

SSLC Examination, March 2025

ANSWER KEY

English - Second Language

Time: 2½ Hours

Total Score: 80

Questions 1-5: Read the excerpt from 'Vanka' and answer the questions that follow.

Excerpt:

'Dear Grandad, for the dear Lord's sake take me away from here. Take me home to the village. I can't bear it any longer. Oh! Grandad, I beg and implore you and I will always pray for you, do take me away from here or I'll die...'

Vanka's lips twitched, he rubbed his eyes with a black fist and gave a sob.

'I will grind your snuff for you,' he went on. I will pray for you and you can flog me as hard as you like if I am naughty. And if you think there is nothing for me to do I will ask the steward to take pity on me and let me clean the boots or I will go as a shepherd-boy instead of Fedya. Dear Grandad I can't stand it. It is killing me. I thought I would run away on foot to the village but I have no boots and I am afraid of the frost. And when I grow up to be a man I will look after you and I will not let anyone hurt you and when you die, I will pray for your soul like I do for my Mummie.'

1. What is Vanka's request to his Grandad?

- Vanka requests his Grandad to take him away from the shoemaker's house and bring him back to the village because he cannot bear the suffering anymore.

2. Why is Vanka unable to escape from the shoemaker's house?

- Vanka is unable to escape because he has no boots and is afraid of the frost.

3. What is the attitude of the shoemaker towards Vanka?

- (A) Cruel and torturous

4. How does Vanka's statement "Dear Grandad I can't stand it. It is killing me." reflect his emotional state?

- The statement reflects Vanka's deep emotional distress and desperation. He feels overwhelmed by the suffering and mistreatment he endures at the shoemaker's house.

5. Pick out the word from the passage that means 'to make a sudden small movement with a part of the body'.

- Twitched

Questions 6-9: Read the lines from 'Blowin' in the Wind' and answer the questions that follow:

Lines:

Yes, and how many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky ?

Yes, and how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry ?

Yes, and how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died ?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

6. What does 'sky' stand for?

- The 'sky' stands for freedom, hope, or enlightenment.

7. What does the line 'The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind' suggest?

- The line suggests that the answers to life's profound questions are elusive and intangible, like the wind.

8. Who is the 'he' in the line 'Before he can hear people cry' refer to?

- (C) Humanity or leaders in general

9. What do we call the questions used here which do not demand a specific answer?

- Rhetorical questions
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Question 10: Read the lines from 'Poetry' and prepare an appreciation focusing on the theme, imagery, and poetic devices.

Lines:

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.
I don't know how or when,
no they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of night,

abruptly from the others,
among violent fires
or returning alone,
there I was without a face
and it touched me.

Appreciation:

The poem 'Poetry' by Pablo Neruda explores the theme of inspiration and the mysterious arrival of creativity. The poet describes how poetry came to him unexpectedly, as if summoned by an unknown force. The imagery of "winter or a river" and "branches of night" evokes a sense of nature and the unknown. The poet uses metaphors like "violent fires" to convey the intensity of the creative process. The poem is written in free verse, with no strict rhyme or meter, reflecting the spontaneous and unpredictable nature of poetic inspiration. The use of repetition ("I don't know") emphasizes the poet's uncertainty about the source of his creativity, while the imagery of being "without a face" suggests a loss of identity in the act of creation. Overall, the poem captures the profound and transformative experience of being touched by poetry.

Questions 11-15: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Passage:

A young man, weary from his search for peace, decided to seek the guidance of a wise old master who lived alone on a remote mountain. After days of difficult travel, he finally reached the place. The master greeted him warmly. "What troubles you, dear young man?" asked the master. The young man sighed. "I've been meditating for years, and seeking answers. But I still feel restless. I want to find peace, but it seems out of reach." The master smiled gently and said, "Come with me." The two walked down to a nearby lake. The master picked up a smooth stone and tossed it into the water. "What happens when the stone hits the lake?" asked the master. The young man watched ripples spread across the water. "The water is disturbed, and ripples form, moving outward," he replied. The master nodded, and then waited in silence. Slowly, the ripples faded, and the lake returned to its previous state of stillness. "And now?" asked the master. "The water is calm again," said the young man. The master said. "This lake is like your mind. When thoughts, emotions, or outside events disturb you, they create ripples, just like the stone. The more you focus on them, the longer they last. But if you let them settle, the mind naturally returns to peace." The young man stood in thought. "So, my mind is already peaceful. I've been creating ripples by thinking too much." The master nodded. Happily, the young man returned, ready to live with a calmer heart.

