

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

English Language and Literature
GCE
Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
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Contents	Page
Executive summary	5
Component 1: Poetry and Prose	6
Component 2: Drama	10
Component 3: Non-literary Texts	16
Component 4: Critical and Creative Genre Study (NEA)	24
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	28

Executive Summary

The Principal Examiners for all components saw some excellent work in the summer 2025 entry. It was especially pleasing to see that centres had engaged with the support materials provided by Eduqas, paying particular attention to previous Examiners' Reports. It was clear that advice given in previous years had been considered and adopted into the teaching and learning. It was also pleasing to see so much engagement with the set texts, with the key aspects of integrated study and to see such accurate marking in the NEA.

Some common points to consider for the future include the following:

- The best candidates are those who have a good knowledge and understanding of the whole set text.
- Those who were able to use a broad range of linguistic and literary techniques accurately and purposefully were invariably successful.
- Using learnt generic context can only get someone so far. Context, even where double-weighted, should be integrated into the analysis and the argument.
- A stronger grasp of conceptual ideas and written expression would serve candidates well.
- Where candidates' handwriting is not clear, it is better for them to word process their exam responses.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1: POETRY AND PROSE

Overview of the Component

Many successful responses were seen this year, with candidates engaging well with the unseen texts in Section A, as well as demonstrating clear knowledge of their chosen novel in Section B. More concise responses were seen compared to previous years, with candidates managing their time effectively to respond to all three tasks. Choice of poems continues to be an issue for some candidates, although this was less of a problem with Question 2 on 'religion and beliefs'.

Accuracy (or inaccuracy) of terminology and a tendency to focus on words that could be labelled rather than useful and effective quotations, meant that analysis was sometimes weaker. A significant number of candidates were rephrasing or explaining quotations rather than commenting on the effects created by techniques. Candidates need to recognise that a quotation evidencing one particular idea might not be as useful for a different task focus and should adapt their response on learned poems or prose texts accordingly.

To achieve at least Band 4 for AO1, in Section A or Section B, candidates are expected to use terminology accurately and purposefully. Unfortunately, there is still over-reliance on, and inaccurate use of, terms such as alliteration, juxtaposition, noun phrase, verb phrase, modal verbs, syndetic and asyndetic listing, and imperatives. Words such as 'love', that can be a verb or a noun, need to be seen in the context of the quotation and identified accordingly. 'Semantic fields' are often noted with no focus referenced and with only one or two words as evidence. This year there were many examples of candidates mislabelling some poems as sonnets, a specific verse form, and also using the term 'volta' with respect to a turning point in any poem when this term is specific to sonnets.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: POETRY

There was a lot of successful engagement with both poetry tasks this year, with Question 1 proving more popular than Question 2. Essays were generally well-structured although, as in previous years, there are still some candidates focusing paragraphs on points such as titles and structure, which doesn't tend to lead to insightful analysis or comparison. Candidates adopting this approach often also read too much into the fact that the first line of the unseen was 'also' the title, not recognising this as a poetic convention.

As noted in previous years, choice of poems is so important in writing a successful response. There are still some candidates opting for more obscure choices that don't provide sufficient evidence for focusing on the given task. For example, choosing to write about 'London' or 'England in 1819' for Question 2 ('religion and beliefs') meant candidates were limited to a couple of lines of evidence, not sufficient for detailed analysis and comparison. For Question 1, many candidates seemed to feel that all poetry is about 'strong emotions', but choosing poems with the unseen text in mind (focusing on love and relationships) worked more successfully. Whilst 'Sonnet 73' and 'Song' may appear to have underlying strong emotions, it's not as easy to evidence these compared to choosing 'Sonnet 43: How Do I Love Thee?' or 'The Collar' for example.

