

Senior secondary

# English: Study units 1-6

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Scholar study workbook



Forum for African Women  
Educationalists in Malawi  
(FAWEMA)

*"Supporting Girls and Women to  
Acquire Education for  
Development"*



The Open  
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme  
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# 'Keeping Girls in School' Scholarship Programme

## MSCE Resources: 2014–15

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# MSCE E1: Introducing English language

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Language Unit E1

This unit is about grammar practice and the MSCE English Language exam.

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. show understanding of key ideas in English grammar
2. prepare for grammar topics in MSCE English Language Paper 1 (Grammar).

## Introduction

### Start here

Welcome to English grammar!

How much time you spend on each activity depends on how easy or difficult you find it. Think about the study tools in the study guide and how you can help your friends, for example making up some more examples and activities to practise. If your tutor can show you a copy of MSCE English Paper 1 this will be a useful study tool.

### What is grammar?

Do not be afraid of grammar. Grammar is about rules and patterns. There are patterns in songs and in leaves all around us. We meet lots of rules and patterns in English and Maths.

If we have been using a language since birth we may not know all the rules of grammar but we use the patterns without thinking when we talk and write.

But when we learn another language like English, it can take more time to learn what looks or sounds right.

### Parts of speech

Different parts of sentences have different names. Chichewa and English have **adverbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions**. These are some key words you may already know. Don't worry if there are new words because there is time to learn them, revise them and use them.

Now do the first activity.

### Activity 1

1. Here is a list of parts of speech.
  - a) Put a tick next to the terms you already know and give an example to show you understand what the one you have ticked means.
  - b) Put a question mark (?) next to the ones you are not sure of.
    - Verbs
    - Adverbs
    - Nouns
    - Pronouns
    - Adjectives
    - Prepositions
    - Conjunctions
  - c) To finish this activity find a friend and see if you can help each other to complete the list of ticks by explaining the parts of speech to each other. Don't worry if there are still some things you don't understand.

This example might help you.

*She<sup>1</sup> desperately<sup>2</sup> wants<sup>3</sup> to become<sup>3</sup> an<sup>4</sup> English<sup>5</sup> teacher<sup>6</sup>*

Answer: 1 Pronoun, 2 Adverb, 3 Verb, 4 Article, 5 Adjective, 6 Noun

Well done – you have started to revise **parts of speech**. These will help you understand the MSCE English Language paper.

### Grammar in the examination

You will need to show you know you understand these key ideas in the English Language Paper 1.

(Don't worry if you do not know what all these terms mean yet. We hope that after you work through this unit they will seem a bit easier.)

1. **Naming parts of speech.** In the exam you may be asked to identify verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions in sentences.
2. **Using correct verbs;** In the exam you may be asked to give the correct form of verbs in a sentence. (For example; *the teacher said she would teach the students if they worked hard.*)
3. **Using correct prepositions** – words that give **position** – (like *on* or *over*,) **direction** (like *to* and *from*,) and time, (like *during*, *while*). In the exam you may be asked to give the correct preposition in a sentence. E.g. *The teacher congratulated the scholar on her success.*
4. **Direct and indirect speech.** Direct speech is quoted directly from someone talking, indirect speech is when that talking is reported by someone else. In the exam you will be asked to change one type into another. (E.g. *'Take care!' said the teacher* (direct speech) *The teacher told Tawina to take care* (indirect speech).)
5. **Adjectives,** tell you more about a noun. (E.g. *red dress*). In the exam you may have to place them in correct order in sentences. (E.g. *is it new red dress or red new dress?* – Answer; *new red dress.*)

6. **Tag questions** (e.g. *He will be coming, won't he?* In the exam you may be asked to choose which of several tag questions is the correct one. *E.g. I must prepare for the test mustn't I? OR I must prepare for the test shouldn't I? Answer; I must prepare for the test mustn't I? )*
7. **Collocations**; words that usually go together. For example English speakers say '*a fast train*' rather than '*a quick train*'. We say '*break a promise*' rather than '*smash a promise*'. There is no real reason why, it is just a question of habit. So we say '*old people sometimes find fault with young people.*' ('*Seek fault*' would have similar meaning but would sound wrong.) We *make a decision* but *do homework*. We say '*catch fire*', '*catch a bus*' and '*catch a cold*'. We learn which words sound right together by listening, speaking and reading.
8. **Vocabulary**; The exam may also include some questions on general vocabulary. You may be asked which is the correct word to complete a sentence. Tips are given below and in the study skills section for improving your English vocabulary.

## Activity 2

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Now read this at least twice before doing the activity below.

### Waiting for the Matola

The scholars were waiting for the matola to go to Lilongwe. The day was very hot and they sat under a big, shady tree. They chatted about their MSCE work. They were wearing their T-shirts proudly.

There were lots of other people waiting patiently for the matolas too. A very old lady sat on a blanket making a piece of beautiful white lace. Two boys played bawo in the dust. Gradually some other boys came up and soon there was a little crowd around the game. A man walked around selling cartons of mahewu. The scholars were thirsty. They asked how much the drink cost, but it was very expensive so they decided not to buy any. A woman carrying a heavy suitcase came to sit under the shady tree. She looked very hot and the scholars moved aside so she could have some shade. She asked about their T-shirts and the scholars explained that they were part of a programme to help girls stay in school in Malawi. The old lady who was making lace heard their explanation. She laughed and said, 'Well, good luck girls! I wish I had had that opportunity when I was young!'

1. First underline or highlight all the verbs. Remember to include all the forms of the verb 'to be' (is, are, was, were, etc.).
2. Then underline any adverbs.
3. Then underline the nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions.

**Study tool:** use a different way (colour or circle tick) for each part of speech.

When you have finished show your work to your friend. Does she have the same? You can help each other if there are any parts of speech you are not sure of.

### Activity 3

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You are going to have fun making up examples to teach someone else about parts of speech. Go back to the list of the parts of speech in activity 1. Give some more examples of the ones you know.

For example:

Verb; Lake Malawi is beautiful

Adverb; The bus travelled fast along the road.

Noun; The bus travelled fast along the road.

Adjective; *The* old bus travelled fast.

Pronoun; He went to the lake.

Preposition; He fished in the lake.

Conjunction; He fished in the lake and caught a fish.

Add to this with sentences of your own, underlining the example of the part of speech in each.

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### Verbs (using the correct form and tense of verbs)

The tense of a verb is whether it is **present**, **past** or **future**. **Present** means that the action is happening NOW, **past** has already happened and **future** is still to come. In the exam you will be asked to put the right form of a verb in a sentence.

Important: We will not revise all the rules and forms of the past tense in this small space here but you will need to keep looking for them in your reading and writing.

### Activity 4

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Go back to the piece ‘Waiting for the Matola’ above. Look at all the verbs you have underlined. Then try and say what tense they are in.

For example: *She passed<sup>1</sup> the exam so she will go<sup>2</sup> to college next year.*

Answer: 1 Past tense. 2 Future tense.

Other study ideas on verbs:

- With your friend or tutor use an old newspaper story or something from a book or these study units to make your own exercise to underline all the verbs. What is important is to try to say what tense the verb is in and why.
- Learn from your past mistakes- if you make a mistake in using verbs or tenses in your writing learn why. You may need to keep lists of regular and irregular verb forms.



## Prepositions

There are many prepositions in English. Examples: **in, of, to, under, with, for, into, through**. You will find many when you are reading.

In English prepositions are often added to verbs to change the meaning slightly. This is very common in English. For example, '**drop**' alone has quite a different meaning from '**drop in**' or '**drop out**'; '**break**' has a different meaning from '**break down**' or '**break up**'.

In the exam you may be asked to choose the right preposition to put in a sentence. For example;

I looked ..... the number in the telephone directory.

- a) on
- b) up
- c) down
- d) in

### Activity 5

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This is where you and your friend can have fun testing each other. Make up ten short sentences like the one above. Each of them should have a preposition in it. Then read the sentence out to your friend, leaving out the preposition and get her to say the right preposition. Let her test you too. If you disagree about which is the right preposition to use, make a note of that and ask your tutor next time you meet.

## Direct and indirect speech

Direct speech is exactly what someone says. Indirect speech is when that talking is reported by someone else.

### Activity 6

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In the piece 'Waiting for the Matola' there are some examples of indirect speech, reporting what has been said, and one example of direct speech.

#### Indirect speech

- a) The scholars asked how much the drink cost.
- b) She asked what they were reading about.
- c) The scholars explained that they were part of a programme to keep girls in school in Malawi.

#### Direct speech

- d) She said, 'Well, good luck girls! I wish I had had that opportunity when I was young!'
1. Write the above (a,b,c) **indirect or reported speech** in **direct speech**. You will have to imagine what the scholars said to the mahewu seller to find out the price; what the woman said to the scholars to find out about their T shirts, and the exact answer the scholars gave to the woman.
  2. Then write (d) **direct speech** in **indirect speech**.

If you have time; Write 5 sentences in direct speech (e.g. 'I am so tired' sighed Tawina.) and then re-write them in indirect speech. (= Tawina said that she was very tired.)

Then do this exercise in reverse; write 5 sentences in indirect speech (Mrs Banda asked the scholar whether she had found her book.) and rewrite them in direct speech. ('Have you found your book?' Mrs Banda asked the scholar.)

## Adjectives (correct order in sentences)

There are general rules for the order of adjectives such as:

- 'Opinion' adjectives come before 'fact' adjectives.

(If you say 'She has a nice, red dress', *nice* gives your opinion of the dress, and it is a fact that it is red.)

- The normal order for fact adjectives is **size, age, shape, colour, material, origin**:

(E.g. Our teacher has bought a big, old, blue, Japanese car. She drove it down the long, bumpy, muddy road.)

**Advice:** A good way of learning the right order of adjectives is to practise reading sentences out loud and getting to know what sounds right.

### Activity 7

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In the piece 'Waiting for the Matola' there are some examples of adjectives together in a sentence.

They sat under a big, shady tree.

A very old lady sat on a blanket making a piece of beautiful, white lace.

Read these sentences aloud and listen to how they sound. Then say them again with the adjectives in a different order. (Shady big tree ; white beautiful lace) This doesn't sound quite right, although the meaning is the same.

Next time you read a piece of English text (story, newspaper, magazine or advert) try and pick out the adjectives. Note how they are used. If there are several adjectives together in a sentence, try saying them in a different order and see whether they sound wrong.

## Tag questions (e.g. Won't I? Mustn't he? Isn't it?)

### Activity 8

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1. First practise saying or writing sentences using tag questions:

e.g. He will be coming, won't he?

I must do my homework now, mustn't I?

She is the smartest girl in the school, isn't she?

2. Then write down the correct tag question to complete the following sentences.

We are going to school \_\_\_\_\_?

- a. *Aren't we?*
- b. *Could we?*
- c. *Can we?*

She does know the right answer, \_\_\_\_\_?

- a. *Does she?*
- b. *Can't she*
- c. *Doesn't she?*

3. Now make up some more tests like this and test your friend.

### Collocations (words that usually go together)

In any language there are words that are commonly said or written together. This is not for any real reason other than habit! So an English speaker will say '*a fast car*' rather than '*a quick car*'. Although the meaning is very similar the first one 'sounds right' the second one 'sounds wrong'. It would be impossible to learn by heart a full list of all collocations in English. The only way to become familiar with these is to read, speak and listen to English as much as possible. When you read any written English material see whether you can find any words that always seem to occur together. (e.g. 'Burst out laughing' – not 'blow up laughing'; 'break the law' not 'smash the law' etc.)

