

# UNEB U.C.E ENGLISH

## COMPREHENSION (PAPER 2) 2005

### 1. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Most African tribes have a communal approach to life. A person is an individual only to the extent that he is a member of a clan, a community or family. Land was never owned by an individual, but by the people and couldn't be disposed of by anybody. Where there were traditional heads, they held land in trust for the community generally. Food grown on the land was regarded as food to feed the hungry among the tribe. Although each family might have its own piece of land to cultivate, when there was famine or someone wanted to simply eat, he merely looked for food and ate it. It was not a question in his mind as to who owned it. In many parts of Africa it was quite natural for a traveller to walk into the nearest garden (shamba) and pick some bananas or maize and eat it. Nobody would interfere with him unless he went in and started taking loads of food away. Then he was of course contravening the law of hospitality and generosity, and exploiting land through whose land he was passing.

The same attitude prevailed in marriage customs. Bride price had to be paid, but if a man did not own cattle, it did not rule out marriage for him. Cattle owned by an uncle or distant cousin or by any member could be easily acquired to provide the amount. In such cases, the tribal elders ruled that several people should provide cattle for the man who did not have the wealth of his own. It was not expected that he should repay them, instead it was expected that he will do the same in the years to come if someone else's son found himself in a similar position.

When money was introduced, the African came to work for wages, but he still maintained contact with his native land as the only source of security to which he could look in old age or in sickness. He was secure in his mind that he could go back home and be taken care of by his people. It was a social security scheme with no written rules but with a strict pattern to which everyone adhered. If anyone did not adhere to the pattern, and did not take on obligations inherent in the system, he found that when he next got in trouble, he received little or no attention.

He was expected to live harmoniously with others in his community and make contribution to work done in the village. When a hut had to be built, everyone was expected to go out and cut the trees and erect the frame. The women would bring cow dung and the earth to make the floor and draw water to make the plaster for the walls. Then the men would bring the grass for thatching, and the work would be done together. The owner of the hut would cook food for everyone and the work would be finished in a day. If someone refused to take part, he would find that when his time came to build the hut, a few people would come to help and might be boycotted. This was the kind of sanction that operated against a lazy man. If he persisted and refused to help when there was harvesting to be done or weeding during the rainy months, he could be disowned and left to wander about alone. This was a strong sanction, because it meant he lost his whole source of security in life. Many of those who were disowned saw how foolish they had been and asked to come back into the clan, ceremonies had to be performed before they were taken back.

(Adapted from: *Freedom and After*; By Tom Mboya)

#### Question:

In about 120 words, summarise how the African people used to have a communal approach to life.

### 2. Read the following passage carefully then answer the questions that follow:

The school's rickety and half-dead fife-band was in full session. Each class stood in twos in rigid military fashion. All the teachers, six of them, were standing on the school veranda, in the shade while the students stood in the scorching sun. Each class teacher stood in front of his class and barked orders. The newly admitted class one boys were unruly and noisy. They had not yet been initiated into the military discipline, which prevailed on such occasions. It was only a matter of time.

While they were so engaged, Torto, who was in another file, was looking intently in Mensa's direction; he was trying to wink and smile at him, hoping that Mensa would wink and smile reassuringly back at him. Unfortunately, Mensa would not look his way; Torto therefore had to persist, and he was so taken up by the fruitless task that when the teacher bellowed, "Mark Time!" he did not hear him. Mr. Lomo, the impressive head teacher, who stood aloof both from pupils and the teachers, noticed Torto's intention but waited for more evidence. Meanwhile, Torto was still smiling and winking. The teacher on duty yelled again, "Right turn!" and then "Quick march!" Torto was standing without any intention of moving when a boy immediately behind him, marched and bumped into him.

The boy who bumped into him was so startled that soon after the bump; he nudged Torto in the ribs to get moving so that they would soon not be caught. Torto was so startled by the well-intention nudge that he squealed.

"Halt," cried, Mr. Lomo. The whole school came to a halt. The boy playing the base was so taken aback by thunderous cry of halt that he gave the already tied drum a big **superfluous** bang, which marked time for nobody. He had to pray to God at once that no ill should befall him for striking the bass drum when it should be silent. It was the kind of thing the head teacher did not like and he had been waned before. He had been accused by the head teacher of playing the bass not to keep time, hut to satisfy his juvenile lust for hitting things.

"Torto, Come Forward!" Mr. Lomo thundered. Thinking that Mensa had reported him, Torto had decided to run away at once never to return. But the shock of hearing his name mentioned paralysed him.

"Torto, I said come forward." cried Mr. Lomo, this time brandishing a stout cane he held in his hand. The whole place was quite as a courtroom just before the judge pronounces sentence.

Torto once more thought of bolting, but he knew too much about the school. Just as he had been told in detail that the wife of the head master was selfish and wicked, so also had it been explained to him in graphic language that it was hopeless and indeed dangerous for a class-one boy to run away from school; Mr. Lomo would order the big boys to chase and catch him and if they caught him, they would so secretly nudge and twist all parts of his body that they would give hell before the worst hell followed.

He therefore obeyed and went forward. By the time he reached the head teacher, who stood tight-lipped and overpowering, his mind had become completely blank. Mr. Lomo spoke aloud and said, "Attention everybody, this boy, Torto standing before me, while the master on duty was giving orders, was laughing and winking. When you were all ordered to march, he was so engaged in naughtiness that he wouldn't budge."

"Whip him!" the whole school roared to the skies.