- Q.1** Candidates read Text A well and noted the shifting emotions and changing relationships conveyed. It's important to have evidence to support ideas, so candidates writing about ashes being scattered, did not produce convincing responses. There was much to be made of the slight change between the first line and the last line, and many also successfully noted the use of caesura in stanza 2 and the enjambment throughout much of the rest of the poem.
- Q.2** Text B was analysed very well, with most candidates who chose this task recognising the shift from expectation at the beginning to a loss of hope at the end. Some only referenced the opening paragraphs and therefore missed this significant change in tone. Candidates are reminded to read the whole text through to gain understanding before starting to analyse. Some responses noted the twenty-first century date of publication and attributed the beliefs in the extract to this time period without fully engaging with the fifteenth century setting.

SECTION B: PROSE

It was pleasing to see that most candidates managed their time effectively and wrote detailed responses to both part (i) and part (ii) of this task. While context is the dominant AO in task (ii), the best responses are those where context is integrated into argument rather than provided in separate paragraphs. The generic context introduction adopted by an increasing number of candidates provided little relevant information to illuminate the arguments or the text. Including context in the introduction can be successful but should be selected purposefully in relation to the task. Candidates who noted Walker's own religious beliefs in their introduction to 12(ii), for example, made a strong start to their essay.

Whole text responses that gained the most marks were ones that selected parts of the text to analyse with a clear focus on the set task, rather than relying on learned sections. As this is an open text exam, candidates are expected to quote accurately from the text, particularly as close analysis is also needed. This year there seemed to be more candidates providing approximations of key quotations, leading to inaccurate terminology and analysis. There were also some candidates who did not include any quotations from the novel, limiting their ability to close analyse the text.

Jane Eyre

This is the second most popular text, after *The Color Purple*, and responses to both tasks were seen, Question 4 proving more popular than Question 3. Candidates writing about 'duty and obligation' for 3(ii) often made effective links to class and gender roles, allowing them to integrate contextual points with their arguments.

The task in 4(ii), 'presentation of the position of women in society', again allowed for clear contextual links to be made, in terms of the servant classes, governesses and women such as Blanche Ingram. Several candidates focused only on Jane in this question, an approach that was self-limiting in not providing scope for reference to women of other classes and with other experiences.

Great Expectations

There were only a small number of responses to this text. Question 5(ii) on 'Pip's relationships with male characters' provided good opportunity for discussion of Joe, Herbert and Magwitch, covering a range of events across the novel. Question 6(ii), 'ideas about morality', also drew some interesting responses, but with candidates focusing more on Magwitch, perhaps led by the extract, rather than considering other characters' moral dilemmas.

Atonement

The extracts from *Atonement* provided candidates with many points to discuss. The focalisation in the extract for 7(i) was often acknowledged and led to interesting points about Emily's relationship with her sister and her niece, and also her husband. Candidates who chose 8(i) noted the shifting relationship between Cecilia and Briony.

Candidates found many points to write about for 7(ii) 'presentation of guilt and/or atonement', beginning with Briony's crime, but also noting Robbie's guilt in wartime and Cecilia disowning her family as an attempt to atone for their false accusation of Robbie. 'Different kinds of love', the focus of 8(ii), led to discussion of camaraderie in wartime as well as sibling love and Cecilia's and Robbie's romantic love.

The Remains of the Day

A small number of responses were seen on this text, with those writing about ‘the influence of social class on relationships’ acknowledging the changes in the class system occurring at the start of the twentieth century and into the 1950s when the novel is set. Consideration of the middle and upper classes, as well as Stevens’ experiences and expectations as a servant, were written about with some success. Question 10(ii) required candidates to focus on ‘Ishiguro’s use of flashbacks’, and those choosing this question took the opportunity to write about several events from different points in the novel, an approach that enabled them to demonstrate good understanding of the text as a whole.

The Color Purple

The majority of responses seen were on this text, with Question 12 proving more popular. The extract in 12(i) was analysed fairly well, with reference to the rainy season followed by the celebration of roofleaf. However, candidates are reminded to reread the extract carefully as there were some significant misreadings. Some believed Nettie to have been present during the horrific storms described, and a significant number of candidates attributed “We know a roofleaf... is it not God?” to Nettie rather than Joseph. This had an impact on the success of subsequent analysis. Successful responses to Question 11(i) were aware of the patriarchal Olinka society presented as well as Nettie’s acknowledgement and interest in cultural differences.