### Vocabulary (definitions and synonyms)

Just as with collocations the best way to learn a wide vocabulary is to read, speak and listen to English as much as possible.

- Try to keep a notebook or list of English words you don't understand. Add a few new words to it every day with the meaning. It may be technical words from a subject.
- If you read the sentences surrounding (before and after) the new word you may be able to guess what the word means.

For example in 'Waiting for the Matola' some people might not know what mahewu means. But the next few sentences give clues. The girls were thirsty and they asked how much the drink cost. So we can guess that mahewu is a drink. There are more tips in the study skills section for remembering any new words you learn.

To test yourself on grammar, make up questions for your friend and get her to do the same for you. If you walk to school together you could do this while you are walking along, so you don't have to be sitting at a desk to fit in learning whenever you can. You could also practice by teaching what you have learnt to a younger pupil. Another way of practising is to read whenever you have the opportunity, for example the labels on food packaging, and identify which words are nouns or adjectives or adverbs.

## Practice questions

Give the part of speech for each of the underlined words in the following sentences.

1. Chimanga slept the whole day at work.
2. I do not understand why he had to labour himself that way.
3. They came to see us.
4. Why do you spend money on what does not satisfy you?
5. Neither Chikwanje nor Mphamba managed to talk to him.
6. While he was singing, he felt very happy.

Choose the option A, B, C or D that best completes each of the following sentences.

7. Mwezi played the ..... of a king in the play.
  - (a) part
  - (b) title
  - (c) name
  - (d) function
8. The boy was narrating ..... story.
  - (a) a long, interesting Sena
  - (b) a Sena, long interesting
  - (c) an interesting, long Sena
  - (d) a Sena, interesting long
9. The tourists came across ..... elephant.
  - (a) a lazy, huge African
  - (b) a huge, lazy African
  - (c) an African, lazy huge
  - (d) an African, huge lazy
10. She is wearing ..... skirt.
  - (a) a pretty, traditional long
  - (b) a long, pretty traditional
  - (c) a pretty, long traditional
  - (d) traditional, long pretty
11. They were advised to ..... with their business.
  - (a) carry over
  - (b) carry on
  - (c) carry through
  - (d) carry out
12. He ..... his old post at the Company.
  - (a) took out
  - (b) took up
  - (c) took away
  - (d) took off



## How am I doing ?

This section is a study tool.

Now look back over this unit and be honest about what was difficult.

Later use it to discuss with your tutor any extra help you need.

Before the exam use this tool to revise.

	 <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	 <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you <b>still need a lot</b> of work on this section)
Naming parts of speech (identifying verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions)			
Using correct verbs			
Using correct prepositions			
Direct and indirect speech			
Adjectives (correct order)			
Tag questions			
Collocations; words that usually go together			
Vocabulary			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date: .....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date: .....

## Answers to practice questions

1. adjective
2. verb
3. pronoun
4. preposition
5. pronoun
6. preposition
7. a
8. c
9. a
10. c
11. b
12. b

# MSCE E2: Introducing literature in English

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Literature Unit E2

This unit is about an introduction to literature and the MSCE English Literature exam papers.

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. use study tools to prepare for the MSCE Literature exam papers and the next literature units
2. understand and revise specialist literature words (genre, plot, character, setting, theme, simile, metaphor)
3. discuss what you think is enjoyable and important about literature and stories.

## Introduction

Do you like hearing and telling stories? Do you enjoy listening to radio drama? In this unit we introduce types or **genres** of literature as ways of telling good stories. People all over the world have been telling each other stories for a long time. It is a way to understand what people find important and to share strong feelings.

Which genre or form of literature is your favourite: plays, poems, novels or short stories? Can you say why? Perhaps you prefer poetry for its sound or maybe you prefer entering the **setting** and world of a short story or seeing how a character develops in a novel.

This unit will help with revision for the literature work and we look at:

- what happens (**plot**)
- who it happens to and what sort of people are in the stories (**character**)
- where and when the story takes place (**setting**)
- what the story is telling us and why this might be important (**theme**).

While we are looking at these things, we will also meet some examples of poetic language and specialist literature words.

We will meet all of these learning points (plot, setting, theme, character) again in the next literature units, but it is important to start work on them now. Literature work needs a special effort because it takes time to read, revise and think about the books for the literature exam or **set texts**. So please start reading as soon as you can and then help others with the set texts as you find and share copies of books.

- Find out which of the exam books or set texts are available in your Teacher Development Centre (TDC) or local school library.
- Start work by reading, making notes and talking to a friend/tutor about the literature.

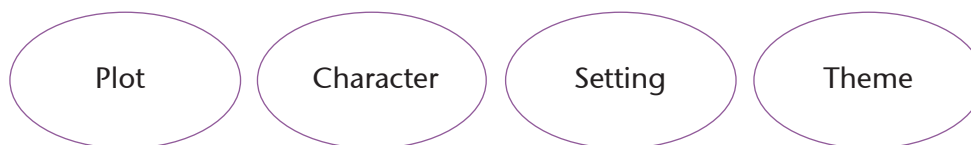
## Activity 1

### Sharing the set texts

Use this chart as a study tool to revise which texts you may have met before in school, then plan ways to share.

Name of text	Genre	Studied before? (yes/no/can't remember)	Where to find this? (TDC, school library, friend)	When to share/who to work with
<i>Smouldering Charcoal</i>	Novel			
<i>Unsung Song</i>	Poetry			
<i>Looking for a Rain God</i>	Short story			
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Play			
Other				

## Plot, Character, Setting and Theme



### More about plot

There will be exam questions on the plots of the set texts especially in Paper 1. Revising the plot helps you to understand what happens and why and may also make you curious about the story. Revising the plot can be easy if you make your own sentence or short paragraph and if you talk about it with a friend.

For example, you may find long plots of novels or Shakespeare's language confusing at first, but try to break it into small steps or a very simple story.

*Romeo and Juliet* – short summary:

Two different families are enemies but their children fall in love then die and then the families stop quarrelling.

After this we can then add the names and details.

*Romeo and Juliet* – medium summary:

Two different families in *Verona, Italy*, the *Montagues* and the *Capulets* have been enemies for a long time. A young man, *Romeo*, a Montague falls in love with *Juliet*, a Capulet. They marry in *secret*. Then Romeo has to leave after a fight with Juliet's relative, *Tybalt*. Juliet's father wants her to marry *Paris*.

She takes a sleeping medicine which looks like poison. Romeo thinks she is dead. He fights Paris and kills himself. She wakes up and sees he is dead and she kills herself.





- Show your questions to your friend and see if you can help each other.
- Think back to another story or play you did at school where you remember some of the plot. Say what the conflict or problem was and how it ended. Why do you think you remember this?

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### More about setting

*Long long ago someone told a story under a tree with the stars up above.*

**Setting** is where a story takes place. Where means **place** and **time**. If you were writing a story, where and when would you set it?

Place means a physical place for example a home, a workplace (bakery, hospital) or outside (forest, river) or a geographical place for example Botswana or Uganda.

The setting also includes the time of the story, which may tell us something about the history and politics and customs. For example the story *The Torn Veil* is set in Ghana in the Second World War under British colonial rule. Knowing this helps us to understand the relationships between characters and also the title prepares us that the theme is to do with women. When you study the collection of short stories *Looking for a Rain God*, you will see how the place and time also makes us think how we would feel if we were in the story – trapped or free, happy or frightened? So the setting is also about mood and atmosphere.

It is possible to change the setting. Although Shakespeare’s plays were written with European settings, the theme or message is about big human problems. For example, the setting of *Macbeth* was in Scotland but a Blantyre theatre company changed the setting to an African county with traditional healers. The setting of *Romeo and Juliet* was Italy but the idea of fighting families was changed to gangs in America in *West Side Story*.

## More about character

People in stories can be very interesting even if we don't like them or what they do. You will need to make notes on key people and **main characters** as you get to know the set texts. The next units on literature will do more on character but this advice is to help you to start now.

**Advice:** It is easy to remember **who** the characters are if you make simple notes perhaps with drawings. Add a diagram or picture here to help you:

Nambe + Mchere

Catherine + Chola

Then as you find out more about friends or enemies in the story you can keep adding:

Chola + Dambe

Mchere + Bota

Nambe + Biti

Catherine + Thoko

This will help you to think about changes in the relationships and how characters behave when there is a problem and about tensions.

**Study advice:** character notes can be about:

- life choices and problems in the story
- why characters do things and what the reasons for tension might be
- if the character changes in the story and why?

For example, in *Smouldering Charcoal*, we see the tension between Nambe and Mchere from the first chapter. Your notes might include examples and questions like this:



## More about specialist terms and poetic language

You may know lots of songs and enjoy the **rhythm** and you may like poetry because of the sound and the **rhyme**. Sometimes the language is very special and beautiful. When you are working in a school, children may enjoy the sound of language.

Shakespeare was also a poet. In Shakespeare's plays there is some **poetic language**. This shows special ways of creating a strong picture in the mind.

You will revise some specialist words around poetic language in later units. The main ones to revise now are **similes** and **metaphors** which are about comparisons.

**More about simile:** comparison of two things using **like** or **as**

Examples: He walked like an angry elephant.

The baby's hair was as soft as a feather.

**Metaphor:** a comparison of two things **not** using like or as

Examples: He was an elephant thundering down the road.

The baby's hair was feather soft.

### Activity 4

Here are some quotations about the character of Juliet. What do they tell us about the character and use of language?

Quotation	From	Tells us about character	Use of language (imagery, simile, metaphor)
'One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun Ne'er saw her match since first the world began.'	Act 1, scene 2	Juliet – beautiful	Sun = bright burning love
'O!, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!'	Act 1, scene 5		
'It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.'	Act 2, scene 2		

**Study advice:** as you make notes on each exam text, you will need to keep adding to your notes on character and build up a list of quotations. It may be a different list to your friends' list.

### More about themes

There are always questions on themes of literature in the exam. Theme is different from **plot (what happens)** because it is about the writer's message. Theme in a story or poem is taking us beyond the story to the main idea or lesson. Theme is not written down but we think about it afterwards. For revision we may look for some themes and then quotations and examples.

The theme will help us to think about human nature and society. Here are some examples of themes found in many stories:

- death and loss
- love and friendship
- marriage and family
- growing up
- trickery
- problems of society
- war and peace
- greed and corruption.

In *Romeo and Juliet* some themes are: love, death, time, hatred.

In *Smouldering Charcoal*, we can also think of themes as opposites:

education/lack of education, poor/rich, power/powerlessness, loyalty/betrayal, Malawi culture/American and European culture.

When you read the novel you can think about what the title *Smouldering Charcoal* means and why it was chosen.

We hope you have enjoyed revising literature and maybe one day you will be an author. The oldest stories are spoken not written and they continue to be very important for children and adults. Writing stories may have started in Egypt over 4000 years ago.

### Activity 5

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#### You as author

If you were writing a play or book, which theme would you choose or would it be something else not on this list. Is the theme funny or sad or both? Where would the setting be? Who would the main character be? What would the conflict be about? You can think about your own story or use examples from any story or radio drama you know.

