ENGLISH LANGUAGE GRADE 10

OPENER EXAM TERM 2, 2026

TIME: 2½ HOURS

NAME…….ADM NO…….

DATE……..……

SIGN……

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. ***This paper has FIVE sections: A, B, C, D and E.***
2. ***Answer ALL questions in all sections.***
3. ***Write your answers in the spaces provided after each question.***
4. ***All answers must be written in English.***
5. ***Candidates must check that all pages are printed and no questions are missing.***
6. ***This paper consists of 12 printed pages.***

SECTION A: COMPREHENSION (20 Marks)

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

The courtroom was packed. Every wooden bench was occupied, and a ring of standing spectators pressed against the walls as if held there by the weight of the moment. At the centre of it all sat Dr. Miriam Ochieng, her hands folded neatly on the table before her, her face bearing the composed expression of a woman who had long since made her peace with whatever was to come.

Dr. Ochieng had been a medical officer at Kericho District Hospital for eleven years. In that time, she had seen the full spectrum of human suffering: children born too soon, farmers mangled by machinery, women who had walked twenty kilometres for a consultation. She had always believed that medicine was not merely a profession but a calling a covenant between the healer and the vulnerable.

Three years ago, however, something changed. A consignment of anti-malarial drugs arrived at the hospital bearing the correct labels, the correct serial numbers, but carrying a quiet, invisible defect: the dosage of the active compound was thirty percent below the registered level. In the weeks that followed, forty-seven patients who had been treated with those drugs deteriorated. Eleven of them died.

Dr. Ochieng had made the connection early. She had cross-referenced patient files, consulted colleagues, and sent a detailed report to the Ministry of Health and to the pharmaceutical company that supplied the drugs. The response from both offices was identical in substance, if not in phrasing: her findings were "under review." She waited six months. Nothing happened.

Colleagues warned her. The hospital administrator called her into his office on three separate occasions, each time growing more direct in his suggestion that she "consider the bigger picture." A senior official from the Ministry visited and, over tea, spoke gently of careers that had flourished through patience and discretion. Dr. Ochieng listened to each of them carefully, and then she went to the press.

The story, when it broke, did so with the force of a thunderclap. Investigations were launched. The pharmaceutical company's local director resigned. A parliamentary committee convened. But none of that stopped the charges that were simultaneously filed against Dr. Ochieng herself – charges of "causing public panic" and "sharing confidential medical information without authorisation."

Now, seated in the courtroom, she was asked by the prosecutor whether she regretted her decision. Dr. Ochieng looked at the man for a long moment before she answered.

"I regret," she said quietly, "that eleven people died before I spoke. I do not regret the speaking."

The gallery erupted. The judge called for order. Outside, in the corridor, a young nurse who had followed the case for months leaned against the wall and wept – not from grief, she would later tell her husband, but from recognition of something she had not known she was missing.

Questions

1. What was the atmosphere in the courtroom at the beginning of the passage? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. **(3 marks)**

---

2. How does the writer convey the range of Dr. Ochieng's experience as a medical officer? Refer to the passage in your answer. **(3 marks)**

---

3. Describe in your own words the problem that Dr. Ochieng discovered with the anti-malarial drugs. **(3 marks)**

---

4. What pressures were placed on Dr. Ochieng to keep silent? Give THREE examples from the passage. **(3 marks)**

---

5. What does the phrase "with the force of a thunderclap" (paragraph 6) tell you about the impact of the published story? **(2 marks)**

---

6. Explain the irony in the charges brought against Dr. Ochieng after she went to the press. **(2 marks)**

---

7. Comment on the significance of the young nurse's reaction at the end of the passage. **(2 marks)**

---

8. Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage: **(2 marks)**

(a) a covenant (paragraph 2)

(b) discretion (paragraph 5)

SECTION B: SUMMARY WRITING (10 Marks)

Read the following passage carefully. In not more than 80 words, summarise the challenges that face young people growing up in urban areas today. Use your own words as far as possible. Write your summary in the space provided below the passage.

Modern cities offer young people a dazzling array of opportunities: universities, employment, cultural exposure and social connection. Yet beneath the bright surface, urban life confronts adolescents and young adults with a distinct and often crushing set of pressures that previous generations could scarcely have imagined.

Perhaps the most pervasive challenge is economic. In cities like Nairobi, Lagos and Accra, the cost of basic necessities rent, food, transport and healthcare – has risen sharply, while entry-level wages remain stubbornly low. Young people find themselves trapped in a cycle in which they must work long hours in informal or precarious employment simply to survive, leaving little time or energy for education, self-development or rest.

Alongside economic hardship, urban youth are exposed to elevated levels of violence and crime. Poorly planned neighbourhoods, inadequate street lighting and weak community structures create environments in which gangs thrive. Peer pressure and the glamorisation of criminal lifestyles in popular media make it harder for young people to resist involvement, particularly when legitimate pathways to success appear blocked.

The explosion of social media has introduced a new dimension of psychological difficulty. Young urban dwellers are continuously bombarded with curated images of success, beauty and wealth. The resulting gap between aspiration and reality fuels anxiety, depression and diminished self-worth. Online harassment and cyberbullying compound the mental health burden, often with no adult intervention.

Finally, rapid urbanisation has eroded traditional support structures. Extended family networks, community elders and cultural ceremonies that once anchored young people's sense of identity and belonging have weakened significantly. Many young urban residents feel profoundly isolated, navigating the enormous complexity of modern life without adequate guidance, mentorship or emotional safety nets.

