WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

JUNE 2025

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

THEORY PAPER

2 hours

Answer three questions in all: one question from Section A and all the questions in Sections B and C.

SECTION A – ESSAY

[50 marks]

Answer one question only from this section. All questions carry equal marks. Your answer should not be less than 450 words. You are advised to spend about 50 minutes on this section.

1. The National Science and Mathematics Quiz is now a popular programme on the school calendar. Write a letter to your friend in another school explaining the benefits of participating in the Regional or National Science and Mathematics Quiz competition.

2. Write an article suitable for publication in a teenage magazine explaining three ways teenagers can avoid boredom.

3. Write a letter to your District Chief Executive in which you complain about three problems that students in the district are facing and suggest three solutions to them.

4. Write a suitable essay to end with the statement: **I woke up and it was all a terrible dream.**

5. You represented your country during an International Youth Summit where your country was chosen to host the event in the coming year. Write an acceptance speech, highlighting at least three things that make your country and people special.

SECTION B – COMPREHENSION

[20 marks]

You are advised to spend about 30 minutes on this section. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

Right from childhood, Bibo dreamt of becoming a pilot. Living close to an airbase in the country's capital, he used to be drawn to the mesmerising sight of combat jets manoeuvring in the sky above him during practice sessions. "One day," he said to his mother at the marketplace, where they had gone to buy soup ingredients, "I shall be flying one of those." His mother took a long look at him and smiled before saying, "Once you can conceive anything in your mind, my dear boy, you can achieve it." Slowly, Bibo nodded, still staring skywards in wonderment. After letting him soak in the show for a few more seconds, Bibo's mother patted him on the back and said, "But you must be prepared always to go the extra mile and never to give up, for nothing good comes easy."

From that day on, a steely resolve formed in the nine-year-old's mind. He was going to give it his best shot. He then requested that his parents buy him the relevant books. As loving parents who wanted the best for their inquisitive child, they obliged him. They also bought him an Internet-enabled handheld device, on which he could access only educational content for children. And so, every day Bibo devoted time to learning something new about aviation and the air force. So committed to this quest for success in combat aviation was he that it became something of an obsession, and he would sometimes mumble aeronautical terms in his sleep. However, Bibo's parents didn't worry too much because his performance in school kept improving.

Soon, Bibo was admitted to secondary school and continued to excel. However, as he got to the final year of senior secondary school, tragedy struck in the family! While returning from a relative's burial in the countryside, Bibo's parents' saloon car was crushed by a truck whose driver had been intoxicated. All of a sudden, Bibo became an orphan. "How was he going to fulfil his dreams without the support of his affectionate parents?" he worried. With his parents' assets inaccessible because of legal complications, Bibo had to adjust to a new life in the care of less well-off foster parents. There, he experienced the unpleasant side of life. To earn his meals, for instance, he had to engage in hawking vegetables to augment the family's income. Through all of these, however, he never lost sight of his dream.

Day after day, he slugged it out with life, enduring deprivations and taking it all in his stride. In the end, at twenty-one – five good years after leaving secondary school – he finally managed to raise the money for the entrance examination into Air Force University. Because of Bibo's extraordinary performance in the selection test, several organizations offered him a full scholarship. At last, he was on the way to realising his dream – and he would never forget his mother's marketplace pep talk.

(a) What inspired Bibo to dream of pursuing a career in the air force?

(b) How old was Bibo when his mother gave him a pep talk at the marketplace?

(c) Why were Bibo's parents not bothered about his obsession with flying planes?

(d) Why did Bibo's parents give him a device on which he could access only educational content?

(e) What led Bibo to a life of penury after his parents' death?

(f) How did Bibo contribute to his foster family's income?

(g) *... he slugged it out with life ...* What figure of speech is used in this expression?

(h) *... where they had gone to buy soup ingredients*

(i) What is the grammatical name of this expression as it is used in the passage?

(ii) What is its function?

(i) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase that means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:

(i) mesmerising; (ii) wonderment; (iii) steely; (iv) affectionate; (v) augment; (vi) deprivations.

SECTION C – SUMMARY

[30 marks]

You are advised to spend about 40 minutes on this section. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

Every nation aspires to greatness, but not all nations are able to achieve it. Any nation aspiring to be great must educate its citizens, as an ignorant citizenry cannot make a nation great. A nation can be considered great if it has a high percentage of well-educated, innovative and skilled personnel. It is in a knowledge-driven economy that inventions can occur and jobs are created. This cycle of learning and innovation fuels economic growth. All developed nations have high literacy levels, whereas underdeveloped nations invest very little in education, and therefore fall short of the desired literacy level.

Then, consider the citizenry. What roles do they play in promoting or inhibiting the economic growth of the country? When you have people who believe in self-aggrandisement rather than corporate welfare and national progress, you can forget about national greatness. Where this obtains, people are engaged in the endless activity of feathering their own nests rather than promoting the common good. Both individual and corporate responsibility are required if a nation is to achieve success or greatness. Realise that roads, hospitals, schools, power supply and the like can only be made available through concerted efforts and sustained collaboration.

Related to that is the problem of nepotism. Nepotism on a large scale can turn into massive corruption and when unchecked, it systematically undermines merit-based progress. Think of a building project, for example, the execution of which is handled by an accountant – a cousin of the chairman in charge – instead of a qualified civil engineer. Think also of employing relatives who are half-baked graduates in the teaching or health services. The level of damage that such actions cause is better imagined.

It is unfortunate that many nations aspiring to be great are experiencing social and political unrest. Investors are not attracted to countries where there are communal conflicts, kidnappings and thuggery, among others. Violence scares away most opportunities. No investor will feel confident enough to establish a business where there is unrest; and without investments, there will be increased unemployment, continued dependence on other countries for most basic needs and a high level of poverty. Development and national growth need peace to thrive.

Many people believe that the availability of natural resources such as mineral deposits makes a nation great. Such people had better think again – natural resources mean nothing alone! Natural resources can help only where there are enlightened, committed, selfless and dedicated citizens to tap them. Otherwise, the vast resources will soon be wasted. Let us not forget that Singapore and Japan have very few natural resources but are among the greatest nations of the world. These are nations with highly competent, dedicated and patriotic citizens. So, it is brainpower and commitment rather than the mere possession of natural resources that promote a country's greatness.

(a) In three sentences, one for each, summarise the factors that make a nation great.

(b) In three sentences, one for each, summarise the factors that hinder a nation's greatness.

End of Theory Paper