After you have set out the theme, the main characters and the conflict, write the first few lines of your play or story. Remember, you have to write a composition for Paper 2, so this is good practice.

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## References

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## How am I doing?

	☺ <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	☹ <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you <b>still need a lot</b> of work on this section)
How to study plot			
How to study character			
Understand simile and metaphor			
How to study setting			
How to study theme			
Say what is enjoyable and interesting in literature			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date:.....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date:.....



# MSCE E3: Note-making and comprehension

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Language Unit E3

This unit builds on study skills of breaking written material into key points. It is also about showing understanding by using your own words.

This unit will help you answer the MSCE English Language Paper 3 Exam. There are two sections to this unit:

- note-making practice (for Paper 3)
- comprehension practice (for Paper 3).

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. make notes and summarise a passage in your own words
2. feel more confident about answering questions which show you understand a passage of writing.

## Note-making

The first part of the MSCE English Language Paper 3 involves reading a passage and:

- giving it a title
- summarising or giving the main points of the passage.

This type of exam tests your understanding of what is written in the piece. However, as is said in the Study Skills section, you do not have to understand every single word, and you may need to read it more than once. Even if there are words, or even whole sentences, that you don't understand just continue reading until you come to something you do understand.

### Activity 1

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This activity will take you through making a summary (making notes of the main points) of a written piece.

- First, read the piece below carefully.
- Read it again and underline anything you think is really important. Use pencil to underline, because you may change your mind about what is important later on. Remember that you should not underline everything!

Malawi is a landlocked country in south-eastern Africa, bordered by Zambia to the north-west, Tanzania to the north-east and Mozambique to the south, southwest and southeast.

The Great Rift Valley runs through the country from north to south, and to the east of the valley lies Lake Malawi. Lake Malawi is sometimes called the Calendar Lake as it is about 365 miles (587 km) long and 52 miles (84 km) wide.

The Shire River flows from the south end of the lake. The surface of Lake Malawi is 1,500 feet (457 m) above sea level. The lake is very deep in places, with a maximum depth of 2,300 feet (701 m).

In the mountainous sections of Malawi surrounding the Rift Valley, some peaks are as high as 8,000 feet (2,438 m) in the north. To the

south of Lake Malawi, in the Shire Highlands, are the Zomba and Mlanje mountain peaks of 7,000 feet (2,134 m) and 10,000 feet (3,048 m) respectively.

Malawi's capital is Lilongwe although Blantyre is its largest city, with a population of over 500,000 people. Malawi has two places on the UNESCO World Heritage List: Lake Malawi National Park and the Chongoni Rock Art Area. (The UNESCO World Heritage List is a list of places that are considered to be of special cultural or physical significance.)

Malawi's climate is hot in the low-lying areas in the south of the country and temperate in the northern highlands. Between November and April the temperature is warm with rain and thunderstorms. The storms are most severe in late March. After March, the rainfall rapidly diminishes. From May to September there is almost no rainfall.

The economy of Malawi is mostly agriculture based. 90% of export revenues come from agriculture and approximately 85% of the population live in rural areas.

The main agricultural products of Malawi include tobacco, sugarcane, cotton, tea, corn, potatoes, sorghum, cattle and goats. Tobacco is the most important export crop (it accounts for about 70% of export revenues). The country also relies heavily on tea, sugar and coffee exports. These three products, plus tobacco, account for more than 90% of Malawi's export revenue.

Other goods Malawi exports are cotton, peanuts, wood products and clothes. The main countries Malawi exports to are South Africa, Germany, Egypt, Zimbabwe, the United States, Russia and the Netherlands.

(Adapted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malawi>)

### Advice for Activity 1

Once you have underlined the main points, start to write your notes about the piece.

#### 1. Tip: One point per paragraph.

Each paragraph in the piece above should have a main point. Read each paragraph and write a sentence about it. Try not to copy out whole sentences from the original text. Cover up the paragraph when you are writing. Try imagining you are telling your friend about the content of the paragraph and then write down what you would tell her.

There are nine paragraphs in this piece, so you should have nine sentences at first, no more.

When you have written one sentence for each paragraph check your work. If there are any sentences that aren't necessary, cross them out. Does the passage say anything important that you have missed out? If so, write another sentence to give this important point. Some paragraphs will be more important than others and may need two or more sentences written about them.

#### 2. Tip: Short sentences are better for note-making than long complicated ones.

3. **Tip: A summary should be about 25% of the original.** You should aim to write about 100 words. This passage is 387 words long.
4. **Tip: Remember you have to shorten the passage, not give every detail.** You need to make decisions about what is most important to show that you have understood what you have read.
5. **Tip: Use your own words; don't copy.**

In this **Note-making** section of the exam you will be penalized (lose marks) for simply copying out bits of the original passage. This means that the more you can use your own words, the better.

### Suggested approach to Activity 1

My summary of the passage looked like this at first. Is there anything that you think should be different? Is there anything important I have missed out? Is there anything *unimportant* that should be crossed out?

Summary:

1. Malawi is a country in south-eastern Africa.
2. The Great Rift Valley runs from north to south of Malawi, and the huge Lake Malawi is 587 kilometres long.
3. Lake Malawi is very deep in places.
4. There are many high mountains.
5. Lilongwe is the capital and Blantyre is the biggest city.
6. Between November and March the climate is warm and wet; between May and September it is dry.
7. The economy relies mainly on agriculture.
8. Tobacco, tea, sugar and coffee are the most important things Malawi exports to other countries.
9. Cotton, peanuts, wood products and clothes are also exported.

Total=104 words (approximately 25% of the original)

When I looked at my summary again I decided that I should say that Malawi was landlocked, and also give the name and height of the highest mountain, the depth of Lake Malawi, and the percentage of revenue that came from agriculture. I also decided that the ninth sentence was not necessary so crossed it out.

To use my own words I thought about another way of saying 'landlocked'. The passage doesn't say that Lake Malawi is very big; it simply gives its length. However, in my summary I have used the word 'huge' to show my understanding of the piece. You may be able to find other places where you can use your own words.

Your summary might be quite a bit different from this. Don't worry about that. If it isn't too long, makes sense, and gives the main ideas, that's fine.

## Using note-making in your other reading

We have seen that note-making is a useful skill for revision. When you have finished making notes about this passage, you could practise the same technique on any written passage you can find. If you are studying with a friend, let her read your notes and see whether she understands them, or talk about the passage to help each other.

### Activity 2

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#### Deciding on a title

**Tip: Titles help the reader to see quickly what a passage is about.**

- Now think of a title for the passage in Activity 1. It might help to imagine you are writing a headline for a story in a newspaper or on the radio. Because this passage is factual, a straightforward title like 'The Geography of Malawi' may be most suitable. However, 'Some Interesting Facts about Malawi' makes it sound a bit more interesting. Titles like 'The Highest Mountain and the Deepest Lake' make it sound even more interesting.
- Discuss the title with a friend and decide what would be the best title for this factual passage.

## Comprehension

Comprehension means testing your understanding. In Section B of the MSCE English Language Paper 3 you will find a written passage which you need to read carefully and then answer questions on it.

The passage changes from year to year. The best way you can prepare for this is to read as much English as you can, including factual texts, persuasive texts and literature. Look again at the Study Skills tips for expanding your vocabulary. Remember that you can return to a difficult question and spend more time on it.

### Activity 3

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As you will now be very familiar with the passage in Activity 1 about 'The Geography of Malawi', we will start the comprehension section by asking you some questions about it.

- Please give written answers to the following questions.

#### Questions

1. What is the meaning of 'landlocked'?
2. What are the three countries that share borders with Malawi?
3. Why do you think Lake Malawi is sometimes called the Calendar Lake?
4. What is the name of the river that flows out of Lake Malawi?
5. Which is the highest mountain mentioned in the passage?
6. What does the passage say is the population of Malawi's largest city?
7. Which two places in Malawi are on the UNESCO World Heritage List?
8. According to this passage, when are the most severe storms? Is this the case where you live?

9. The passage says that 'The economy of Malawi is mostly agriculture based'. What does this mean?
10. What is the meaning of 'rural area'?
11. Name three main agricultural products of Malawi.
12. Name three countries Malawi exports goods to.

Well done! This is very good practice for your MSCE English Language Paper 3.

#### Activity 4

Here we move from comprehension of factual writing to comprehension of literature. When you speak to someone you understand their feelings from their eyes as well as their words. In reading comprehension think about why some words were chosen and what it shows about a human situation and human emotions.

Here is another comprehension exercise to practise, this time it is based on a story entitled *Whispers* by Max Iphani. This story is in the book *The Unsung Song: An Anthology of Malawian writing in English* (Reuben Chirambo, Max J. Iphani and Zondiwe Mbanjo, eds, p. 93).

*Whispers* is a story about a college lecturer whom the students can't understand. One of his students eventually stands up to him. She tells him that she is not satisfied with his teaching.

Read the following extracts from the story and answer the questions that follow.

#### Whispers

by Max J. Iphani

That is what he normally did. He cleaned the chalk board before greeting them. They wondered why he did so all the time. Did he have to do it? After all, he rarely wrote anything on the board. However, nobody would dare ask him why. It was not worth the risk. You had to be careful with what you did or said during his lesson. He could easily humiliate you.

Before they entered the classroom, they often gathered outside and discussed the impending ordeal.

"The course is too difficult," they would say, "and the lecturer is a bore..."

Now the instructor has finished wiping the chalk board and is looking at his students with his small eyes. His eyes have a certain peculiar quality which, when they fall on you, make you feel that something terrible is going to happen to you. So when he looks at them like this, they avoid his eyes. Some students look down. Others look outside through the window... After greeting them, he straight away starts delivering his lesson.

"Now ladies and gentlemen, last time I was telling you that character portrayal cannot be done with any verisimilitude. In a short story, you need to be economical, terse, direct, lucid..."

...

The lecturer has noticed the blankness on the faces in front of him. They are faces which show no understanding at all. He inwardly feels happy that they find the material tough. It shows that now they know that he mastered difficult stuff. It is important that they should know this, if they are going to respect him.

...

After some time a student who is normally silent stands up to address her lecturer...

“Sir, with your permission, I would like to share with you my opinion about ... the way you have conducted this course... Your boasting about your great learning is really uncalled for... When you come to this lesson you mention many terms, theories and books, [not because you want to help us learn,] but with the sole intention of dazzling us...’.

(Source: Chirambo et al. (eds), 1994)

### Questions

1. What does the lecturer usually do before he greets the students?
2. Why do the students think it is strange that he always does this?
3. Explain what the word ‘humiliate’ means here.
4. The lesson is described as ‘an impending ordeal’. This suggests that something unpleasant is about to happen to the students. List three reasons why they feel that they will not enjoy this teacher’s lesson.
5. What do the students do when the lecturer looks at them?
6. When he starts his lesson the lecturer deliberately uses words he knows the students will not understand. Why does he do this?
7. How might the students feel when they realise that the lecturer is not willing to help them learn?
8. Give the meaning of the following words as used in this passage:
  - a) respect
  - b) boasting
  - c) dazzling
9. Underline the parts of this story that are written in the present tense. (Look back at Unit E1 on grammar practice and verb tenses to help you.)