Question 11(ii) on ‘Walker’s presentation of mothers and mother figures’, led to interesting discussion of Shug’s views of motherhood, as well as Celie as stepmother and Sofia protecting her children. While the question allows for analysis of non-biological mother figures, those who wrote about Shug and Celie’s romantic relationship produced responses that lacked relevance to the task set. Candidates who discussed fathers and parents in general also produced less relevant responses.

Candidates answered well on 12(ii), ‘significance of spirituality and/or beliefs’, often quoting from Shug’s discussion with Celie on pages 173-178. Many also noted the beliefs of the Olinka, although this led to a significant minority referencing the given extract, which cannot be rewarded in part (ii). Discussion that moved away from spirituality and towards patriarchal beliefs was rewarded, although candidates needed to ensure there was a clear focus on ‘beliefs’, rather than just a discussion of society.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 2: DRAMA

Overview of the Component

In Section A, *Othello* is still the most popular choice, followed by *King Lear*, with *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Tempest* following. No centres yet choose the wonderful late tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra*. In Section B, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The History Boys* and *Kindertransport* are the most popular, followed by Translations and then *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.

This year we saw many really excellent responses, where candidates not only knew their texts thoroughly, but offered purposeful, often perceptive analysis using a range of carefully chosen terms and concepts, going beyond the (often irrelevant) word class and sentence mood. There is evidence of some high quality work on the huge range of rhetorical features such as hypophora, epiphora, epizeuxis and polyptoton, to name but a few, which are particularly (but not only) appropriate for Shakespeare study, because where these are used it is often the source of powerful linguistic and dramatic impact. Similarly, there is a promising increase in the number of candidates analysing dramatic effects such as the use of dramatic syntax, analepsis and prolepsis, dramatic irony and breaking the 'fourth wall' (again, to name but a few), where marks can be accrued in both AO1 and AO2 if the terms are used and understood appropriately.

Written expression seems to be an increasing problem, with many candidates failing to achieve high bands in AO1 because of it. Sentence demarcation is a particular problem area: if full stops are not used, or not used correctly, clarity and coherence are impeded, which are AO1 criteria. An increasing number of responses are being seen using informal, chatty or journalistic prose, along with note forms such as slashes, contractions such as 'would've', 'vs' and 'etc.'. Candidates are reminded that formal academic prose is appropriate for exams, and required for Band 4 AO1 'fluent expression'.

Relatedly, a section from the 2024 report follows, as the comments are relevant again this year:

"Some candidates have clearly been encouraged to use polysyllabic words and complex sentences as a virtue in themselves, without regard to clarity or meaning. Obviously this results in unclear expression, a Band 1 descriptor, and because it makes it very hard to understand the points made, problems may also arise in other AOs."

The main challenge with this component is to show how meaning is created in dramatic texts by using *appropriate* methods and concepts from literary linguistic study. Simply offering a quotation and identifying word classes and sentence mood cannot attract more than a mid-Band 2, because it shows no understanding of the text, yet a high proportion of candidates depend on this approach, often following this labelling with a paraphrase of the quotation, for example: 'The first person pronouns used in Iago's declarative sentence "I am not what I am" suggest that 'he is not what he seems to be.' This is not purposeful analysis because it does not explain how the impact of the text is created, and a paraphrase of a quotation shows no understanding of meaning.

As pointed out last year, these are recurrent issues, despite the fact that addressing them would result in higher marks. Sections from last year's report follow:

“Verbs are very commonly identified as ‘dynamic’, often confusing the terms ‘dynamic’ and ‘stative’ with active and passive mood. Dynamic verbs are simply those that occur at a specific moment in time, which is not often a relevant feature to identify in analysis.”

“‘Post-modifying adjective’ is another term commonly misapplied, usually where a predicative (as opposed to attributive) adjective is intended.” For example, from Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*: ‘The lady is disloyal.’ ‘Disloyal’ here is a predicative adjective, not a post-modifier (which is part of a noun phrase).