11. Whose advice did the young man decide to take?

- The young man decided to take the advice of the wise old master.

12. What did the master use to explain the young man's mind?

- (B) A lake disturbed by ripples

13. What was the young man's mistake in his pursuit of peace?

- (C) He was focusing too much on disturbances.

14. What lesson does the master teach the young man?

- The master teaches the young man that peace is already within him, and by letting go of disturbances (like ripples in water), his mind will naturally return to a state of calm.

15. In what state of mind did the young man return after meeting the master?

- The young man returned with a calmer heart, ready to live peacefully.

Questions 16 & 17: Answer any one of the following in about 120 words.

16. The play 'The Never-Never Nest' highlights the drawbacks of the hire purchase system and the consequences of living beyond one's means. Write a review of the play focusing on its theme, characterisation, and plot structure.

- **Review:**

The play 'The Never-Never Nest' by Cedric Mount is a satirical take on the hire purchase system and the dangers of living beyond one's means. The theme revolves around the pitfalls of consumerism and the illusion of ownership. The characters, Jack and Jill, represent the middle-class family that falls into the trap of buying everything on instalments, from their house to their car, without actually owning anything outright. Aunt Jane, a voice of reason, questions their lifestyle and highlights the absurdity of their situation. The plot structure is simple yet effective, with a series of revelations that expose the couple's financial instability. The play ends on a humorous yet thought-provoking note, as Jack and Jill realize they don't even own the furniture they sit on. The play serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of debt and the importance of financial responsibility.

17. "The Best Investment I Ever Made" illustrates how a single act of kindness transforms lives. Prepare a write-up on the topic 'Compassion and Support Can Create Wonders in One's Life,' reflecting on the story.

Compassion and Support Can Create Wonders in One's Life

The story 'The Best Investment I Ever Made' shows how a small act of kindness can change a person's life. A young man, who had lost his way,

was saved by the help of three kind people—a doctor, a clergyman, and a landlady. Their timely support gave him a second chance. Instead of ruining his life, he chose to help others and became involved in youth welfare activities. This proves that compassion and support can transform lives. A simple act of kindness can bring hope and create a positive impact on society.

Questions 18-20: Answer any two of the following.

18. **The visit to Fide’s house alters Adichie’s perception of his family. She jots down her feelings in her diary after the visit. Prepare the likely diary entry highlighting her emotions and reflections.**

- **Diary Entry:**

28/12/2024

Today, I visited Fide’s house, and it completely changed my perception of his family. I had always thought of them as poor and struggling, but seeing their home and the way they lived made me realize how wrong I was. Their house was small but filled with warmth and love. Fide’s mother welcomed me with a smile, and despite their humble surroundings, they seemed content and happy. I felt ashamed of my earlier assumptions and realized how easily we judge others based on superficial things. This visit taught me to look beyond material wealth and appreciate the value of love and togetherness. I will carry this lesson with me and strive to be more empathetic in the future.

Adichie

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19. **The Theatre Club of your school has decided to dramatise the story ‘The Castaway’ which explores themes of relationship and abandonment. Being the convener of the club, you are asked to prepare a notice for the programme. Prepare the likely notice.**

- **Notice:**

Theatre Club Presents: ‘The Castaway’

The Theatre Club is proud to present a dramatization of Rabindranath Tagore’s poignant story, *The Castaway*. The play explores themes of relationships, abandonment, and the complexities of human emotions.

Date: 25th March 2025

Time: 4:00 PM

Venue: School Auditorium

All students and staff are cordially invited to witness this captivating performance. Let’s come together to appreciate the art of storytelling and the power of theatre.

Convener, Theatre Club

20. Read the extract given below and prepare five questions based on it.

Extract:

" Mr. Thorat's men had fixed a five-foot iron rod to the ground, about thirty feet from the area where the tiger was supposed to take a walk. They took a thin, long wire and fixed one end to the collar made of tiger-skin that the tiger was already wearing. The other end was tied firmly to the visible portion of the iron rod. The door of one of the cages was unfastened and Mr. Thorat called out to the tiger. It responded almost at once and sprang out of its cage to land on the open space outside. What followed was totally unexpected. One look at Mr. Thorat's startled and helpless face told us that he was as taken aback as the rest of us."