### Activity 5

#### Making up your own exercises

Since you may be a teacher one day, it is a good idea for you to make up your own questions including ‘why’ questions.

- If you have a copy of the book *The Unsung Song* in your teacher development centre you can practise making up your own questions about the stories in it. You can then use these to test your friend.
- It is also a good idea to practise summarising the stories in a few sentences. You and your friend can tell each other about the stories you read.
- Use any texts you see to look at grammar, especially verb tenses.

## How am I doing?

	 <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	 <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a lot of work</b> on this section)
Be prepared for what to expect in English Paper 3			
Understand the advice about note-making			
Understand the advice about titles			
Understand how to approach comprehension			
Answer questions on <i>Whispers</i>			
Think about answers for real exam papers			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date:.....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date:.....

## Suggested answers

### Activity 3

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1. Landlocked means without a sea coast.
2. Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique.
3. According to this passage Lake Malawi is sometimes called the Calendar Lake because its length and width in miles correspond to the number of days in a year and the number of weeks in a year. (365 miles long and 52 miles wide.) It must have been called this before Malawi used the metric system.
4. The Shire River.
5. Mlanje peak.
6. Over 500,000 people.
7. Lake Malawi National Park and the Chongoni Rock Art Area.
8. The passage says 'the storms are most severe in late March'. However, in the area where you live, this may not be the case.
9. Agriculture means farming: cultivating the ground to produce crops and livestock. So this passage says that Malawi's main products result from these farming activities.
10. A 'rural area' is a country area rather than a town or city. So the passage is saying that most people in Malawi don't live in towns or cities.
11. You could choose any three from this list: tobacco, sugarcane, cotton, tea, corn, potatoes, sorghum, cattle and goats. The passage says that the most important products are tobacco, tea, sugar and coffee.
12. You could choose any three from this list: South Africa, Germany, Egypt, Zimbabwe, the United States, Russia and the Netherlands.

### Activity 4

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1. The lecturer usually cleans the blackboard before he greets the students.
2. The students think this is strange because he does not often write anything on the board.
3. 'Humiliate' means to damage somebody's dignity or pride, especially publicly. You could also say in your answer that the lecturer made the students 'feel small', or 'put them down'.
4. There are several possible answers to this question. For example:
  - because the students thought that the course was too difficult.
  - because the lecturer was boring.
  - because the students were scared the lecturer would humiliate them.
  - because the lecturer used words they did not understand.
5. The students avoid the lecturer's gaze; they look down, or look out of the window.
6. The lecturer deliberately uses words he knows the students will not understand because he thinks this will impress them and they will think he is very clever and respect him more.



7. Everyone will have a slightly different answer to this question. You might have said something like: The students would feel angry, annoyed, worried that they will not pass their exams.
8.
  - a) Respect: means a feeling of admiration and deference or reverence for someone or something.
  - b) Boasting: to brag or show-off (about achievements or possessions). In this case the lecturer shows off about how much he knows.
  - c) Dazzling: here this word means to impress or to amaze the students. Literally 'to dazzle' means to confuse or blind with something very glittery or shiny. As in 'the driver was dazzled by the setting sun so she could not see the pedestrian'.
9. A lot of this extract is in the present tense. You should have underlined everything in the paragraph **after** 'Now the instructor has finished wiping the chalk board ...'.



# MSCE E4: English Language and Literature

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Language (Composition) and Literature (*The Unsung Song* and Poetry) Unit E4

This unit is in two sections for two different examinations with revision activities for both Language and Literature. You will look at the ideas and experiences of many Malawian writers in *The Unsung Song* and learn some techniques for your own writing.

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

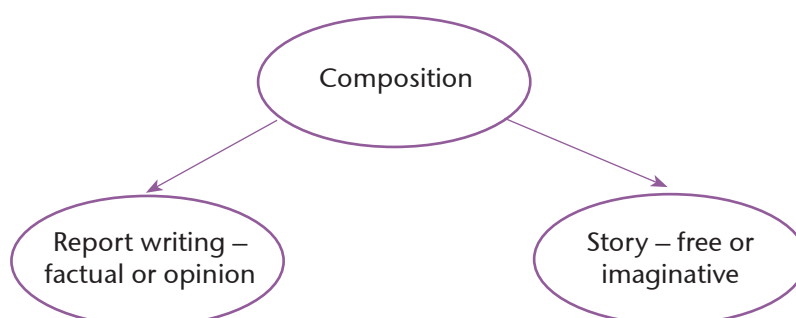
- understand the differences between report writing and story writing (MSCE English Language Paper 2)
- work on practice questions for writing composition (MSCE English Language Paper 2)
- understand how to approach poems from *The Unsung Song* (MSCE Literature Papers 1 and 4).

Do you admire people who can speak up for themselves and their communities? We hope your studies are giving you this confidence to speak up and write your opinion.



## Section A: Revise composition

There is good news about the MSCE English Language Paper 2. You write only **one** composition and can choose from:



Different types of writing depend on who is reading it and why. Is it a newspaper or a government minister's report or a letter or a story? Is it for information, or getting something changed, or for entertainment? By the end of this unit you may decide that you prefer one type of writing more than another. We hope you will write for pleasure as well as exam revision and write down ideas for stories and characters.

**Tip:** *sometimes if you talk to a friend first, ideas will come more easily.*

**Tip:** *try to write little and often.*

## Revision of reports and factual composition

Here you may have to imagine you are a newspaper reporter. Or you may have to write as a community leader about a problem.

A report is different from a story because it is less about feelings and more about facts and **evidence** and examples. We may have strong personal feelings about a problem but as a reporter or community leader we have to set out facts first.

You want the reader to think that what you are saying is important and that you are an expert. Here is an example of a report writing task. Read it carefully and then read the tip below.

A hostel in a school has caught fire. You are a newspaper reporter sent to write the story of the incident. Write your report containing the following information:

- when the fire started
- the suspected cause of the fire (how)
- the extent of the damage (how much, where, etc.)
- whether there are injuries or deaths (who, what condition)
- the immediate needs of the students (what happened next, where they will go).

Your report must be written with:

- headlines and subheadings.

It must contain:

- quotations from some of the students, teachers and authorities.

**Tip:** *using headings is a way to build up your writing with key points.*

All report writing can start with small steps of organising information. Think about what you really want to know under separate headings. Use your own ideas and language to answer some key questions for your readers.

## Activity 1

This activity is to help you do the task about the hostel fire. Read the task out loud to yourself and then follow these steps to write the report.

A good way to start writing your report is to think of key questions and to write down the answers to them.

Key questions are: What? When? Where? Who? Why? and How much?

Q: *Where did the fire happen?*

A: *The fire happened in the library block of the secondary school.*

Q: *Was it serious?*

A: *Yes, most of the books and computers were destroyed and a teacher is in hospital.*

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Now go back to your key questions and answers and underline the three most important facts to start the report.

This activity will help you build up the words and organise the facts and evidence, but notes are different from a full report. In a full report you need to keep answering the question with relevant information.

### Language and grammar for reports

When you start writing a report you need to say where your information comes from, and you can use direct or indirect speech.

*Headteacher, Mrs Mambo, said "We would like to reassure parents that their daughters are safe."*

Sometimes this is reported speech: *Headteacher, Mrs Mambo, reported that the girls were safe. Or, According to school staff representatives, the girls are now safe.*

*Dr Kambuwa confirmed that the injured teacher was recovering well.*

If you cannot say the name of the speaker you will need to use other language to say where you found the information including the passive tense:

*It has been suggested that ...*

*It has been reported that ...*

*Some witnesses claim to have seen ...*

*Many local farmers from this area report that there is a problem with water.*

You will need to set out what your problem and solution is at the beginning and end of your report or speech. Make it easy for the audience to know what is important.

## Activity 2

### Using the right language at the beginning and end

Here are some phrases you might find to begin or end reports or speeches:

1. On behalf of our village I would like to welcome ...
2. I would like to bring your attention to the important matter of ...
3. This report has been compiled because of ...
4. The village is asking for assistance with this problem because ...
5. In conclusion, this report has outlined the evidence ...
  - Explain to a friend what the phrases mean.
  - Think of a real problem you feel strongly about and finish these phrases.

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- Add your own expressions as you learn them in your notebook.

## Revising story writing or free writing

You may prefer to write a story. What do you think are the differences between free writing and report and factual writing? Discuss which you prefer with a friend.

Here are some differences:

- Story writing can include feelings, emotions, and senses of what people are thinking.
- Story writing can be told from your point of view or a character’s point of view (whichever one you choose, keep to that for the whole story).
- There are no sub-headings in stories but you still need to have some idea of what will happen when you begin.

**Tip: keep the event of the story simple and short.**

A story can happen in a few hours. A good story shows a description of life with some conflict or difficulty. For example, if you are thinking of your own life you would want to choose the most important parts. You might write about your life from your point of view or from another person’s point of view.

## Activity 3

### The writer’s point of view and message

In Unit E2 you looked at settings, characters and themes to think about **where** a story takes place and **who** is in it and **why** the author wrote it. Look out for these in *The Unsung Song* and also when you write and plan your own stories. For a character you need to decide what sort of person

and also who will tell the story or the point of view. Different people in your family would have different points of view from you!

You also need to think about whether there is a message in the story to make readers think. A story's message may be very clear or hidden behind a character's actions. Some traditional stories use animals to give a message. Many traditional stories in human society are not written down but spoken and told in communities. Modern stories in books may have modern characters and may criticise some parts of society.

This is a planning activity to start you writing a story.

A story I would like to write would have the following title, point of view, main character, setting, theme:

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A traditional story told to me and who told and who was in it:

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Tell a story to a friend as you walk. Speak it first and write it later.

### Exam tip: Planning time

The exam for composition is 1 hour and 10 minutes long for one question. At the start, spend 10 minutes jotting down ideas and planning headings, then cross these notes out as you write about each point. At the end, spend at least 10 minutes reading through your work and checking for full sentences and grammar, especially verb tenses.

## Activity 4

Here are three typical questions from the MSCE paper. We suggest you try to answer all these questions for practice. Make sure you only spend 1 hour and 10 minutes on each of the questions. Don't try to do them all on the same day, leave a few days between doing these questions. Show your answers to other scholars and ask what they think of your answer. Also show your answers to your Tutor.

### Practice composition

Marks will be awarded for layout, language and content. Candidates will be penalized for committing mechanical errors and writing answers that are short and /or off-point.

You are expected to write between 350 and 500 words for the question you have chosen.

A. Your district has been hit by heavy rains resulting in serious damage to property and crops. Write a report to the District Commissioner requesting assistance.

