great country since the youths are the leaders of tomorrow.

*Amina Abubarkar,
Lagos.*

Question 8

Write an article suitable for publication on one traditional ceremony of your people.
(WASSCE 2009)

Answer

THE “IGBA NKWU NWANYI” OF THE IGBOS

“ Igba Nkwu Nwanyi ” means “ wine carrying of a woman ” and for many decades has been generally accepted as the igbo word for traditional marriage.

The Igbo traditional marriage entails first the introduction “ Ikwu - Aka ” (knocking). Marriage in Igbo land is not just an affair between the-to-be couple but also involves the parents, the extended family and villages. So the intending groom will be required to make two visits to the bride family as part of the introduction or “ Ikwu-Aka ”. During these visits of which no gift is required, the brides to-be’s family will have ample time to investigate the groom to be’s family and must reach a conclusion on the proposal.

The prerequisites for their visit may vary from village to village but basically some key items offered as gift to the host family include; kolanut, wines, wrappers and money. At this stage, a date would be agreed on for the “ Igba Nkwu ” to hold at the paternal home of the bride to be. The intending groom would have been handed a list of items to be presented at the engagement. The Igba Nkwu can either be a close family event or a big event including the

whole village. The items on the list are usually symbolic and covers different section of the ceremony. For example the “Umuada” i.e. (All kindred daughters) would have wrappers, blouses, jewelry, Headties Shoes, Beverages and toiletries including food items and cash gift called (Ogwe Ego) and drinks.

The Mmanya Nkwu (big wine) for the kinsmen (Umunna) included, bottles of Seaman’s Schnapps, colonize, gallons of palm wine cartoons of beer, heads of tobacco etc.

The Umuada and Umunna usually share these items and keep some for the parents of the bride.

On the day of the wedding the groom and bride dress gorgeously in traditional attires. other party paraphernalia such as catering, decorations, video, music and a lot more side attraction will feature at a traditional Igbo “Igba Nkwu Nwanyi”.

Angel Okafor,
Enugu.

Question 9

Your house master has just been promoted to head another school. As the house prefect, write a speech you would deliver during the send-off party organized for him.

(WASSCE 2010)

Answer

**A FAREWELL SPEECH PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY ANGEL OKAFOR,
HOUSE PREFECT, PENNY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE ON THE SEND
FORTH ORGANIZED FOR MR KOLAWOLE ON JUNE 10, 2010 AT THE
AUDITORIUM**

Honorable House Master, respected ladies and gentlemen. I feel highly honoured to be called upon to deliver a farewell speech in respect of our out-going house master, Mr. Kola who has been promoted to head another school. This promotion is an indicator of his dedication to duty.

Mr. Kolawole is a gentleman to be reckoned with. Infact, he is a role model to many students in this institution. He is being highly honoured today because he has worked for it. Will the ‘boarders’ of this great school, ever find a replacement for such a devoted, committed, caring, loving, humorous big brother as Mr. Kola? We certainly do not want him to leave us, but who among us will win a lottery to reside in the U.S.A and not jump at the opportunity? In as much as we need you most here, your progress in life is paramount.

True, Mr. Kola, was a “Master Caner”. Did I hear your say “D-e-a-n?” Sure, that’s his nickname. A ‘no nonsense’ man. But did he not cane us for a purpose - to discipline us enough to value education?

Ladies and Gentlemen, hope you’ll join me in bidding farewell to our charming, loving erudite, hard working, sporty and disciplinarian house master, Mr. Kola. Your words and actions will be indelible in our hearts. We promise to abide to all your teachings and advice to us.

Sir, may the Almighty God go with you and continue to shower you with blessings. We plead that you always remember this great school.

Thank you all for listening and goodbye.

*Angel Okafor,
Green House Prefect*

Question 10

Write an article suitable for publication in a newspaper on the importance of education in national development. (WASSCE 2013)

Answer

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The world over, education is acknowledged to be the bedrock of any development. Education can either be formal or informal. For the purpose of this article, I will dwell more on formal education and touch a little of informal learning.

Formal education is the one that takes us from nursery to tertiary level. This type of education exposes us to knowledge especially those tested over time and seen to be useful. Most of this knowledge is committed into writing so that everybody can benefit from the information. It confer on all learners power. The power to conquer the environment and make us comfortable. The power to subject diseases. The knowledge to cloth, feed and shelter our selves is derived from education.