Five Questions Based on the Extract:

- Who was Mr. Thorat, and what was his role in the scene?
- How was the tiger secured before being released from the cage?
- What unexpected event occurred after the tiger was let out?
- What was Mr. Thorat's reaction to the situation?
- Why do you think the author describes Mr. Thorat's face as "startled and helpless"?

Questions 21-24: Answer any two of the following.

21. Martha's unwavering determination enables her to win the Scholarship Jacket overcoming many attempts to undermine merit using money and influence. Prepare the likely character sketch of Martha.

• **Character Sketch of Martha:**

Martha is a determined and hardworking young girl who values merit and integrity above all else. Despite coming from a poor family, she has consistently maintained the highest grades in her school, earning her the right to the Scholarship Jacket. Martha is resilient and stands up for what she believes is right, even when faced with unfair treatment. Her grandfather's refusal to pay for the jacket reinforces her belief that true achievement cannot be bought. Martha's character is defined by her humility, perseverance, and strong moral values. She is a role model for standing up against injustice and proving that hard work and integrity will always prevail.

22. **'The Snake and the Mirror' is a humorous and thrilling tale that talks about a homeopath's encounter with a snake. Narrate the series of events, highlighting his reactions and reflections.**

• **Summary:**

In 'The Snake and the Mirror,' a homeopath is alone in his room when a snake suddenly falls from the ceiling and lands on his shoulder. Initially, he is terrified and freezes, but then he begins to reflect on his life and the irony of his situation. He humorously thinks about how he, a doctor who treats others, is now in a life-threatening situation. The snake coils around his arm, and he remains still, hoping it will leave. Eventually, the snake slithers away, and the homeopath is left shaken but unharmed. The story is a blend of humor and suspense, highlighting the unpredictability of life and the importance of staying calm in the face of danger.

23. **The use of a dwarf as a stand-in for a dog in Hollywood puzzled Ray. The incident attracted media attention. Prepare the likely news report.**

Hollywood's Unusual Film Trick Sparks Debate

Los Angeles, [Date]: A bizarre filmmaking technique used in a Hollywood production has sparked widespread discussion. Renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray was surprised to learn that, in some Hollywood films, a dwarf was used as a stand-in for a dog. This unusual practice, intended to achieve better camera angles and controlled movements, raised ethical concerns.

Ray, known for his realistic storytelling, found the method unnatural and unnecessary. The incident attracted media attention, with film critics and animal rights activists questioning the ethics behind such choices. Many argue that this reflects the artificial nature of Hollywood's filmmaking techniques, while others see it as an innovative cinematic approach. The controversy continues to stir debate in the film industry, highlighting differences in storytelling techniques between Hollywood and world cinema.

24. On July 28, Nature Conservation Day, you are asked to deliver a speech in the school assembly on the topic 'Diversity and Harmony in Nature'. In the light of your reading of 'Adventures in a Banyan Tree', prepare the text of the likely speech.

Speech on Diversity and Harmony in Nature

Good morning everyone,

Today, on **Nature Conservation Day**, I would like to speak about the importance of **Diversity and Harmony in Nature**. Nature is a perfect example of how different species live together in balance. Every tree, animal, and insect plays a crucial role in maintaining this harmony.

In *Adventures in a Banyan Tree*, we see how the boy observes the rich biodiversity around the banyan tree. The tree becomes a home to many

creatures—birds, squirrels, and even a mongoose and a cobra. Despite their differences, they coexist, showing how nature thrives on diversity. However, human activities are disrupting this balance. Deforestation, pollution, and climate change threaten the beautiful harmony of our environment. It is our duty to protect this diversity. Planting trees, reducing waste, and conserving wildlife can help restore nature’s balance. Let us all pledge to respect and protect nature so that future generations can enjoy its beauty and richness. Thank you!

Questions 25-30: Read the news headlines and answer the questions that follow.