In your report include the following points:

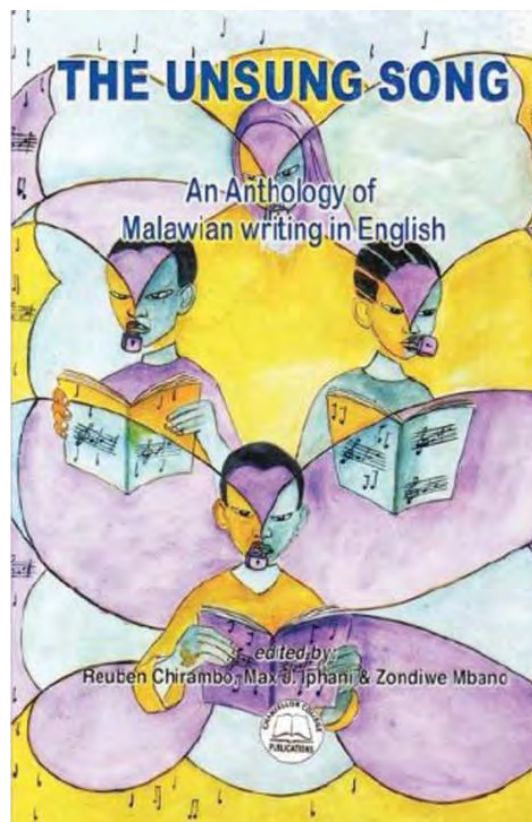
- a. location of the area affected
- b. when and for how long the rain fell
- c. how big the affected area is
- d. the extent of the damage
- e. assistance needed

B. Your school lacks a building block to be used as a school library and a computer laboratory. The chairperson of a non-governmental organisation is coming to your school to assess the situation and has asked to meet members of staff and students. As a Head Prefect, write a speech to be delivered on the occasion. In your speech include the following points:

- a. welcoming remarks to the visitors
- b. reasons why the school needs a computer laboratory and school library
- c. what the school has done in an attempt to address the problem

C. Write a story in which disappointment is central to the plot.

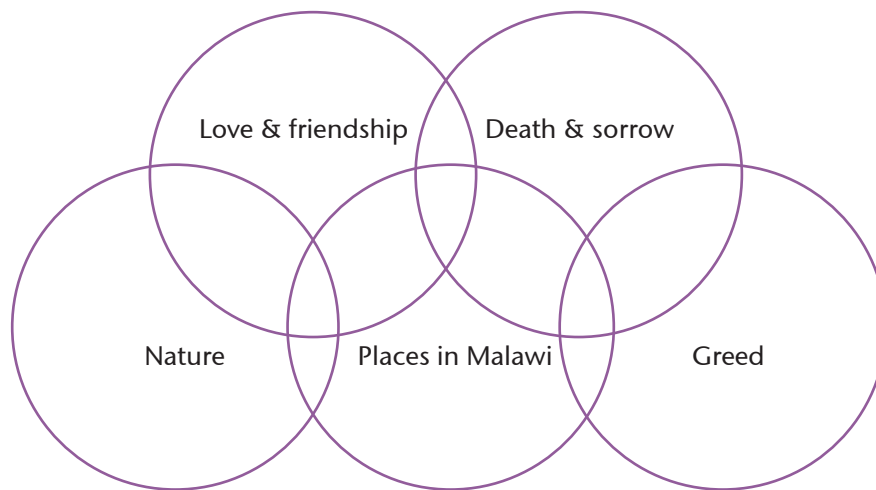
## Section B: Revision *The Unsung Song* and poetry





*The Unsung Song* is an important Malawian collection or **anthology** of short stories and poetry. Enjoy the people and places and maybe you will be inspired to do your own writing.

Please borrow a copy from your Teacher Development Centre or from a local secondary school. Make detailed notes on the themes and language use in each of the stories and poems. We suggest you do this with other scholars. Read the stories and poems to each other and discuss and compare your notes. These will be very important when you are revising for the exam. Discuss your notes in your tutorials with your Tutor. You will not have time to read everything. Some words may be difficult but you can still note the message of the story or the mood of the poem. The themes might be about:



## Revising poetry

This section is to help you revise poetry. You will come across poetry on two exam papers:

1. in Literature Paper 1 there will be some multiple choice questions on poetry
2. in Literature Paper 4 there will be short questions on poetry.

Since we do not know which poems you will read in the exam, learn to look at any poem and think about it more than once. Poems may look very short but may also have lots of ideas, feelings and emotions in very few words.

Poems are for saying aloud so that you can hear the rhyme to know whether to say it quickly or slowly. To understand a poem fully, you will need to read the poem several times. Poets use words very carefully.

For example, when I read *Beading* by Steve Chimombo I first thought it was about colourful bead necklaces. When I read it again I thought about the power of women working together and being friends, and community. The poet was using beads as a metaphor for friendship “I am a bead on a string circling me”.

## Activity 4

### Looking again at poems

1. Read the poem aloud two or three times. Look through the book for some short poems and choose a happy one and a sad one, or one where the mood changes.
2. Tell a friend how reading it a second time or reading it aloud changed your views on the poem.
3. Look for an example of poetic language (**metaphor** or **simile**: saying that something is like something else) which all poems use.

For example, when I read *Day of New Baby* by Constantine E. Masalait it seemed to be happy with the metaphor “a new shoot on the tree” comparing a new baby to new life in nature. At the end the mood was more worrying about money with “thin budgets stretch further”.

## Activity 5

### Key questions about poems

What are the key questions you could ask about any poem? Think back to the key questions in factual writing. Write some key questions you could ask of any poem here:

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For example, your key questions might look like this:

- **What** is the poem about?  
(Does it describe a place or a person? Does it describe an event? Is it a subject the poet feels strongly about?)
- **What happens** in the poem?  
(Does it tell a story? Does it describe an important moment in time or an important feeling or idea?)
- **What are the main feelings or moods** in the poem?  
(What emotions are expressed? Is it anger, fear, sorrow, love, joy or admiration? How does it make you feel?)

When we read the poem a second time we may think about:

- **Who** is the poem from and who is it to?  
(Does it seem to be written for a particular person?)

- **Where** do the events in the poem happen?  
(This means where in time or place, and think about why this might matter?)
- **Why** did the poet write this? What is the **poet's attitude** towards the subject?
- **What** is the general message of the poem, the **theme**?

There will usually be questions on the way language works, for example:

- **How** does the poem work? If sounds are repeated why is this? If there are images what is being compared?  
(What do you notice about the look and shape of the poem? Is it divided into stanzas? Does each stanza tell a stage of a story, different views?)
- **How** are any changes in mood shown? What do you notice about the language of the poem? Does the poet use vivid descriptive language or simple and direct words?

There are many technical ways of describing how language sounds work and the main one is about regular or irregular rhyme or repetition of sounds.

### Practice for poetry in literature papers

(From 2008 Malawi National Examination Board)

- Paper 1 is multiple choice. You should answer all the questions. All questions carry one mark each.

#### Coming for Good

by Tobias T. Chidzalo

We endured long years  
When you only came  
Briefly during holidays

What is the tone of the poem?

- Bitterness and sorrow
- Anger and resignation
- Regret and determination
- Perseverance and acceptance

Why does the narrator describe the years as “long”?

- There were no holidays
- There had been many years of sorrow
- They were full of hardships

• Paper 4

**Songani Lookout**

By Felix Mnthali

It looks daunting, doesn't it?  
with its moss, slippery moss  
with its crags, biting, sharp  
blood-letting crags.

But if you were exposed  
or marooned  
on that perpendicular, mossy  
greyness –  
if you were pushed or pinned  
to that perpendicular craggy  
majesty  
you would force yourself  
and no doubt succeed  
in reaching the top!

Men have swam  
from the deep end  
of Lake Malawi –  
not only defying the lake  
but achieving success.

And so  
if you were pushed  
to scale the limits of nature  
to reach Songani Lookout –  
from the wrong end  
bottom upwards, east and not west  
you might as well  
succeed!

1. According to the poem, what is Songani lookout? (1 mark)
2. What is the theme of the poem? Explain your answer. (3 marks)
3. Mention two things that make Songani lookout daunting? (2 marks)
4. What could the things mentioned in Q3 mean in life? (2 marks)
5. “But if you were exposed or marooned ...” (line 5), how would this situation force you to reach the top? (2 marks)
6. In what way does the poem relate to education? (2 marks)
7. “Men have swam ... deep end of Lake Malawi ...” (lines 15–17). What life experiences do you think are being referred to here? (3 marks)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

When you have finished your answers compare them with the answers at the end of the unit. How could you improve your answers?



## How am I doing?

This section is a study tool.

Now look back over this unit and be honest about what was difficult.

Later use it to discuss with your tutor any extra help you need.

Before the exam use this tool to revise.

	 <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	 <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you <b>still need a lot</b> of work on this section)
Understand how to plan reports using key questions, key points and headings (English Language Paper 2)			
Use the right language for factual writing and the differences with language of story writing (English Language Paper 2)			
Understand how to plan story writing by talking about problems, settings, characters and point of view (Literature Papers 1 and 4)			
Start own study of <i>The Unsung Song</i> especially on themes and language use			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date:.....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date:.....

## References

Chirambo, Reuben, Max J. Iphani and Zondiwe Mbanjo (eds) (1994) *The Unsung Song – An Anthology of Malawian writing in English*. Zomba, Malawi: Chancellor College Publishers.

Cooper, S., A. Grogory and M. Paule, (2002) *Working with Opening Worlds and Opening Lines*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) (2008) English Paper 1 and Paper 4.

www.teachit.co.uk (1999) Exploding a poem.

## Suggested answers To Songani Lookout

1. A mountain top.
2. Perseverance in life is necessary to attain the highest achievements in life because life will always be full of hardships or obstacles.
3. Slippery moss and crags.
4. The hardships one faces in life.
5. This situation would force you to reach the top because the only option would be to fall back down which could mean death.
6. To succeed in education one needs to be diligent and persevere because success in education only comes with hard work.
7. This quote refers to the experiences men and women who have struggled to achieve remarkable things from disadvantaged situations such as loss of parents, poverty, disability and traumas of war.

# MSCE E5: Modern African fiction

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Literature Unit E5

This unit helps you to revise *Looking for a Rain God*, a collection of short stories from different countries in Africa, and *Smouldering Charcoal*, a novel set in a country before independence.

Before you start here, please look at the key ideas about literature from units E2 and E4, and the study skills unit.

At the end of this unit you should know more about:

1. Plots – making brief notes and understanding how plot and character are linked
2. Settings – making notes on where and understanding why setting is important to plot and mood
3. Themes – what the stories tell us about human nature
4. Characters – making notes and building key vocabulary to describe main characters in the stories
5. How to prepare for the different types of exam question (multiple choice, short answers and longer compositions).

## Introduction

This unit is in two sections. The first section is about making your own notes on *Looking for a Rain God* and the second gives you guided questions to help you read *Smouldering Charcoal*.

You will need to read the stories to be ready for this exam. Although you may find reading this type of English a challenge, **there is no need to understand every word or detail of the stories**. Just try to understand the basic human situation first. We all enjoy stories when there is a secret or an act of courage, for example. You may have a picture in your head of the characters as if they are your friends or enemies.

As you work through this unit, find a fellow Scholar to talk about the stories and your notes with, and discuss anything you're unclear about with your tutor.

## References

Gordon, I. (2002) *Looking for a Rain God and other short stories from Africa*, Blantyre, Macmillan Malawi Ltd.

Zeleka, T. (1992) *Smouldering Charcoal*, Harlow, Heinemann

### Activity 1

#### Planning reading and making notes

First you need to find copies of the books and also a dictionary. You will need to make your own notes about the plot, themes and characters. You can make longer plot summaries than those in this unit and share them with others.

We are asking you to find time to read and skim read each book:

1. Read to know the plot and characters, making short notes. Write **when** you will do this.

.....

.....

.....

2. Read again to make longer notes on characters, themes and settings. Write when you will do this and who you will share with. Write how you will divide up your notebook for note-taking.