Knowledge today is put into compartments such as Physics, Chemistry and Biology which represent the sciences. We have subjects such as Literature-in-English, Economics, Government, History and others representing the Humanities and Social Sciences cover civic education, Geography and a lot more.

All the above sources of knowledge when well ingrained by an individual leads to development in the individual. Many individuals make a nation, so you can imagine the wealth of any nation whose individuals are opportuned with such great knowledge. There is no need to imagine. It is a guarantee that a nation with educated individuals is surely a great nation. The opposite is too terrible to imagine.

Without education, there would be a drawback of the economy. In any nation, there are a group of people that function as the think tank. Most of them remain in the confine of academics. They can be found in university research centres and polytechnics where they turn out ideas which well funded by government and various organisations serve as sources of raw materials for development.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm that there is great advantage in educating a nation. Both formal and informal education are helpful. Everybody takes part in informal education. The venue is everywhere and the textbook is observation!

*O.C. Papal
2015.*

Question 11

Write an article suitable for publication in your school magazine on the need to inculcate good moral values in the youth.
(WASSCE 2014)

Answer**NEED TO INCULCATE GOOD MORAL VALUES IN THE YOUTH**

Believe me sincerely, there is an urgent need to pay special attention to the moral values of the youth! For a long time now, I have resisted the urge to join the band waggon of people who say that children of this generation lack good moral values but I have no choice than to do so when one day I travelled in public transport and witnessed an incident. The bus I was to board was almost full. There remained just two seats and then came two young lads and then another set of people, an old man of about 83 years and his age two young daughter. It was like a race in the movie, the young lads of about fourteen years and fifteen years old arrived almost at the same time with just a time line of maybe two seconds the young lads being in the lead. It took the combined effort of all the passengers including the middle aged man driver and some other observers to get the consent of these two lads to allow the old man and his daughter have the empty two seats. Out of curiosity, I called the two young lads aside and inquired why they were adamant about having the seats. Their answer was simple "They got there first!"

In days gone by, age was one reason for people to show respect. We were made to understand then that the old and aged were weak and needed our help and support; The same goes for children. In this case therefore, where we have the combination of the two which could not command the respect or even the sympathy of the young lads is a matter for great concern. I will like to add that the two lads in this situation were not rude or violent, they simply were convinced they were doing the right then. In their time, giving respect where your money counts amounts to being sentimental! Such good moral values have been taken over by the power of money. This is just one of the many situations where it has become clear that good morals no longer make man.

Stealing from government or institutions is longer regarded as wrong - everybody does it; Cheating in examination is longer a maths to worry about. Betrayal of friends and loved ones is considered least of offence. The hot is inexhaustible and the unfortunate thing is that it has become an attitude. Both those who act out this attitude and those observers or people in a position to correct it have come to accept it as a way of life!

My listeners, there is fire on the mountain. We need to confront this attitude with a determination to change things for the better or else, the coming up generation will be doomed. The very fabric of man's nature are those values that differentiate him from animal, that gives him integrity. Without these moral values, man is as useless as the stone that cannot put itself to use - only man can cut a stone to use.

I am calling on all stakeholders to rise up for this necessary move to change our youths for the better. Teachers, mothers, fathers and the government who can make policies. We all should be on deck to salvage the situation.

Thank you.

*Omoni Betan
2015.*

Exercises

There has been rampant cases of armed robbery in your country. Write an article for publication in one of your national newspaper discussing the causes of this social menace and suggesting solutions to it.

Write an article for publication in a foreign magazine on “The Effect of Superstition on Nigeria”.

Your school is celebrating its students representative council (SRC) week and you have been requested to deliver a talk on the topic “Drug Abuse: Causes, Effects and Control”. Write your speech.

To commemorate a national holiday, you have been invited to deliver a speech on the topic “The need to educate the girl-child”. Write out your speech.

Thieves broke into your house and stole some items while your parents were away. You are helping the police with their enquires. Write your report.

There have been rampant cases of armed robbery in your country. Write an article for publication in one of your national newspapers discussing the causes of this social menace and suggesting solutions to it.

You were an eyewitness to an account in which a friend of yours was knocked down by a taxi driver who promptly drove away. Write a report of the incident to help the police with their investigation.