“Noun phrase structure is widely misunderstood, and noun phrases are often identified without either their pre-modifying (determiners, modifiers etc.) or post-modifying structures (prepositional phrases, relative clauses or non-finite clauses).” For example, from Cassio in *Othello*: “I have lost the immortal part of myself”: ‘part’ is the head noun, ‘the’ and ‘immortal’ are premodification, and ‘of myself’ is the post-modifying prepositional clause. Similarly, in Lear’s “We shall express our darker purpose” the noun phrase includes the determiner ‘our’, not just the adjective and noun.

“Deontic modal verbs such as “You must go with us” are also often misidentified as imperatives.”

Numerous candidates are still using ‘juxtapose’ instead of ‘contrast’, even when the elements are not placed side by side.

Finally, there are still a number of candidates writing either just literature essays or historical accounts, often very lucidly and fluently but with little or no attempt at language analysis. Needless to say they do not gain high marks in this exam.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: SHAKESPEARE

Extract questions

It was gratifying to see that many centres have taken advice from previous reports, and encouraged candidates to start their extract response with a brief account of the location of the extract in the play, along with its structural significance. A large number of responses benefited from this approach. As has been noted before, some candidates are still wasting time by offering context material in this question, where it is not assessed.

King Lear

Many candidates found interesting and relevant things to say about the extract from *King Lear*, particularly concerning the way the mental state of the King is revealed in his language, the dramatic irony created as he imagines the trial, and the significance of disguise here. There were some particularly insightful observations about the role of the Fool in this section, including the fact that these are his last lines in the play, although many responses omitted to comment on Edgar’s presence.

Much Ado About Nothing

Most candidates who wrote on *Much Ado About Nothing* found relevant points about the extract from Act 3 Scene 3, the introduction of the comic characters Dogberry, Verges and The Watch, but the most successful were able to comment on the ironies of Dogberry's malapropisms and the fact that this inept crew were the ones who would shortly stumble on the criminals and (eventually) bring them to justice. Some misguidedly claimed that this proved their intelligence, despite appearances, but of course their discovery of Conrade and Borachio is entirely accidental. Some took opportunities to analyse the conversation structure here, to good advantage, as Dogberry's ironic dominance is demonstrated by that method.

Othello

The *Othello* extract from Act 4 Scene 1 proved more challenging than expected, perhaps because it comes from the second half of the play. The most successful candidates analysed the way Iago's dominance as 'stage director' is demonstrated here, despite his minimal utterances, and the painful dramatic irony as Othello mishears Cassio's 'story'. However, many responses missed the fact that Othello is hiding to one side of the stage, and claimed that Othello was talking to Cassio. They were left with little to comment on other than the anger of Bianca and her treatment by Cassio.

The Tempest

The extract from Act 3 Scene 3 of *The Tempest* also proved challenging to some, who focused only on the relationship between Stephano and Caliban, missing the presence of Ariel and the terror he creates in the butler and jester with his invisible music. However, there were a number of excellent analyses of Caliban's blank verse speech 'Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises', which attracted high marks when covered in detail.

Ultimately, candidates who know the text well are likely to do best in the extract questions, as elsewhere.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

King Lear

Excellent essays were seen on both 2 b) and 2 c), with some really thoughtful and perceptive accounts in 2 b) of the ways in which the play might cause audiences of both the 17th and 21st centuries to respond, and some excellent, detailed analyses of the causes of conflict. Candidates were less successful overall when they opened either essay with a paragraph on context with only marginal relevance (as mentioned above). In 2 b) many were only able to discuss the first two scenes of the play, which limited their ability to answer the question effectively, and therefore the marks they gained. Misreadings of Gloucester's conversation with Kent in the opening scene were common, seeing his comments about Edmund as a rejection of his illegitimate son, when in fact he says Edgar is 'no dearer in my account.' Gloucester's fault is a more complex matter of tone and lexis. Unfortunately some responses only discussed the breakdown of family relationships and ignored the 'fall of a king' completely.