.....

.....

.....

It is difficult to have a story without people unless it is about animals who behave like people. So, character and plot are linked because a story is about a character with a problem and what they do. When you make notes on plot, you are also gaining an understanding of the characters.

Although you need to understand the story or plot, this is not enough for the exam as **characters** and **themes** will be more important. Most marks in the exam are for understanding character and theme, especially in the longer questions.





## Section A: *Looking for a Rain God*

### Themes

Famous African authors have written this collection of powerful stories. Since these are works of short fiction, the writers have to help us to get to know the world of the characters straight away.

The themes make us think about human weaknesses and the problems we share. For example, many of the stories make us think about:

- the situation of women (look for examples as you read the collection)
- conflict between adults and children
- differences between living in cities and villages.

You usually think of the theme when you have finished the story and have had to time to reflect. For example, in *They Sold my Sister* by Leteipa Ole Sunkuli, the story is set in a Masai village in Kenya. The story's plot is about forced early marriage, and the theme is the resistance of the brothers and sisters to their parents' wishes. As readers we feel sorry for the youngest sister, the narrator. We see that she is afraid but nobody listens.

There are 30 short stories in this collection. You will not be able to study and remember all of them in the same detail, and that is why making notes and making up questions to discuss with a fellow scholar are important for the literature exam.

### Activity 2

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#### Making notes on themes

Thinking first about the plot will help you to think of the theme.

Look at *Country Lovers* by Nadine Gordimer.

1. How do the title and pictures help before you start to guess the plot? What do you think will happen?

.....

.....

.....

2. Plot is different from theme. Write a few words about the plot of this story after you have read it.

.....

.....

.....

For example, you may say: *The plot is about secret lovers who cannot be together because of politics and a mixed-race baby that is murdered.*

3. Note examples of the cruelty and dominance of Paulus and how he escapes from court.

.....

.....

4. Discuss with your partner if Thebedi could have saved the baby.

.....

.....

5. Now think about the theme. Is it about love or power or both?

.....

.....

**Tip: If you are writing a long answer on theme in the exam, you will need to give examples, evidence and quotations.**

### Setting and mood

It is easy to look at the list on the contents page to see which country the author is from. But this is not enough to give us the setting. Why is the setting important? Sometimes the geographical setting or exact place helps us picture the mood in a place. For example, in *The Intruder*, the remote setting where the Masai meet an educated man from the capital is important to understanding their conversation.

The historical setting of a story can also help us to understand the politics and pressures on characters. For example, the apartheid setting in the South African *Country Lovers* story is important as we think about how the people in the story behave when they have a problem. How did you feel when you read this story?

Sometimes the author wants us to have strong emotions through the characters, setting and themes. You are going to look for the feeling the writer wants us to have during the story.

A story with the same setting but a different theme and mood is *The Toilet*, where the political setting is also a racially divided South Africa. This setting explains why the girl has to hide her sister from the white woman and why the only place she can write stories in peace is in the public toilet. But the mood is hopeful despite the political setting because she finds a way to make her writing dream come true.

### Activity 3

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#### Making notes on settings

Below are some notes which have been partially completed. Read these notes and then carry out the tasks that follow, using the notes to guide your skim reading.

Notes on settings and themes				
Title	Author	Geographical setting	Themes	Feeling or mood
<i>Looking for a Rain God</i>	Bessie Head	Botswana rural	Tradition Women and men	Desperate – sacrifice of children for rain
<i>Uncle Ben's Choice</i>	Chinua Achebe	Nigeria urban night-time		Funny – spirit of the Lady of the River
<i>The Dube Train</i>	Can Themba	South Africa city train	Uncaring society Being afraid to speak up	Frightening, brutal – train passes cemetery during stabbing

1. Now choose different stories and make your own notes on the settings and themes like those above. Your partner should choose different stories for their notes.
2. Exchange notes and discuss. Note any more reading you will need to do before the exam.

## Character

You will also need character notes on the stories and to make up your own system. For example, to remember who is who in stories you could create simple diagrams with names, especially for the main characters and their friends.

It is interesting that there is a problem or conflict in all stories. Conflict may be between characters, or the character may have an inner conflict involving their own wishes.

In short fiction we can learn from everything the characters do or say. Sometimes we learn about a character because of something they do **not** do. For example, discuss with a fellow scholar why Thebedi in *Country Lovers* does not cry when Njabulo her husband finds the baby dead.

*She did not cry but simply sat, staring at the door. Her hands were cold as dead chicken's feet to his touch. (p. 132)*

You may think it is because she has already cried earlier when her lover told her she had to give away the baby and now cannot show her feelings of grief.

*Her eyes began to glow, to thicken with tears. For a moment there was the feeling between them that used to come when they were alone down at the river bed. (p. 130)*

Later we read that she cried hysterically in the witness box and on the second appearance was calm (p. 132). These notes imply that she tries to keep her feelings to herself and accepts that she has little power.

We will work more on character in the next section.

## Section B: *Smouldering Charcoal*, by Tiyambe Zeleza

The **setting** of this novel is an African country just after independence. The people experience many of the problems found in independent African nations. When countries become independent the people expect their lives to improve but that is not the case with the people in this story.

This is the story of two families from different social backgrounds who are drawn together by strikes and prison, which will have a major effect on their relationships and their future. The main **themes** are corruption, political oppression, rural and urban poverty, and the people's efforts to improve their conditions under difficult circumstances.

We hope you will feel proud of reading a novel in English. You may be especially interested in the stories of the different women and their difficulties.



### Activity 4

---

#### Preparing to read the novel for revision

1. You have already seen the importance of **character**, **setting** and **theme** in this unit, so you know you will need to look out for these and build up your notes as you read. Now make space in your notebook for each of these headings.
2. You have also read some passages from this book in an earlier unit, so you have some idea of the key events and characters in the story. Talk with a fellow scholar about the parts of the story you remember already. Agree that you will each write a short plot summary as you read and then exchange them.

3. In an earlier unit we used diagrams and simple pictures to follow the plot and the characters. Leave a page in your notebook to create revision diagrams and pictures of the characters, as a way of helping you to follow who is who. For example:

House of Montague;	House of Capulet;
Romeo	Juliet
Mercutio (Romeo's friend)	Paris (Juliet's suitor)
Montague (Romeo's father)	Juliet's Nurse
Lady Montague (Romeo's mother)	Capulet (Juliet's father)
	Lady Capulet (Juliet's mother)
Friar Lawrence Apothecary	

Find examples of similar relationships in this story.

**Tip: You will find new descriptive vocabulary in this novel. Try to learn some new words every week but you do not have to know every new word. All words to help you describe the characters and themes will be helpful.**

### Guided reading

If you have a long journey, you can make it shorter by stopping as you go. If you read a novel of 12 chapters, you can stop as you go to make notes and talk to a partner. In this section you are going to be guided through the reading.

Please discuss the questions below with a fellow Scholar and then go back to your notebook, writing notes under the character, setting and theme headings.

These practice questions will help you to develop your writing and vocabulary ready for the exam. In the longer questions, you will have to include several examples and key points.

**Tip: You must always give an example in your answer.**

#### Chapter 1

What kind of man is Mchere so far? [use this for your character notes]

.....

How does Nambe feel about him and her marriage to him? [character notes]

.....

What kind of community do they live in? [setting and theme notes]

.....

**Chapter 2**

Describe Chola's background.

.....

How does Chola feel about his job?

.....

What grievances are causing the workers to want to strike?

.....

What is the difference between Mchere and Bota's attitude towards the strike?

.....

**Chapter 3**

Make some notes about how the women live in Njala?

.....

What kind of people are the priest and party chairman?

.....

**Chapter 4**

What kind of affair does Chola have with Catherine?

.....

How is Chola affected by Dambo's death?

.....

How is Catherine affected by Dambo's death?

.....

What is Catherine's attitude towards Dr Bakha?

.....

**Chapter 5**

What has Mchere been trying to tell Bota?

.....

Why is Bota angry with Mchere?

.....

Why does Mchere feel helpless when he gets home?

.....

How is he embarrassed further?

.....

Explain Mchere's reflections about his life on his way to the hospital with Ntolo.

.....

**Chapter 6**

Explain the atmosphere in the mortuary.

.....

Describe Mchere's experiences in the hospital.

.....

How does Nambe see the hospital?

.....

Describe Mchere's helplessness after he leaves the hospital.

.....

How does Lucy describe her relationship with men in general and Mchere in particular?

.....

**Chapter 8**

Why is Chola determined to go into exile?

.....

How does his decision affect his relationship with Catherine?

.....

Why are the people unhappy with the presence of the youth militia at Dambo's funeral?

.....

**Chapter 9**

What are prison conditions like for Chola?

.....

How had the bakery strike been broken?

.....

**Chapter 10**

How has Ntolo's death affected Nambe?

.....

How has the detention of their men changed the women of Njala?

.....

**Chapter 11**

How do the prisoners try to change their conditions in jail?

.....

What are the effects of the hunger strike?

.....

Who does Chola find in prison that he knew from the university?

.....

What kind of relationship do they have in prison?

.....

How does Chola die?

.....

**Chapter 12**

How does Chola's death affect Catherine's education?

.....

How does Dr Bakha try to take advantage of Catherine? Does he succeed?

.....

Why is Catherine convinced that she should go into exile?

.....



## Activity 5

Now go back to your first notes on character, setting and theme. See what else you can add or if there are any parts you need to read again. Discuss the characters with a fellow scholar.

## Practice questions

This section contains recent exam questions. You may start by checking the vocabulary and your understanding of it, seeing how many notes you can make in the time given. Looking at these practice questions will guide you when sharing your notes or reading more.

*Source of questions: The Malawi National Examinations Board 2011, Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations, English Paper I & IV (Subject No. MO52/I & MO52/IV).*

## Practice examination questions on *Looking for a Rain God*

Although we have not discussed these stories in this unit you can still answer them based on your own notes and reading.