A wave of indiscipline is sweeping across the length and breadth of your country. In an article to be published in a local newspaper , discuss the problem and suggest measures to curb it.

CHAPTER FOUR**COMPREHENSION**

Why Comprehension	..	..	..	..	..
Reading the Passage	..	..	..	..	..
Types of Comprehension Questions			..	..	..
Types of Comprehension Passage			..	..	..
A Practical Approach to Answering the Comp. Paper				..	..
Model Passages	..	..	..	..	..
Comprehension Passages for Practice			..	..	..

WHY COMPREHENSION?

Understanding what you read is one of the basic requirements for proficiency in the English Language. The Comprehension Paper tests the candidate's ability to:

- Read effectively
- Understand a passage(s) of moderate difficulty
- Digest passages

It looks like nothing could be simpler than reading a passage and answering questions drawn from it. On a second look however, it is not an easy task as such. Like the summary, the questions don't usually require you to generate any ideas of your own. The source of answers is the passage itself. You need not go beyond the passage in your search for answers.

READING THE PASSAGE

- Complete concentration is the first requirement for reading a passage. Give the passage a first exploratory reading to find out in general terms what it is about. Then embark on a second concentrated reading seeking to understand exactly what the passage is saying.
- Read the passage as many times as time would allow. The fact is that each reading widens space the scope of understanding.
- Read the passage in the spirit in which it was written. Also, do not allow your religious or traditional beliefs to influence the answers you give. The comprehension test is not a forum for debate or argument.
- With many passages, you need to understand the surface meaning and the meaning implicit in the words

TYPES OF COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Questions set on the Comprehension Paper include the following:

- Vocabulary - 5 or 6 words are chosen from the passage and underlined
- The meanings of the words should be given in context
 - They should be similar in meaning
 - They should be capable of replacing the words given the question
 - The number (singular or plural) and tense of the words should be retained
 - Watch out for articles- answers should go with articles (a or an), which precede them, if any.

For example, a replacement for the word “silly” in the sentence: He gave a silly answer should be “foolish” or “senseless” but not “absurd” or “unintelligent” as these two words cannot go with the article “a”.

b. IMPLICATION OR IMPLICIT TYPE

In our reading, we sometimes have to look for the meaning behind the words. Rather than make a point or put across a fact directly (explicitly), a writer may choose to be implicit. Below is an extract and a question whose answer is implicitly rather than expressly stated.

It is exactly four years ago when Mama Turay placed her first-born child in a simple grave near her hut. She was barely eighteen at the time but no stranger to misfortune.

Question:

How old is Mama Turay now?

Implicitly, she is twenty-two. Implicit because nowhere in the passage is twenty-two years stated. Similarly, a passage which contains such phrases as: cold mornings, half - bare trees, dusty roads, cracked lips and parched dry skin is making an indirect reference to the harmattan

c. FREE ANSWER TYPE

Answers to the questions are picked from the passage and put down.

d. QUESTIONS ON GRAMMAR

Included here are questions on:

- i. Part of Speech - nouns, verbs, adjectives etc
- ii. Figures of speech - simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole etc
- iii. Sentence types - simple, compound, complex and compound complex
- iv.
 - a. Grammatical names of underlined or stated portions of the passage
 - b. Functions of these.

Usually, this has to do with phrases and clauses and you should limit yourself to the three - types - nominal (noun), adjectival and adverbial. These phrases and clauses may function as subjects, objects complements, modifiers etc.

e. QUESTIONS ON TYPES OF QUESTION

One of four could be demanded:

- i. Direct Question - e.g. How are you?
- ii. Indirect Question - e.g. I hope it is not too expensive
- iii. Rhetorical Question - e.g. What is the world coming up to?
- iv. Question Tag - They are reading, aren't they?

f. Quoting A Sentence/Phrase/Word to Support (usually) a Yes / No Answer

THE COMPREHENSION PAPER

The test items of the comprehension paper are designed to test how well a candidate understands what is read. These test items do not measure the understanding of a particular topic or subject. For this reason, knowledge outside the contents of the passage is not required.