In 2 c), the 'causes of conflict' question, a number of candidates found it difficult to focus on the question, which was reflected in their marks. Many were unable to offer precise examples of conflict or war in the play. The most successful answers were those with an introductory paragraph giving an overview of the different examples of conflict or war, the causes of which they then proceeded to discuss in detail. Many centres are doing excellent work on context in the Shakespeare questions, and *King Lear* is a good example of this, however some candidates claimed that King James united England and Scotland. Although he very much wanted to, the Act of Union did not occur until 1707.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 3 b) invited discussion of Don John, Borachio and Conrade, and some sound accounts were seen here, often focusing fruitfully on the different classes of spectator in Shakespeare's audiences. There were some excellent analyses of comic language in responses to 3 c), the most successful contrasting the humorous language used by Beatrice and Benedick in their 'merry war', with that of Dogberry and The Watch, and considering its relationship to the tragic elements in the play.

Othello

Question 4 b), on the presentation of the character Desdemona, was chosen by many candidates, many of whom produced insightful analyses, largely focusing their contextual comments on the patriarchal oppression she encounters. This is obviously a relevant and important area, but those few who also considered her role as morality play angel (in contrast to Iago's Vice character) were even more successful. There were many excellent accounts of social status in the play (3 c)), with wide-ranging analytical examples of this key theme including Othello's complex status, Iago's seeming craving for higher status and Cassio's complaints about his 'reputation' in Act 2 Scene 3, although very few remembered that Othello takes his "life and being from men of royal siege", so his initially high status does not derive entirely from his military authority.

One problem often seen in weaker responses (not only in *Othello* but particularly so) is when a candidate takes a quotation from, for example, Iago (perhaps about the role of women) and claims it as an example of typical Jacobean attitudes. The speaker of the line and the dramatic context of the line in the play, are as important as the words themselves.

The Tempest

Question 5 b) produced the more successful responses of the two this year, with some confident analyses ranging across several different master and servant relationships in the play. Less successful approaches argued for example that Miranda is Prospero's servant, forgetting that when Prospero says "What, my foot my tutor?" there is dramatic irony, as he is only taking the role of tyrant in order to test Ferdinand. In all cases, the best answers were nuanced and exploratory rather than simplistic and 'black and white'.

SECTION B: MODERN DRAMA

It needs to be said here, as above, that many candidates are still opening their essay questions with lengthy and detailed contextual material that lacks specific relevance to the topic in question, so only attracts a maximum of Band 2 in AO3.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Question 7 was the more popular of the two, and most candidates were able to discuss and analyse some relevant types of conflict in the play. There is evidence of good work going on in contextual study of the play, although it should not be seen as a replacement for linguistic analysis of the text. As is the case with the other American texts in this component, candidates are more successful in their discussion of context if they briefly explain the American Dream rather than simply mentioning the name.

The History Boys

Both Questions 8 and 9 were popular, and both saw many very successful responses. In Question 8 some were able to show how Bennett uses humour to critique the Thatcher policies of the 1980s, while still eliciting warmth towards most of the characters. As always, the taboo language proved too tempting to resist, although on this occasion there was usually justification for its inclusion, particularly in the case of Mrs. Lintott's humorous contributions, which many candidates analysed very successfully. The Posner question, Question 9, was even more popular and generally well done, although again many candidates offered mini-essays on context which was marginally relevant at best. Not only does this limit the AO3 response to Band 2, but it means candidates have correspondingly less time to offer analysis for AO1 and AO2, so under-achieve all round. Posner was often described wrongly as working class. The north/south divide meant that he was disadvantaged in that respect, but Rudge is the representative of the working class in the play.

Translations

Some very successful essays were seen on both Questions 10 and 11, particularly Question 10 on the female characters Sarah and Maire, although less successful candidates were drawn off into writing about the significance of language generally, so gained fewer marks.

Kindertransport

Questions 12 and 13 were particularly badly affected by candidates' tendency to offer long sections of generalised contextual material on Nazi Germany, the Kindertransport and Diane Samuels' research for the play. Question 13 was however well done on the whole, when candidates were able to analyse the presentation of some of the many examples of 'mistakes and guilt'. Responses to Question 12 often suffered from lack of focus on the topic, and rather than 'England and Germany' they drifted into writing just about Eva/Evelyn.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

By far the majority of candidates chose Question 14, on the presentation of desire and ambition in the play, and there were many excellent accounts here, many with thorough and insightful analyses of different manifestations of those themes, along with relevant and detailed contextual commentary. Of course, remarks made above about irrelevant contextual material also stand in this case, as does the reminder to candidates to explain (briefly but clearly) what the American Dream signified, rather than just dropping the name and moving on, and the same applies to other relevant events from U.S. social history such as the Lavender Scare and McCarthyism.