### Questions on *Looking for a Rain God and Other Stories from Africa* from Paper I (multiple choice)

#### *The Music of the Violin* by Njabulo Ndebele

1. Who is Teboho?
  - A. Vukani's music teacher
  - B. Vukani's friend
  - C. Vukani's sympathiser
  - D. Vukani's sister
  
2. Which word best describes the character of Vukani's parents?
  - A. Ignorant
  - B. Insensitive
  - C. Cruel
  - D. Ungrateful
  
3. Why do Vukani's parents opt for a violin and not a guitar?
  - A. It is the most wonderful instrument
  - B. It is a symbol of modernity and high social status
  - C. It is more expensive than a guitar
  - D. It is easier to learn than the guitar

4. Why does Vukani's mother mention so many musicians as she asks Vukani to play the violin?
  - A. To show off her knowledge of music
  - B. To give Vukani a variety to choose from
  - C. To show that she can play the violin herself
  - D. To show that the violin is not an ordinary instrument

***Uncle Ben's Choice* by Chinua Achebe**

1. Who is the narrator of the story?
  - A. Uncle Ben's friend
  - B. Uncle Ben himself
  - C. Uncle Ben's wife
  - D. A woman Uncle Ben found in his house
2. How could Uncle Ben be described as a traditionalist?
  - A. He believes in love potions
  - B. He does not drink local beer
  - C. He does not go to a Roman Catholic church
  - D. He stops visiting a German doctor
3. Which of the following words best describes Uncle Ben's character?
  - A. Cunning
  - B. Generous
  - C. Proud
  - D. Pompous
4. What would happen if Uncle Ben Chose "Mami Wota"?
  - A. He was going to have many children
  - B. He was going to be very rich but without a wife and children
  - C. He was going to lose his job
  - D. He was going to turn into a spirit
5. "...but for every rule there must be an exception..." Which of Uncle Ben's rules was to have an exception at this particular time?
  - A. Not allowing a handshake to pass the elbow
  - B. Not eating food cooked by women of Umuru
  - C. Not allowing women to come to Uncle Ben's house
  - D. Drinking one type of beer at a time

## Questions from Paper IV, Section A (30 marks)

### *The Music of the Violin* by Njabulo Ndebele

*I left. I did not see Noorjehan while I was in the living room. Outside, as I reached the front gate and turned to close it, I saw her standing at the bedroom window with one hand holding aside the froth of a lace curtain...*

- A. What attempts does the teacher make in order to help Noorjehan? (2 marks)
- B. Mention two things that show Noorjehan's indirect protest against the marriage proposal. (2 Marks)
- C. Explain briefly any one theme portrayed in the story. (2 marks)
- D. In what way do the parents justify the idea of marrying off their daughter? (2 marks)
- E. Identify one character portrayed by Noorjehan. Justify your answer. (3 marks)
- F. Describe the geographic setting of the story. (2 marks)
- G. In what two ways are Noorjehan's rights abused? (2 marks)

### Practice examination questions on *Smouldering Charcoal*

You can see that to answer the questions you need to have read the stories and know plot, character, setting and theme; so all the work in this unit will help you.

### Questions on *Smouldering Charcoal* from Paper I (multiple choice)

1. What picture does the first chapter in *Smouldering Charcoal* paint about life in Njala village?
  - A. Violence and alcohol abuse
  - B. Poverty and squalor
  - C. Political instability and oppression
  - D. Over-population and poor health
2. Ntolo's revelation that he had seen his father when the landlord came to collect money is a sign of:
  - A. honesty among Mchere's children
  - B. a lack of respect among Njala children
  - C. arrogance among Mchere's children
  - D. irresponsibility in Mchere as a father

3. What does the arrest of the school teacher of Njala for failing to buy party uniform reveal about the regime?
  - A. It is intolerant
  - B. It is independent
  - C. It does not promote education
  - D. It is oppressive
4. Who informs Chola about the impending strike at Nkate Bakery?
  - A. Mchere
  - B. Catherine
  - C. Denga
  - D. Dambo
5. How would one describe Mchere's attitude towards the impending strike?
  - A. Indifferent
  - B. Supportive
  - C. Fearful
  - D. Cautious
6. Which of the following incidents brings out Mchere's strong character?
  - A. Ntolo's illness
  - B. The strike at Nkate Bakery
  - C. The hunger strike in prison
  - D. The Chairman's refusal to take Ntolo to hospital

### Questions from Paper IV, Section B (40 marks)



#### EITHER

- A. With examples from the book *Smouldering Charcoal*, show the extent to which the following women are portrayed as strong characters:
  - (i) Nambe
  - (ii) Lucy (20 marks)

#### OR

- B. With examples from the book *Smouldering Charcoal*, discuss how the theme of friendship is portrayed. (20 marks)

## How am I doing?

	 <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	 <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a lot of work</b> on this section)
Starting to read, make notes and talk about <i>Looking for a Rain God</i>			
Finishing reading and notes for <i>Looking for a Rain God</i>			
Trying to answer practice questions for <i>Looking for a Rain God</i>			
Starting to read, make notes and talk about <i>Smouldering Charcoal</i>			
Finishing reading and notes for <i>Smouldering Charcoal</i>			
Trying to answer practice questions for <i>Smouldering Charcoal</i>			
Building up lists of new vocabulary to help describe characters			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date:.....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date:.....



# MSCE E6: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

## What you are studying and why

Subject: English Literature Unit E6

The work you did in earlier units on theme, character and note-taking will help you. This unit will help you to revise Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a drama and tragedy written in England in the 1590s about two lovers in Italy.

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. understand the plot and know how the play is structured
2. develop notes on main characters
3. develop notes on main themes
4. try some examples of past literature exam papers.

## Why study Shakespeare?

You are joining millions of people over the world who are studying Shakespeare as part of understanding English language and literature. Shakespeare died in 1616 and had no idea that people would still be laughing, and sometimes crying, at his plays hundreds of years later.



Photographs: © Robert Day

Some people have argued that it is more appropriate to study African dramas with African names and characters. Other people say that human stories are the same all over the world and that you change the settings. We saw the theme of conflict between generations in *Looking for a Rain God* and it is found here, too.

When we have a long journey we break it down into steps. This is how we will approach the large task of studying Shakespeare – so although the language may be new and challenging you can break the revision into smaller steps.

**Tip: You may need to make some notes on key vocabulary as you work through the unit. For example: feud = family fight.**

## Plot

Your first step is to borrow the book, from your Teacher Development Centre or local school. Does it have helpful notes and photos such as the Cambridge University Press edition? Look through without worrying about the language or story yet. As with all revision, make time to talk about the story with a friend.

### Activity 1

#### What is drama?

When you have the book, do the following:

- Look at how the play is divided into five acts, with scenes in each act. Look at the difference between acts and scenes.
- Look at the character list.
- If you borrow the Cambridge book, look at modern English summary notes to the left of the Shakespeare text.

The next step is to have the shape of the plot in your mind. We advise you to know the simple story first, and add details as you read and discuss. You probably know something about the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* already.

### Activity 2

#### What will happen in the story?

Decide whether each of the following statements about the beginning and end of the plot is true or false, and then underline the appropriate option.

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. Romeo and Juliet fall in love and their parents are happy for them to marry each other.                          | True/False |
| 2. Romeo and Juliet fall in love and their parents are not happy for them to marry each other.                      | True/False |
| 3. Juliet does not marry Romeo because she is obedient.   | True/False |
| 4. Juliet chooses death if she cannot have Romeo because she is passionate.   | True/False |
| 5. The two families, the Capulets and the Montagues, are enemies throughout the whole drama.                        | True/False |
| 6. At the end of the drama, the two families stop their fight or quarrel because of what happens to their children. | True/False |



We can show the action through simple notes within summary boxes for each act.

There are five acts in the play. Within each act are several scenes. We already know what happens at the beginning and the end.

**Act 1**  
Romeo and Juliet fall in love.  
Families are enemies.

**Act 2**  
?

**Act 3**  
?

**Act 4**  
?

**Act 5**  
Romeo and Juliet die.  
Families are friends.

Have a discussion with a fellow Scholar, guessing what might happen in the middle of the story (in acts 2, 3 and 4) before you read the plot summary.

In studying drama, we look at what characters say and what others say about them. We may also learn more about a character, and what is going through his/her mind, through stage directions by the playwright. When you make character notes you will be using **quotations** to support your key points.

Do you think the most important or exciting scene will be in the beginning, middle or end? This is the **dramatic climax**. Often there is more than one conflict or complication after a climax in act 3.

*Romeo and Juliet* belongs to the type of play called **tragedy**. This means a character makes mistakes leading to extreme sorrow or death.

There are also scenes of **dramatic irony**, where something is hidden from the characters but the audience knows the true meaning of events.

**Tip: Keep building up your knowledge of the plot by asking your own questions. If you do this you will be preparing for the multiple-choice questions on the exam paper. Write some questions here about the plot (see example overleaf).**

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Who will help them or who will stop them? How do they die?

To finish this section on plot, write some of your ideas on how drama is different from other types of fiction:

.....

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.....

You might have written that both drama and other types of fiction involve interesting stories, but an audience sees a drama so things happen more quickly to keep them watching. For example, the play opens with a fighting scene and the audience wants to know why. They may want to quickly experience different kinds of scenes as well – some funny or some sad. You may also have written that, in a drama the audience is unable to see what a character is thinking, compared to something like a novel, which can show a character's inner thoughts and feelings.

### Plot summary

#### Act 1

Servants from two families, who are enemies, are fighting in the street as part of a long **feud** (disagreement). Romeo is in a bad mood because Rosaline does not love him. His friend Benvolio suggests they go to a party wearing masks to find other women. Capulet and Lady Capulet want their daughter to marry Paris and Juliet's nurse tries to persuade her to think about marriage. Tybalt leaves the party but wants to fight. Romeo falls in love with Juliet and then learns she is a Capulet.

#### Act 2

Romeo hides, watching Juliet on an upstairs balcony. They declare their love for each other. Friar Lawrence agrees to marry the couple to help bring peace to the two families. Romeo says he will send a ladder to the nurse in order to get into Juliet's house for the marriage. Juliet cannot wait. The audience does not see the wedding.

#### Act 3

Tybalt wants to fight Romeo but Romeo refuses as Tybalt is now a relative. Mercutio is wounded. Romeo kills Tybalt in revenge. Romeo is **banished** (sent away) from the city of Verona as a punishment.

Juliet waits for news of her husband as they have not had their wedding night. The nurse tells her of the killing of Tybalt and that Romeo is banished, but agrees to bring him to Juliet's bedroom that night. Friar Lawrence tells Romeo he should be grateful for the banishment but Romeo wants to kill himself if he cannot be with Juliet. He knows he only has one last night with her before he has to leave for another city, Mantua. Juliet is told she will be married to Paris in three days. Romeo and Juliet spend one night together and find it difficult to part in the morning.

**Act 4**

Juliet asks Friar Lawrence for help. She says she would rather kill herself, so Friar Lawrence gives her some special poison to make her look dead in order to avoid marriage. Juliet meets Paris and pretends to agree to the marriage. The family decides to have the wedding early. Juliet is afraid of what could happen but she takes the drink. The family thinks she is dead. Friar Lawrence sends a letter to Romeo.

**Act 5**

When Romeo learns that Juliet is dead he wants to go to her tomb. He buys some powerful poison and leaves for Verona. The letter does not arrive. Paris is at Juliet's tomb, he fights with Romeo and is killed. Romeo drinks the poison. Juliet wakes up, refuses to leave and stabs herself with Romeo's dagger. The Friar tells the truth and the families are sorry. The Prince makes a speech about forgiveness.

**Character**

Dramas (like all stories) have action, change and conflict. The conflict and differences between people make a good story.

You are going to make notes on the major characters, their conflicts and changes with the help of a fellow scholar, your tutor and the book.

**Activity 3**

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**Who are the characters?**

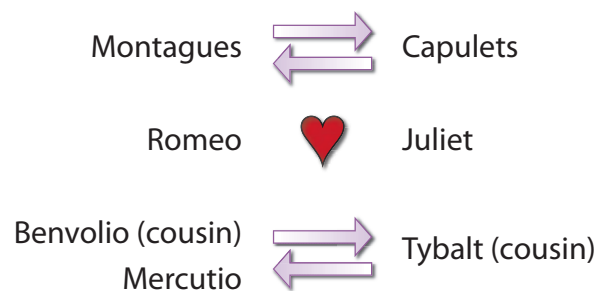
Look at the character list at the start of the play. The purpose of this activity is to learn who the major characters are. Some minor characters such as Paris, the apothecary and the Prince do not say much in the story. Please focus on the eight major characters described in the table on the next page.