TYPES OF COMPREHENSION PASSAGES**i. Narratives**

The passage set may be a narrative ... Telling a story. A series of events are strung together to tell what happened and thereby make a point. To well understand narrative passages, see the linkage of events and factors explaining them. Questions may centre on what happened, who did what, how and why.

ii. A writer's Personal Observation

A passage may also state a writer's personal observation about something many have taken for granted. What is usual or commonplace is interpreted or analysed in an interesting manner. These passages unravel a pattern, impact or the significance of something not yet observed or discerned by many.

iii. Topical Issues

Other passages explore topical issues in which viewpoints are expressed, solutions suggested or a case made for and / or against.

iv. Others

Other forms of writing for the comprehension passage are the descriptive and the expository. The latter explains a process or how something works or is made. Analyse a descriptive passage by carefully examining its parts and the way they interact to form the whole. As with all reading exercises, rather than allowing words to pass before your eyes, read with an inquiring mind and visualize what is read.

Deriving Meanings of Words from Contextual Clues

A passage ridden with many unfamiliar words is not easily digested because the meaning becomes beclouded. Luckily, the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary can be worked out from contextual clues.

Unfamiliar words often move along with familiar words. In most cases, you can derive the meaning of a word from its setting or context. This is so because the familiar words in a sentence can determine the meaning of the unfamiliar words.

Note how examples below illustrate specific clue words.

Definitions, examples, re-statements, comparisons, contrasts, causes and effects tend to provide clues to uncovering meanings of difficult words.

Definitions as Clues

Definitions are given by use of such clue or hint words as : which means, that is, which is, who is or words in apposition.

Examples:

- a. Feminists, campaigners for women's rights, also come up strongly against the use of make-up. (Feminists defined by use of apposition)
- b. Delegation, which is the practice of assigning tasks to others, is an important managerial tool. (Delegation defined).

ii. Examples As Clue

Examples serve to break down the meaning of an unfamiliar word and are introduced by such words and phrases as: for example, such as, for instance, especially, like including etc.

Example:

One becomes lethargic when one goes through such feelings as tiredness, sluggishness and indifference. Implicitly, being lethargic is being sluggish.

iii. Restatement as Clues

Meaning is also derived when one writer re-states what point or idea he has given. Restatements are shown by use of: or, also known as, in other words etc.

When sentences are restated, unfamiliar words are rendered familiar.

Examples:

a. Dyslexia, popularly known as word blindness, is a mysterious condition which prevents children of otherwise normal ability from learning to read.

b. Consciously postponing a decision, that is, deciding not to decide, is not the same as indecision.

iv. Comparison as Clues

The markers of comparison clues are likewise, similarly, in the same way, like Forerunners, like John the Baptist, emerge to prepare the way for the coming of greater men. It can be seen from this example that a comparison unravels the unfamiliar (forerunners) through the familiar.

v. Contrast as Clues.

Contrast is conveyed by such clue words: as whereas, in contrast to, on the contrary, unlike, however, although, but. The jubilant mood of the victorious team and its supporters was in contrast to the dejection and brooding mood of the losers.

vi. Punctuation marks as Clues

Punctuation can also provide clues to unravel the meaning of an unfamiliar word. For instance, definitions and re-statements are sometimes set off with commas or dashes:

The Vatican is an enclave - an independent country - surrounded by Italy.

READING FOR MEANING

The concern of the examiner is to find out if you have comprehended the passage. If you haven't, then you couldn't have really read the passage even though your eyes have taken in all the words.

1. Read in full concentration

Focus on what you read. Link the words with the brain and visualise. Reading is pure brainwork. Project yourself into what you read. In other words, enter the world of the passage. In furtherance of this, never read with divided attention.

2. Read with Utmost care

Reading carefully and at a helpful pace (neither too fast nor too slow) enhances your understanding of a passage. For one thing careful reading prevents your misreading words (e.g fail for fall or farm for form) and your jumping over some lines.

Watch the use of Connectors

Knowledge of the writer's use of connectors enhances meaning. These connectors have to do with how ideas are linked up.

Meanings of some Connectors

- I. Additional or Similar Ideas are indicated by the following: And, Also, Moreover, Furthermore, In addition, Not only ... But also ...
- ii. Markers of Result or Consequences include: Consequently, Therefore, Thus, So, Hence...
- iii. Change of track or direction is conveyed by such connectors as: However, But, Conversely, On the other hand, By contrast.

