

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
END OF SEPT - DEC 2021 TRIMESTER EXAMS
UCC 104: COMMUNICATION SKILLS
(ROYSAMBU DAY, EVENING & VALLEY ROAD)

Exam Duration: 3 hours

Instructions: Answer Question 1 (section A) and any other 3 questions from section B

Section A: *This section is compulsory*

Question 1

Intelligent Characters in the Media

The incredible thing about television is that characters have the potential to be represented in a million different ways. Unfortunately, producers tend to stick to the same few archetypes and tropes. Nearly every show about high schoolers includes a tough jock or a rebellious bad boy. As such, it is no surprise that television follows a few patterns and stereotypes when it comes to portraying intelligence.

One of the most obvious and frankly painful depictions of intelligence is the socially awkward genius. In spite of their high IQs and brilliant minds, these characters have trouble understanding jokes and other social cues. Dr. Temperance Brennan from the show *Bones* is a perfect example. Although she is a leading authority in the field of forensic anthropology, a key catchphrase of hers is “I don’t know what that means” when faced with simple references to Hannibal Lecter, *The Blair Witch Project*, and *Star Trek*. Nearly every character in *The Big Bang Theory* acts this way, too. Most of the show’s humor comes from the contrast between the awkwardness of the brilliant physicists like Sheldon and Leonard and the “normal” people like Penny, the waitress who lives across the hall. The blatant awkwardness portrayed by these characters is likely an attempt by the shows’ writers to give the geniuses a noticeable flaw to ensure that their characters aren’t infallible.

Another kind of intelligent character is the one whose abilities are limited to helping the protagonist. For example, in the show *Arrow*, Felicity Smoak is a computer whiz who worked as an IT girl for superhero Oliver Queen’s company before joining “Team Arrow” as a hacker. She could do anything from finding shortcuts during a car chase to sending a greedy criminal’s illegally-earned income to a charity as a twisted form of blackmail — all from the comfort of her computer screen. However, when she wasn’t busy saving the world, she was reduced to little more than Oliver Queen’s love interest. She was only a minor character in the comic book series that the show was adapted from, but when she became a regular on the show, the writers scrambled for ideas to keep her character interesting. She quickly turned into another ditzy blonde who couldn’t string together two sentences in front of Oliver without there being an unintentional innuendo. Despite her intelligence, Felicity Smoak has been underutilized as a character, and her knowledge is only ever highlighted when it comes in handy to the plot.

The final type of smart character is the one that is constantly picked on. In a high school scenario, it’s the nerdy kid who gets shoved into lockers and made fun of. The show *Glee* created an entire series based on this idea. The kids who joined the glee club were either outcasts like Rachel Berry, who strived for perfection in every way, or they were using

the club for an ulterior motive. The gorgeous, popular cheerleaders were pressured into joining by their meddling coach, and the football players were offered a better grade. They weren't the ones being made fun of; it was the unpopular kids who got stuffed into dumpsters or had slushes thrown in their faces. Even after the club won awards and competitions, it was still met with resentment from the majority of the student body. Although the audience wanted the students in the glee club to succeed, the prevailing theme throughout the show was that the kids who were smart and hard-working were not the ones who were cool and popular.

The fact is, smart people aren't as unique as television makes them out to be. They should not be marveled at like zoo animals or be used as an easy target. Additionally, the characters who are presented in the media shouldn't have their intelligence be their defining characteristic. Although television has come a long way in normalizing intelligence, there is still more ground to be gained in creating characters that are complex and interesting — not just smart.

- i. Discuss any **two** non-verbal cues that Felicity Smoak would use in order to perform the role of the character that she represents in the show "Arrow" (2 marks).
- ii. Identify the topic sentence in paragraph 3 and briefly describe a paragraph development strategy that the writer has used (3 marks).
- iii. Describe the use of informal language in this essay (2marks).
- iv. Explain how any **three** barriers of communication may interfere with the academic excellence of a university student (3 marks).

SECTION B

Answer any THREE questions

Question 2

- a) Differentiate between: (5 marks)
- i. Dash and hyphen
 - ii. Topic and support sentence
 - iii. Encoding and decoding
 - iv. Summary and paraphrase
 - v. Listening and hearing

- b) Discuss briefly any **five** factors that influence effective communication and show the usefulness of each in academic excellence. (5 marks)

Question 3

- a) With reference to the essay in question one above, discuss and illustrate the concepts below:
- i) Paragraph unity (2 marks)
 - ii) Paragraph coherence (2 marks)
 - iii) Transitions in an essay (2 marks)
 - iv) Thesis statement (2 marks)
- b) Describe the role of the channel in the communication process (2 marks)

Question 4

Think of a movie that you have watched and found so interesting that you would wish to convince a friend to watch. Write a 300 word persuasive essay that aims at convincing your friend to watch it as well. (10 marks)

Question 5

- a) Explain any **two** verbal skills that an interviewer would employ to demonstrate fairness in an interview context. (5 marks)
- b) Describe the **five** stages in the writing process (5 marks)