Read each of the character descriptions and then write the names of the people you think they describe. Who is the main character missing here?

.....

About the character	Who is it?
(a) 13-year-old daughter of the Capulets, develops from an innocent girl into a woman.	Juliet
(b) A mother who dies of grief for her child.	
(c) An old servant who is funny, talks too much and is very close to a young girl.	
(d) A relative and friend of Romeo, who loves joking and fighting.	
(e) Another friend of Romeo. His name means good wishes and he tries to stop the fighting and bring peace.	
(f) An old person of the church who knows about secret herbal potions and is involved with giving the lovers advice.	
(g) Juliet's vain cousin, who gets angry quickly and wants to fight Montagues.	
(h) A very traditional father who wants to arrange his daughter's marriage. He invites people to a party in his house.	

**Tip:** So that you can be clear who are friends and enemies, make a simple picture to help you remember. You can use arrows to show conflict or a heart to show love.



Next, you are going to start making detailed character notes. These will help you to answer a long question on character in the exam. A long answer must include more than just what a character does. It must also explain any strengths, weaknesses and changes in them throughout the story.

**Important:** Your notes and answer must include key points and evidence.

Answers: A = Juliet, B = Lady Montague, C = Nurse, D = Mercutio, E = Benvolio, F = Friar Lawrence, G = Tybalt, H = Capulet.  
Missing Romeo.

## Activity 4

### How does Juliet change?

Look at these notes on Juliet and underline some key points about her character, especially how she changes and what the conflicts are.

Juliet is 13 and the only daughter from a rich family in Verona; her parents are Capulet and Lady Capulet. She is beautiful. At the start of the story she is innocent and obedient to her parents, who want her to marry a man called Paris. She is closer to her servant, the nurse, than to her own mother but does not agree with her advice to marry Paris. Juliet changes through her passionate love for Romeo, the son from an enemy family. They are married by Friar Lawrence in secret. She is waiting for their wedding night but learns he has been banished because of killing Tybalt. She stays loyal to him and they have their wedding night. She does not want to marry Paris but her parents are arranging this. She is brave enough to disobey them and agrees to the Friar's plan of taking a bottle of special poison, to make her look dead, then lying in the tomb until she can escape. When she realises Romeo is dead she makes the hasty decision to commit suicide.

Now that you have some key points the next task is to find evidence, such as examples or quotations, to support these points.

You could set out your notes as in the table below. These are a starting point but you can keep making more notes on all the main characters.

Key point about Juliet	Evidence	Where to look
Juliet changes from a girl into a woman who knows her own mind through her passionate love for Romeo	<p>She lets Romeo kiss her when they first meet.</p> <p>She knows his voice in the dark and wants him to know her love is serious.</p> <p>She can't wait for her wedding night.</p>	<p><b>Act 1, Scene 5 party</b></p> <p><b>Act 2, Scene 2 balcony</b> 'My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have for both are infinite!' (line 135)</p> <p><b>Act 3, Scene 2</b></p>
Juliet is beautiful	Romeo compares her to light and to a jewel 'too rich for use, for earth too dear'.	<b>Act 1, Scene 5</b> Romeo says 'She doth teach the torches to burn bright ...' (line 43)
She is brave enough to agree to the Friar's plan	She says she would rather jump off a tower or lie in a grave than marry Paris.	<p><b>Act 4, Scene 1</b> 'O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris. From off the battlements of any tower' (line 78)</p> <p>'Love give me strength and strength shall help afford. Farewell dear father.' (line 125)</p>

### Contrast with minor characters

In any drama there has to be contrast between different types of characters. The character of the nurse is funny because she is only interested in physical love and this contrasts with Juliet. You should also note the contrast between Juliet and her family. How would you describe this relationship?

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### Activity 5

#### How does Romeo change?

Your next step is to make notes (like those you have already made) on Romeo and Mercutio. Look at the partially completed table below. You have to make more notes, giving evidence, examples or quotations. Then look at the practice questions.

**Important: Look for conflicts between characters, how characters change and how they contrast with one another.**

For example, Romeo's main faults are that he is too quick, too hasty, too much of a dreamer looking for affection everywhere. This is in contrast to Mercutio who is more realistic and decisive, as well as witty. The contrast highlights Romeo's flaws or weaknesses. Romeo is the hero of the tragedy, or a tragic hero.

Key point	Evidence	Where to look
His friends and family say he is being moody about Rosaline		
He forgets about Rosaline when he meets Juliet		
He goes against his family's wishes to follow his heart		
His friends love him and say he is gentle and kind		
He is passionate about Juliet and kills himself for her through passion and impatience		

## Themes

Theme means what the overall message is. The play is, of course, most famous for the theme of love. Some other important themes to look for are:

- fate
- death and disorder
- time.

How do we look for the themes? We need to look at the choice of words and special language in some passages. Shakespeare is famous not just for his stories (many were borrowed or changed) but also for the beauty of his language. There is poetry and rhyme in the dialogue as well as powerful imagery.

Some language is repeated as a **motif**, which means an idea that comes up again and again. For example, words referring to light and dark, and nature, are used as motifs in *Romeo and Juliet*.

## Love

Do you think Shakespeare wanted us to share the same view of love as Romeo? Probably not, since different characters see love differently.

For Romeo and Juliet, love is a beautiful thing and a big passion. It makes them blind to their family's wishes, is as strong as hate and leads to violence. It is only through death that they can keep their love. It is very powerful and when they are together there is a sense of peace.

This view is in contrast to the servant's view of basic sexual love or the view of the Capulet parents, who want to marry their daughter off for money and power. Mercutio thinks Romeo is a dreamer.

## Fate

Fate or not being able to do anything about a destiny is a key theme. This is because in Shakespeare's time the audience would have believed very strongly in the idea. Romeo and Juliet are described as 'crossed stars'. Neither Romeo nor Juliet can escape and disasters happen to them. Juliet has a prophecy of Romeo in a tomb.

## Quotations about fate

'A faint cold fear thrills through my veins' (Act 4, Scene 3).

'O, I am fortune's fool! ...' (Act 3, Scene 1, line 131). After Romeo kills Tybalt he says it is due to bad luck or fate.

'Then I defy you, stars' (Act 5, Scene, line 24). After Romeo finds out about Juliet's death he says he wants to disobey his destiny but, of course, by killing himself he causes the death of Juliet.

### Death and disorder

Disorder and death is seen in the many fights, the mood, the language and the imagery of monsters. The Prince threatens death at the start and Romeo dreams about his own death. There are several images of sickness and disease throughout. Do you remember the people who die in the play? (Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Romeo and Juliet.)

### Quotations about death

'We were born to die' (Act 3, Scence 4, line 4).

'... If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding bed,' (Act 1, Scene 5, line 143). Juliet says this after meeting Romeo.

### Time

Things happen fast. Romeo frets about Rosaline and complains that the hours are long. Later, Capulet complains that the years rush too quickly. Romeo compares Juliet to a winged messenger of heaven while Juliet worries that their love is sudden and rushed. The friar also complains that the lovers are in too much of a hurry and his arrival at the end is seconds too late to stop the tragedy. The characters rush into marriage, Romeo is banished for an impulsive action and Capulet cannot wait to marry Juliet to Paris. Finally, characters speedily kill anyone who is in the way.

Add your own notes on time below.

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### Motif: light and darkness

There are many light and dark motifs and metaphors in the play. This also shows how day and night seem to be reversed or the earth upside down in love.

Usually, darkness stands for death, violence, sadness and secrecy but dark is not always bad. At the start, Romeo seeks out darkness because he is sad and depressed. Later, Romeo and Juliet welcome night because they feel safe. The blackness of the tomb and the dark night outside emphasize the sadness and tragedy of the lovers' death. Romeo describes Juliet as brighter than the light of the sun, and Juliet describes Romeo's love as 'pure' and 'whiter than snow'. Juliet's beauty also makes the dark tomb light.



### Quotations about light and dark

In the balcony scene Juliet, metaphorically described as the sun, is seen as banishing the 'envious moon' and 'transforming the night into day' (Act 2, Scene 1, line 46).

After the wedding night, Romeo accepts that 'night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops' (Act 3, Scene 5, line 9).

**Well done! In this unit you have studied a play written over 400 years ago. We would like to know your views.**

### Activity 6

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#### What are your views on studying Shakespeare and English literature now?

1. Why do you think actors still play out Shakespeare's stories all over the world, to rural and urban audiences in different languages?

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2. What do you think about studying Shakespeare as part of English Literature – is it a good idea or not?

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3. Would you like to play a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* with your friends and, if so, which part?

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4. Of all the literature you have studied in these units, which is your favourite story?

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## Practice questions

The authors gratefully acknowledge MANEB for the reproduction of these questions from the 2011 MSCE examination paper on *Romeo and Juliet*.

### Questions on *Romeo and Juliet* from Paper I (multiple choice)

1. Who does Romeo inform about his intention to marry Juliet?
  - A. Benvolio
  - B. Mercutio
  - C. Capulet
  - D. Friar Lawrence
2. Why does Friar Lawrence agree to unite Romeo and Juliet?
  - A. He believes their marriage will end the feuding of their families
  - B. He sees them as suited to each other
  - C. He believes the two are truly in love with each other
  - D. It is his duty as priest to wed couples
3. What makes Romeo feel that his love for Juliet has weakened his courage?
  - A. The death of Tybalt
  - B. Mercutio's cursing of the Montagues
  - C. The wounding of Mercutio
  - D. His failure to make peace between Mercutio and Tybalt
4. Which of the following themes **best** describes Romeo's attitude when he is informed about his banishment?
  - A. 'Blind love'
  - B. 'Selfishness'
  - C. 'Ungratefulness'
  - D. 'Pride'
5. Which of the following **best** describes Juliet's replies to her mother when she sees her in tears after Tybalt's death?
  - A. Dramatic irony
  - B. Paradox
  - C. Satire
  - D. Symbolism

6. Who assisted Juliet to escape the forced marriage to Paris?
- A. The nurse
  - B. Lady Capulet
  - C. Peter
  - D. Friar Lawrence
7. Which of the following best describes Capulet's character as he arranges Juliet's marriage to Paris?
- A. Selfish, cunning and courageous
  - B. Strong, crafty and emotional
  - C. Domineering, selfish and stubborn
  - D. Unpredictable, mature and proud

### Questions from Paper IV, Section B (20 marks)

#### EITHER

- A. With examples from the play *Romeo and Juliet*, discuss the character of the following individuals:
- (i) Romeo
  - (ii) Juliet. (20 marks)

#### OR



- B. With examples from the play *Romeo and Juliet*, show how the following portray an admirable character:
- (i) Benvolio
  - (ii) Friar Lawrence. (20 marks)

### Acknowledgements

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### How am I doing?

	 <b>Easy</b> (Tick this box if you feel confident that you <b>understand this section well</b> )	<b>Fine</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a little work</b> on this section)	 <b>Difficult</b> (Tick this box if you still <b>need a lot of work</b> on this section)
Borrowing a copy of the play to look through with a friend			
Understanding the basic story			
Starting some character notes with evidence and key points			
Revising themes in the play			
Understanding how to plan and answer exam questions			

Notes on what to do next:

Signed (by Scholar): ..... Date:.....

Signed (by Tutor): ..... Date:.....





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