PRACTICAL APPROACH TO ANSWERING THE COMPREHENSION PAPER**Step 1**

Read the passage carefully for the first time. This is exploratory reading and usually not much understanding is derived.

Step 2

Carefully read the questions making sure you understand them and what they are asking for

Step 3

Do your second reading of the passage and in full concentration. Analyse each paragraph watching the first and final sentences for paragraph meaning. Work out meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary.

Step 4

Have your third reading of the passage. At this stage you've had enough familiarity to enable you read a bit faster and do so with confidence.

Step 5

Read each question carefully and search through the passage for the portions or areas which carry the answer. Normally, the answers follow the order in which the questions are asked. The answer to question B, for example, should precede that of Question C

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

- Another approach is to start it all with a look at the questions
- Next, Read and re-read the passage carefully and with focus
- Carefully read the questions again
- Read the passage for the third time and then linking passage and questions search for the answers
- The advantage with this alternative approach lies in getting a hint or a foreshadow of what the passage is about before the exploratory reading is done.

ANSWER PRESENTATION

Be guided by the following when writing out your answers:

1. Make your answers brief and clear
2. Rid your answers of grammatical errors
3. Unlike summary, your comprehension answers should not necessarily be given in sentences. You may or may not use sentences but clarity should be your overriding concern.
4. When answering questions on vocabulary (selected words from the passage) first understand how the words have been used in the passage. Then find appropriate synonyms or phrases to replace them.

3. Find out the Central Message

Be clear in your mind what the passage is all about its theme and subject matter. Your WASSCE passage is untitled and the task of knowing what it is about is yours.

4. Find out for Paragraph Meaning (meaning in each paragraph)

Undertake a paragraph - by- paragraph analysis of the passage. Frantically search for the meaning of each paragraph. Watch the opening and closing sentences of the paragraphs for the topic sentences. These sentences usually state the point being made in each paragraph.

5. Read Between the Lines

As you read along you need to grab both the surface (express) and the hidden (implicit) meanings of the passage or portions of it. Rather than expressly or directly state something, a writer may decide to let his words suggest or hint at a meaning. This is most likely to invite an implicit question in your comprehension paper.

6. See the link between Fact and Evidence

Look out for supporting evidence or facts stated or points made. Fact and evidence usually move together. Evidence or proof is to be seen in reasons, illustrations, examples and explanations given. Note that you answer 'WHY' questions with evidence.

7. Follow the Direction of the Writer's Thoughts

A writer may or can change track. He may for instance change from one stance to another: from supporting something to condemning it or from causes through effects to solutions. This gives you the structure of the passage, which in turn enhances your understanding of the passage. Such connectors as: however, but, nevertheless, on the other hand, contrarily, etc, are suggestive of a change of direction in the writer's line of thought.

8. How fast Should you Read

Do not read faster than your normal pace. Both the exploratory and the concentrated reading should be done cautiously and neither too fast nor too slow.

9. Workout Meanings of Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Inevitably, you are going to encounter some unfamiliar vocabulary. For total understanding of the passage you cannot side-step them.

Dig up meanings of difficult words by:

- a. Guessing meanings from the context in which words are used
- b. Looking around the problem word for a simpler synonym, which may come either before or after this word whose meaning is unknown.
- c. Deriving the meaning of a difficult word used alongside its known antonym or opposite. e.g. Our expectations of a friendly reception were wrong. In all ways it was a hostile reception. Here the word 'hostile' linked to 'friendly' explains itself.
- d. Breaking down a longer/difficult word into its components. E.g Prefix and root words: extraordinary = extra + ordinary.

Answers To Questions On Vocabulary Should Be

- i. Synonymous or similar to the words given
- ii. Capable of replacing the given words.

Hence you should retain the tense and the part of speech of the word concerned.

5. Do not give two answers to a question unless otherwise directed. If one of two answer is wrong, no mark is given
6. You are at liberty to lift answers from the passage where appropriate and provided you have not been instructed to use your own words.
7. Answer questions in the tenses they were asked.
8. If asked to quote a word or a phrase in support of an answer, do not quote a sentence and vice versa.

Practice Questions

Passage 1

(WASSCE 2002)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

When health workers first came to the village and talked about family planning, no one took them seriously, including Amusa, whose young wife was then pregnant with their first baby. Had their fathers and forefathers before them not had as many wives and children as they desired? And had they not been able to take care of their families? So, everyone shunned the family planning clinic which was established in the village shortly afterwards.