Summary Of Key Points

There has been some improvement in textual knowledge this year, although this must remain a priority. Written expression needs urgent attention, to prevent underachievement in AO1. Good work on the use of wider frameworks such as rhetorical features is to be encouraged and should continue. 'Bolt-on' context is an increasing problem. Contextual points need to be incorporated into, and relevant to, analysis of the text. And once again, centres are encouraged to keep developing the range of linguistic approaches that learners can use in their analyses, so that they do not have to resort to sentence mood and word class when it is not useful to do so.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 3: NON-LITERARY TEXTS

Overview of the Component

In Section A of this component, candidates are required to compare and contrast three unseen spoken texts on the same broad topic but with differing purposes, genres and attitudes to their subject-matter. Once again this year, the great majority of candidates rose to the challenge of comparing and contrasting three demanding unseen texts in at least a reasonable level of detail. It is clear that nearly all are being prepared thoroughly and guided closely in the close reading techniques that are necessary for success in this section. Most candidates were also able to engage in close analysis of the extract from their chosen set text in Section B and to demonstrate a wider knowledge and understanding of the text in the extract question. That said, there were still instances of candidates producing mainly narrative and descriptive responses in both sections, and writing answers in Section A that mainly addressed the generic differences between transcribed and non-transcribed spoken texts rather than focusing on how the texts conveyed their common theme or subject-matter.

While the linking themes and the chosen texts change from year to year, the characteristic features that make for a strong answer do not – and neither do the errors that many candidates make.

The same is true of Section B, with the best responses tracking through the extract and making a range of points economically, using a variety of accurate technical terminology. Less successful responses generally did the opposite, using fewer terms and/or applying them inaccurately, omitting large sections of the extract, and failing to analyse adequately how meanings are created. Effective essay responses demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text but were also highly selective in their choice of textual evidence, which must be closely related to the question. They also embedded specific contextual points, linking them closely to analysis of meaning. As half the marks are awarded for AO3, omitting contextual points, or only mentioning them briefly, will be significantly self-penalising, as will entire paragraphs of context which is of little relevance to the question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A

This year's linking theme was the presentation of the coast, with three extracts selected to give candidates ample opportunities to explore both comparisons and contrasts. As usual, the strongest answers made a wide range of points concisely and sharply, used a variety of technical terms from both linguistic and literary study, showed a secure and sometimes perceptive understanding of how meanings were created, and confidently moved between the three extracts, making a range of thoughtful and relevant links. As noted in last year's report, many candidates still wrote introductions of little value, making only basic connections between the texts. Many also over-relied on the terms 'positive' and 'negative' in the main body of the essay: the terms 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' seem to be emerging as alternatives, but are no more precise and still counted only as 'basic' analysis. Several candidates also wrote 'empty' conclusions which merely repeated points already made in the essay, sometimes in exactly the same words. This approach is self-penalising as it will score no extra marks.

Nearly all candidates grasped the 'promotional' nature of Text A and some were able to go on to discuss with some perception the way in which the English resort of Torbay was being 'sold' to prospective visitors by imitating some of the characteristics of the south of France. Most selected the syndetic pair 'opulence and luxury' and made sensible comments about the nature of the audience that this would appeal to, but usually identified the words as adjectives rather than abstract nouns. In the first line of the extract, 'dazzle' was also often labelled as an adjective, or as a verb, suggesting that many candidates were still confused about the basics of word classes and that it is critical to understand the function of an individual word within the sentence: while 'dazzle' can, of course, be a verb, in the context of this sentence it is a noun ('...the dazzle of Riviera villas'). As usual, some candidates wasted valuable time by commenting on the pace, intonation and volume of the speakers of Texts A and B, even though it is not possible to ascertain them from non-transcribed speech.