25. **Prepare a profile of Langston Hughes using the details given below.**

Name	James Mercer Langston Hughes
Born	February 1, 1902, Missouri, U.S.
Profession	Poet, Social Activist, Novelist, Playwright
Education	Lincoln University, Columbia University
Notable Works	<i>Dream Variation, Fine Clothes to the Jew, Harlem, Not Without Laughter</i>
Associated Movement	Harlem Renaissance
Awards	Witter Bynner Undergraduate Poetry Prize
Died	May 22, 1967, New York

Profile of Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was a renowned **American poet, novelist, playwright, and social activist**. He was born on **February 1, 1902, in Missouri, U.S.** and later pursued his education at **Lincoln University and Columbia University**.

Hughes played a key role in the **Harlem Renaissance**, a cultural movement that celebrated African American art and literature. His famous works include *Dream Variation, Fine Clothes to the Jew, Harlem, and Not Without Laughter*. His writings focused on racial pride, social justice, and the struggles of African Americans.

For his contributions to literature, he received the **Witter Bynner Undergraduate Poetry Prize**. Langston Hughes passed away on **May 22, 1967, in New York**, but his works continue to inspire generations.

Question 26-30. Read the news headlines given below and answer the questions follow.

- **D Gukesh crowned world chess champion**
- **Cyclone Fengal wreaks havoc in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu**
- **Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain passes a way**
- **India and Germany to hold strategic foreign policy dialogue**
- **Kerala witnesses human-wildlife conflict across 1004 areas**
- **AI not a substitute for human brain**

26. Which two countries engage in a dialogue on foreign affairs?

- India and Germany

27. The headline that talks about an Indian's victory in the global sports arena is:

- D Gukesh crowned world chess champion

28. Those who wish for a peaceful co-existence of humans with wildlife might be disturbed by the news:

- Kerala witnesses human-wildlife conflict across 1004 areas

29. Which headline mourns the death of a legendary tabla player?

- Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain passes away

30. The headline that talks about an extreme weather event is:

- Cyclone Fengal wreaks havoc in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu
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Question 31: Report the following dialogue.

Dialogue:

Producer: When do you plan to reshoot the scenes at Boral?

Ray: I plan to reshoot the scenes tomorrow.

Reported Speech:

The producer asked Ray when he planned to reshoot the scenes at Boral. Ray replied that he planned to reshoot the scenes the next day.

Question 32: Edit the passage given below. The errors are given in bold.

Passage:

Grandfather in 'The Scholarship Jacket' makes us **realised(a)** that there

is **(b)** certain things in life **what(c)** money cannot buy. His words serve as **a(d)** eye-opener to the principal, who reverses the board's decision and awards the Jacket to Martha.

Edited Passage:

Grandfather in 'The Scholarship Jacket' makes us **realise(a)** that there are **(b)** certain things in life **that(c)** money cannot buy. His words serve as **an(d)** eye-opener to the principal, who reverses the board's decision and awards the Jacket to Martha.

Question 33: Complete the passage using the appropriate forms of the phrasal verbs given in brackets.

Passage:

As Kiran unlocked the box of Nilkanta to place her surprise gift, the lid suddenly **sprang up(a)**, spilling out a jumble of petty things. In order to place her gift, she began to pull out everything. Then, she was **taken aback(b)** to see the missing inkstand hidden under a layer of linen. She couldn't **make out(c)** what had prompted him to steal it. Watching from behind, Nilkanta **ran away(d)** immediately.

Question 34: Fill in the blanks using the words given in brackets.

Passage:

Nine-year-old Vanka Zhukov, **who(a)** had been apprenticed three months ago to Alyakhin **the(b)** shoemaker, did not go to bed **on(c)** Christmas Eve. He waited until his master, mistress, **and(d)** the senior apprentices had gone to church. Then, he began to write a letter to his grandfather.

Question 35: Complete the conversation between Ali and the junk collector suitably.

Conversation:

Ali: Good morning, Sir. You collect junk from the shops around here, **don't you(a)**?

The junk collector: Yes, **I do(b)**.

Ali: I've come searching for my sister's shoes. I left them at Akbar Aqa's shop. **Have you seen them(c)**?

The junk collector: I don't know whether I took your shoes from there.

Ali: Would you mind my **checking(d)**?

The junk collector: No, I don't mind your checking. I left some junk in the backyard of my house. You had better **look there(e)**.

Question 36: Read the statements and identify the Noun Phrase in the subject position in each.

- (a) **The life of Vanka** represents the plight of orphans around the world.
- (b) **The fierce battle between the mongoose and the cobra** was keenly watched by the boy.