Twelve years later, Amusa was a clerical assistant in the city and lived with his wife and eight children in a single room because he could not afford larger quarters. For as long as he could remember, his large family had been going through difficult times, which appeared to be worsening lately. Only yesterday, his third was sent away from school because her parents could not replace her old and torn school uniform. Last year, their first son could not proceed to the secondary school as the family could not afford the cost. Then recently, the landlord had announced his intention to increase the rent.

Amusa found himself thinking about the days when he was himself a young child. His own father had two wives and thirteen children, yet as far as he could remember, the family had not faced anything similar to what he was going through now. He suddenly realized that this was because the times had changed and that the requirements of modern living had put pressure on large family sizes. His father's time and age had been different: he had been a successful farmer in the village, had lived in his own house, employed members of his large family as farm hands and fed everyone from the abundance of the farm. On the other hand, Amusa lived in the city on a limited income. He had no farm land not even a vegetable garden, and had to pay for everything, from his rented room to the smallest domestic need of his family. And at four or five times what they cost a few years before!

It was then that he sadly remembered the health workers and their gospel of family planning. How he wished he had listened and taken their advice! Unfortunately, he has not. And what was even more unfortunate was that the millions in Amusa's shoes became wiser only when it was too late.

Questions:

- (a) What advice do you think the health workers gave to the villages?
- (b) Give two reasons why the villagers did not take the health workers seriously.
- (c) Give two indications of Amusa's financial difficulties.
- (d) Mention any two differences between Amusa's condition and his father's.
- (e) "*And what was even more unfortunate...*"
 - (i) What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
 - (ii) What is its function?
- (f) "*And had they not been able to take care of their families?*"
 - (i) What literary device is used in this expression?
 - (ii) What does it mean?
- (g) For each of the following words or phrases, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
 - (I) shunned;
 - (ii) established;
 - (iii) announced;
 - (iv) going through;
 - (v) limited;
 - (vi) shoes.

Answer

- (a) *They were advised on how to limit the size of their family.*
- (b) *They did not take them seriously because:*
 - (i) *Their fathers and forefathers had many wives and children*
 - (ii) *They were able to cater for their needs.*
- (c) (i) *He lived in a one room apartment with a wife and eight children.*
(ii) *He could not sponsor his children's education*
- (d) (i) *Amusa's father was a successful farmer in the village while Amusa was a clerical assistant in the city with limited income.*
(ii) *His father lived in his own house and could fend for his family, Amusa lived in a rented apartment and paid for his domestic needs.*
- (e) (i) *Noun Clause*
(ii) *Subject of the verb "was"*

(f) (i) *Rhetorical question*

(ii) *It means that Amusa's forefather and fathers were able to take care of their large families.*

(g) (i) *Shunned:* avoided, ignored, rejected (v) *Limited:* small, meagre

(ii) *established:* set up, created, started

(iii) *announced:* declared, pronounced

(iv) *going through:* experiencing, facing

(vi) *shoes:* condition, situation, position, state.

Passage 2

(WASSCE 2002)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

The great white shark is at the top of the marine food chain. In the shark family, it is the king, it will eat anything, even other sharks. But as it gets older, bigger and slower, it develops a preference for seals, penguins and carrion, especially dead whales.

In locating their food, most sharks use all their senses, including excellent vision. Their sense of smell is incredible and their ears are aided by pressure-sensitive cells along each side of the body. Nothing escapes this eavesdropping system, which is attuned to vibrations in the water. Sharks also have a sixth sense which enables them to detect the weak electrical fields emanating from the beating heart or the swimming muscles of a potential prey.

The white shark's most fearsome assets are its huge head, its black eyes, and its razor-sharp, serrated teeth. The circulatory system of the white shark is different from that of most other sharks. Its blood temperature is about three to five degrees Celsius above water temperature, this speeds up digestion and adds to its strength and endurance.

It is known that the white shark spits out its wounded prey after an initial, powerful bite. Then it waits for the victim to die before eating it. Why does it use this bite-and-spit strategy? Experts speculate that this is because of its eyes. Unlike other sharks, white shark has no eyelid like membrane to protect its eyes, rather, it rotates them in their sockets when a collision is imminent. At the moment of impact, the eye is left exposed, perhaps to the flaying claws of a seal. Therefore, for the white shark, a quick mortal strike and release is common behaviour.