The intentions of the speaker of Text B were often misunderstood or over-simplified. Many candidates asserted that the presenter, Paul Rose, was emphasising the dangers of the coast to warn viewers away from it. More perceptive answers saw that Rose was presenting the ruggedness of the coast as an attraction, likely to appeal to those who relish the idea of 'challenging walking.' Some candidates applied the concepts of ethos, pathos and logos to all three texts and this can be a productive approach if understood correctly. For example, in Text B the speaker uses ethos when he comments that 'I've explored the world', which was likely to increase his credibility as an authority figure in the eyes of the audience. Several, however, commented that the mention of 'England's longest national trail' was an example of 'hyperbole' – a term that many candidates overuse across both Sections A and B – rather than a statement of fact. (Far fewer identified Rose's comment that this is 'the walk of a lifetime' as hyperbole even though the term seems much more accurate here).

Text C, the transcript, elicited widely varied responses. The best were able to investigate how the prosodic features, as well as the actual content of what the two speakers were saying, created meaning and helped to persuade the target audience. Many candidates, however, saw the speakers as 'hesitant', 'nervous' or 'lacking confidence' as a result of their use of fillers and micropauses. In reality, these features are simply reflective of normal spontaneous dialogue. Another common error was the labelling of the verbs 'pick', 'raise' and 'take' as imperatives, which they are not in the context of the utterances in this extract.

Summary of key points

AO1, AO2 and AO4 are all assessed in Section A, with AO4 having double weighting. The following points outline features of successful answers and areas for improvement for each Assessment Objective: most have appeared in previous reports on this Component but are still worth reiterating here as answers tend to demonstrate the same strengths and weaknesses from year to year.

AO1

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Purposeful and accurate use of a wide range of technical terminology, not restricted to word classes.
- Using specific terms relating to prosodic features in transcripts: micropause, intonation, stress, filler, latch-on, etc.
- Accurate and well-controlled written expression.
- Using a formal register appropriate for analytical study at this level.
- Evidence of an integrated linguistic/literary approach, including a good balance of both linguistic and literary terminology.
- A clearly structured response with a coherent line of argument that is outlined at the beginning of the essay.
- Making a clear distinction between written texts designed to be spoken by using the term 'sentences', and spoken transcripts by using the term 'utterances'. Also referring to 'speaker' and 'audience' rather than 'writer' and 'reader'.
- A short, sharp introduction identifying and comparing attitudes, before quickly moving on to close analysis.
- An appropriate conclusion, returning to the line of argument outlined in the introduction.

Areas for improvement:

- Overall, candidates need to demonstrate much greater accuracy when naming word classes. It is also important to look at how a word has been used in the context of a sentence or utterance: i.e. its function, not just its form.
- The term 'declarative' is still being overused or used inappropriately, often to label a phrase or even a single word.
- As noted last year, many candidates quoted entire sentences (or sometimes more than one sentence) and then began their analysis with (for example) 'The noun phrase suggests...' without identifying the noun phrase within the sentence, e.g. by underlining it. This makes it difficult or impossible for the examiner to determine their linguistic knowledge.
- Some responses were again poorly structured, with much repetition and without a clear line of argument.
- Continuing misuse or overuse of the technical terms 'hyperbole' and 'oxymoron'. 'Hyperbole' is essentially exaggeration so is not appropriate for features such as superlatives or statistical facts such as '630 miles' in Text B. An 'oxymoron' is a self-contradiction, not simply an antithesis or a pairing of incongruent features – so the comparison of Torquay to the French Riviera in Text A may have been unusual or unexpected, but was not an oxymoron.
- Candidates need to demonstrate that they understand the distinction between phrases and clauses. The term 'verb phrase', in particular, was often followed by the quotation of an entire sentence.

AO2

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Consistent analysis of how the coast was presented in the three texts (beyond simply 'positive'/'negative' or 'optimistic'/'pessimistic'), and an ability to address differing presentations within the same text.
- Relating comments about meanings to the identities and attitudes of the speakers, and the audiences, purposes and genres of the texts.
- Using a range of precise and detailed comments on how meanings are created.
- Showing an ability to go beyond obvious, surface meanings to explore more implicit meanings.