ROUGH COPY

FAIR COPY

SECTION C: GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE USE (30 MARKS)

Rewrite each sentence using the tense indicated in brackets. Do not alter the meaning.(5marks)

(i) The students are writing their examinations. (Simple Past)

(ii) She has lived in Mombasa for ten years. (Simple Present)

(iii) The farmers will harvest the maize next month. (Past Perfect)

(iv) The teacher is explaining the concept very clearly. (Future Continuous)

(v) By the time we arrived, the match had already begun. (Simple Future)

2.Change the following sentences from direct to reported speech or from reported to direct speech as instructed. (6marks)

(i) "We will finish the project before the deadline," said the manager. (Change to reported speech.)

(ii) "Have you submitted your assignment?" the teacher asked Kamau. (Change to reported speech.)

(iii) "Do not enter the laboratory without protective gear," the technician warned us. (Reported speech.)

(iv) The doctor told the patient that he should rest for at least two weeks. (Change to direct speech.)

(v) Grace asked whether anyone had seen her notebook. (Change to direct speech.)

(vi) The Principal announced that the school would close on Friday owing to maintenance work. (Direct speech.)

3.Choose the correct form of the verb in brackets to complete each sentence. (4marks)

(i) Each of the contestants _____ (was/were) given a number.

(ii) Neither the principal nor the teachers _____ (has/have) arrived yet.

(iii) The committee _____ (meets/meet) every first Monday of the month.

(iv) News _____ (travel/travels) fast in the age of social media.

4.Fill in the blank with the correct particle (up, out, off, down, into, on, away) to complete the phrasal verb. Use each particle only once. (5marks)

(i) The fire brigade managed to put _____ the fire before it spread further.

(ii) She could not put _____ the meeting any longer; a decision had to be made.

(iii) The police are looking _____ the cause of the accident on Thika Road.

(iv) He broke _____ tears when he heard the sad news.

(v) The company was set _____ in 1998 by two university graduates.

5.Rewrite the following sentences by changing from active to passive voice or passive to active voice as indicated. (4marks)

(i) The engineer designed the new bridge. (Change to passive.)

(ii) The report has been submitted by the secretary. (Change to active.)

(iii) The government is building more schools in rural areas. (Change to passive.)

(iv) The award was presented to the best student by the governor. (Change to active.)

6.Punctuate the following sentences correctly and rewrite them in full. (3marks)

(i) the headteacher announced that mr odhiambo had won the national teacher of the year award

---

(ii) however the committee decided to postpone the event until january 2027

(iii) the package contained the following items pens pencils rulers erasers and a geometry set

---

7.(a) Write a synonym for each of the following words as used in English. (1½ marks)

(i) eloquent: _____

(ii) frugal: _____

(iii) turbulent: _____

(b) Write an antonym for each of the following words. (1½ marks)

(i) transparent: _____

(ii) diligent: _____

(iii) lenient: _____

SECTION D: ORAL SKILLS (10 MARKS)

1.(a) Identify the odd one out in terms of the underlined sound in each group of words. (2 marks)

(i) bread, head, lead (verb), read (past tense)

(ii) cough, though, rough, enough

(b) Mark the stress on the following words by placing an apostrophe (ˈ) before the stressed syllable. (2 marks)

(i) pho-tog-ra-phy

(ii) e-co-nom-ic

(iii) ca-fe-te-ri-a

(iv) re-cord (noun)

2.For each situation below, write an appropriate response using the register indicated in brackets. (1 mark each)

(i) You have accidentally bumped into a stranger at a shopping centre. (Formal apology)

(ii) You need to excuse yourself from a business meeting to take an urgent call. (Formal)

(iii) A friend texts you asking if you can help them move furniture this weekend. (Informal refusal)

3.Explain the meaning of each of the following expressions as they might be used in everyday speech. Then use each in a sentence of your own. (1 mark each)

(i) bite the bullet

(ii) burn the midnight oil

(iii) the ball is in your court

SECTION E: POETRY(30 MARKS)

Read the following poem carefully and then answer all the questions that follow.

THE LAST FARMER

By A. Wanjiku Ndegwa

He does not check the weather on a screen;
He reads it in the language of the clouds,
The way a cow stands still before the rain,
The particular silence of November afternoons.

His hands are a record no archive holds:
Twenty seasons pressed into the palms,
Callus on callus, the layered autobiography
Of a man who answered the earth's repeated question.

The sons are gone to the city. They send money.
It is not the same as staying.
He knows the difference.

Each furrow he opens is a sentence
In a language only the soil remembers.
He is not afraid of being the last speaker.

At dusk he walks the boundary of his shamba,
Touching the fence posts like a man counting his blessings,
Or perhaps – his losses.

He plants still.
Not because he believes the harvest will be great,
But because silence, like soil,
Must be broken to be useful.

Questions

1. What is the poem about? Write a brief prose statement of the poem's subject matter. **(2 marks)**

---

2. What does the poet mean by the line "He reads it in the language of the clouds"? What does this tell us about the farmer? **(3 marks)**

---

3. Explain the phrase "Twenty seasons pressed into the palms" (stanza 2). What does it suggest about the farmer's life? **(3 marks)**

---

4. Comment on the effect of the short stanza: "The sons are gone to the city. They send money. / It is not the same as staying." Why might the poet have chosen to write it this way? **(4 marks)**

5. Identify and explain ONE figure of speech used in the line "Each furrow he opens is a sentence." **(3 marks)**

6. What is the mood of the poem? Use evidence from at least TWO stanzas to support your answer. **(4 marks)**

7. Examine the use of contrast in the poem. Identify at least TWO contrasts and explain their significance. **(4 marks)**

8. What is the theme of the poem? Discuss how the poet develops this theme through specific images and language choices. **(4 marks)**

9. How does the final stanza serve as a fitting conclusion to the poem? Discuss its meaning and its relationship to the rest of the poem. **(3 marks)**

END