The public image of sharks has been greatly coloured by the novel *Jaws* which was turned into a popular movie. Overnight the white shark became evil incarnate. However, it is not a demon craving human flesh. The smell of blood does not drive it into a feeding frenzy as it does certain other sharks. Nevertheless it is a dangerous animal that should be treated with caution and respect.

Questions:

- (a) How do sharks use their sixth sense?
- (b) In what significant way is the circulatory system of the white shark different from that of other sharks?
- (c) What, according to the passage, is the probable reason why the white shark waits for its victim to die before eating it?
- (d) (i) What is the writer's attitude to the white shark?
(ii) Quote an expression from the passage to support your answer.
- (e) "*At the moment of impact....*"
(i) What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
(ii) What is its function?
- (f) "*However, it is not a demon craving human flesh.*"
What figure of speech is contained in this expression?
- (g) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage.
- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| (i) preference; | (ii) incredible; | (iii) emanating |
| ; (iv) speculate; | (v) mortal; | (vi) coloured. |

Answer

- a) *They use their sixth sense to detect a potential prey.*
- b) *Its blood pressure is higher above water temperature, which speeds up digestion and adds to its strength.*
- c) *To protect its eyes from its victim.*
- d) (i) *He portrays the white shark as a dreadful creature and at the same time admires its strength.*
(ii) *"Nevertheless it is a dangerous animal that should be treated with caution and respect".*
- e) (i) *Adverbial Phrase*
(ii) *It modifies the verb "is left exposed"*
- f) *metaphor*
- (g) (i) *preference:* *desire, interest, fondness*
(ii) *incredible:* *unbelievable, amazing, wonderful*
(iii) *emanating:* *coming, arising, resulting*
(iv) *speculate:* *suggest, believe, think, guess*
(v) *mortal:* *deadly, fatal, lethal*
(vi) *coloured:* *affected, tarnished, distorted*

Passage 3

(WASSCE 2003)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

Among the giraffes, zebras and gazelles that roam the vast African savanna, perhaps the most remarkable creature is the ostrich. Standing about 2.5 metres tall and weighing up to 155 kilograms, the ostrich is the largest bird in existence. No one can fail to be awed and fascinated by the bird's great height, powerful legs and beautiful fluffy feathers.

Like the camel, the ostrich is tolerant of high temperatures and thrives in desert country. It also has long luxuriant eyelashes which protect its large eyes from the dust of the bushveld. Its legs are long and sinewy and its feet are strong and fleshy. Seeing the ostrich strutting about in the open plains, observers are amazed at its agility and endurance.

The ostrich is omnivorous, feeding on almost anything that creeps or crawls. It also dines on insect, snakes, rodents, roots and most vegetation. Because of its great size and weight, it cannot fly. However, its muscular legs are powerful enough to make it one of the fastest creatures on earth. Running across desert country, it can attain speeds of up to 65 kilometres an hour! This extraordinary swiftness and its long-distance stamina enable it to outrun many of the fastest four-legged predators with ease.

The eggs of the ostrich are the largest in the world and can weigh up to 1.5 kilograms each. Prized for its size and delicious taste, each egg is the equivalent of 25 hens' eggs. The shell is hard and glossy and has a glazed porcelain like finish. The empty shell is sometimes used as a container by Bushmen for storing water.

In the 14th century, ostrich feathers became highly valued by fashion-conscious Europeans. Yet, hunting the ostrich was not easy, since the bird has very keen eyesight and swiftly flees from danger. Consequently, the ostrich was in no danger of extinction at that time.

But in the 19th century, armed with modern weapons, hunters slaughtered ostriches by the millions. And today the noble ostrich has become an endangered species.

Questions

- (a) Give three reasons why the ostrich egg is considered valuable.
- (b) How does the ostrich survive attack by predators?
- (c) What common characteristic of birds does the ostrich lack?
- (d) Why did the Europeans value ostrich feathers?
- (e) "*The eggs of the ostrich.....*"
 - (i) What is the grammatical name given to this expression?
 - (ii) What is its function as it is used in the sentence?
- (f) What is the writer's attitude to the ostrich?
- (g) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase that means the same and can replace it as it is used in the passage.