(Adapted from: *The Strange Man* by Amu Djoletto)

**Questions:**

- 1) Give three examples from the passage that show that some aspects of this school resemble life in the army.
- 2) Name two ways in which this assembly was more unpleasant for children than the teachers.
- 3) Why didn't Torto hear the teacher's orders?
- 4) Why did Torto decided against bolting?
- 5) Give the meaning o each of these words as they are used in the passage:

i. **Unruly**

ii. **fruitless**

iii. **aloof**

iv. **superfluous**

**3. Read the following passage carefully:**

**School Bullies.**

I still remember- my hands and my finger tips -still remember what used to lie in store for us on our return to school from the holidays. The guava trees in the school yard would be full leaf again and the old leaves would be strewn around in scattered heaps. In places there were even more than just heaps of them: it would be a muddy sea of leaves.

"Get all that swept up," the headmaster would tell us "I want the whole place cleaned up at once." At once! There was enough work there, damned hard work too, to last us for over a week. Especially since the only tools with which we were provided were our hands, our fingers and our nails.

"Now see that it's done properly, and be quick about it," the head master would say to the older pupils, "or you'll have to answer for it." So an older from the older boys, we would all line up like peasants about to reap or glean a field, and we would all line up like members of a chain gang. If the work was not going as fast as the head master had expected, the boys instead of giving us a helping hand, used to find it simpler to whip us with branches pulled from the trees.

In order to avoid these blows, we used to bribe our tyrants with the succulent cakes of Indian corn, the couscous made of meat or fish which we used to bring for our midday meal. And if we happened to have any money on us, the coins changed hands at once. If we did not do this, if we were afraid to go home with an empty stomach or an empty purse the blows would be redoubled. They were administered with such furious generosity and with such diabolical gusto that even a deaf mute would have gathered that we were being flogged not so much to spur us on to work, but rather to lash us into a state of submissiveness in which we would be only too glad to give up our food and money.

Occasionally, one of us, would have the courage to complain to the headmaster. He would of course be angry, but the punishment he inflicted on the older boys was always negligible. And the fact was that however much we complained, our situation did not improve in the slightest. Perhaps we should have let our parents know what was going on, but somehow we ever dreamed of doing so, I do not know whether it was loyalty or pride that kept us silent, but I can see now that we were foolish to keep quiet.

(Adapted from: *The African Child* by Camare Laye)

**Answer by selecting your best alternatives:**

1) When the boys returned to school from holidays, the compound was

- A. scattered in heaps
- B. a muddy sea of leaves
- C. ready to reap or glean
- D. a chain gang

2) If the work did not go as quickly as expected, the big boys

- A. Whipped the small ones.
- B. helped the small ones
- C. fought each other
- D. fought with the head master

3) **Succulent** as used in the passage means

- A. juicy and tasting good.
- B. beautiful and tasting good
- C. dry but sweet
- D. big and sweet

4) The punishment inflicted on the bigger boys was

- A. the same as what they had done.
- B. harsh, considering what they had done.
- C. not as harsh as what they had done.
- D. generous due to what they had done.

5) The smaller boys did not report to their parents because

- A. The head master handled it
- B. they were loyal and proud
- C. they had food and money.
- D. it is not clear.

**4. Rewrite according to the instructions without changing the meaning of the sentence.**

1) That pool is too dirty for swimming.

(Use "Not")

2) She could not describe the pain she suffered.

(Use "description")

3) The Nairobi bound bus was very crowded. It couldn't go up the steep hill.

(Join using "too...to...")

4) I'd rather stay at than go out in this weather.

(Rewrite beginning: I'd prefer,,)

5) The only reason my sister failed to win the competition was because she didn't train hard.

(Begin: If ...)

6) "Kapere must be over eighteen years old since he is at university." the judge told the court.

(Rewrite into indirect speech beginning: The judge...)

7) The police can torture the prisoner as much as it likes, but he ill never confess his crime.

(Rewrite using: However....)

8) Oculi's parents could not give him all he needed for his studies, but he passed his examinations all the same.

(Rewrite using: Much as...)

9) My mother is not short-tempered. She beat up my little sister for breaking the plates.

(Rewrite as one sentence using: Owing to ...)

10) Maria asked Juma why he had gone to town the previous day.

(Rewrite using direct speech.)

**5. Answer the questions with the most suitable answer among the alternatives.**

1) Our teacher..... us a test when the head master entered.

- A. has given
- B. gives
- C. was giving
- D. will give

2) Little..... know the consequences of our action.

- A. did we
- B. we did

C. we didn't

D. didn't we

3) Night doesn't say much. She is very.....

A. reserved

B. shut up

C. keep quiet

D. silence

4) John and Mary vowed that they would never let anything come.....

A. amidst

B. around

C. between

D. among

5) Kassubo is..... girl.

A. a 18 years old

B. 18 years old

C. 18 year old

D. an 18 year-old

6) Choose the correct response.

Unless you..... hard, I shall not support you anymore.

A. will work

B. could work

C. work

D. worked

7) She asked him.....

A. how she could improve her English

B. how could she improve her English

C. how she is for improve her English

D. how she was improving her English

8) The Head master was too angry.....

A. for what he had done

B. that he beat the boy who lied to him

C. to listen to our excuses.

D. than I had ever seen him before

9) We thought we had heard a voice.....?

A. wasn't it

B. had we

C. didn't we

D. isn't it

10) We'll..... outside your house at midday.

A. picked you

B. pick you up lift you

C. lift you

D. lift you up.