Areas for improvement:

- As noted last year, candidates still need to be more precise in their analysis as an alternative to the repetition of the terms 'positive' and 'negative' throughout the essay: this only counts as 'basic' analysis, which is a Band 2 descriptor.
- Some candidates also overused the terms 'formal' and 'informal' without being clear about what they meant.
- Some candidates still need to be clearer that spoken texts are delivered by a speaker, not a writer, and are received by an audience or a listener, not a reader.
- Making only a small number of points about each text, which may be conveyed in exhaustive and often repetitive detail.
- Paraphrasing or describing quotations rather than analysing them.

AO4

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Spending a considerable amount of time on making connections between the three texts to reflect the fact that AO4 accounts for half of the marks on Section A.
- Exploring specific similarities and differences between how the coast was presented in the three texts, relating these points to genres, audiences and purposes.
- Adeptly moving between the three extracts throughout the answer, but not necessarily comparing all three all the way through the essay. For example, some productive comparisons could be made between Texts A and B, and then between B and C, and so on.
- Including a good balance of similarities and differences, although this does not have to be exactly 50/50 – it does very much depend on the three specific extracts.
- Clearly signposting to the examiner when links are being made (Similarly, Equally, However, In contrast etc.) but then ensuring that this is followed up with a specific and meaningful link.

Areas for improvement:

- Writing about the generic differences between transcribed and non-transcribed texts (such as noting that Texts A and B were scripted and then exploring in detail the features that suggest this, such as the lack of fillers or micropauses). Some candidates are writing long paragraphs in this manner, but this will score no marks as it is not relevant to the question.
- Answers which treated the three texts separately and then mentioned some general links at the end were heavily self-penalising, although very much in the minority.
- More common was an approach in which the candidate made only basic links and/or repeated the same points throughout the essay.
- 'Signposting' language such as 'Similarly...' or 'In contrast...' is only of value if supported by relevant evidence from texts demonstrating the candidate's understanding of the comparison or contrast being explored. Candidates will not be awarded marks for the 'signposting' language in itself, but only for the analysis which follows.

SECTION B

In Cold Blood was again by far the most popular choice of text in this section, with *Once in a House on Fire* and *Homage to Catalonia* being studied by much smaller numbers of candidates. As last year, no responses were seen on *Skating to Antarctica* or *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*.

As with Section A, while extracts and topics will inevitably change from year to year, the features of both strong and less successful answers do not. As usual, better answers in part (i) tracked through the extract systematically, covered a good range of points from throughout the extract, commented convincingly and in depth on how the writer had used linguistic and literary techniques to convey meanings, and related analysis to the specific wording and demands of the question. Conversely, less successful answers were often poorly structured, made only a limited range of points, were sometimes repetitive, and ignored whole sections of the extract. As mentioned in previous reports, the key to a good-quality extract response is systematic close reading, meaning that candidates should home in on short quotations, give sharp and precise analysis of how meanings are created, and then quickly move on to the next point. The inclusion of contextual points in part (i) answers remains a concern – in many cases, candidates included very detailed and specific contextual information which, although demonstrating their in-depth knowledge, was irrelevant as AO3 is not assessed in the extract question and therefore scored no marks - however accurate and interesting it might have been.

The essay question, as in previous years, remains more challenging for many candidates. Timing issues were still sometimes in evidence, although very few omitted the essay answer completely. Although only 16 marks are available for this task and the advice in the rubric is to spend 25 minutes on it, many were able to make efficient use of these constraints, writing essays that demonstrated not only a thorough knowledge of the set text but also real thought and understanding of the topic in the question. On the other hand, some candidates wrote more generalised responses with little if any explicit reference to the question. As usual, the approach to AO3 varied tremendously: a few candidates included no contextual points at all or only addressed context in a brief and basic way. Others included whole paragraphs of contextual information (often the introductory paragraph of the answer) with little relevance to the actual question. As mentioned in last year's report, the most successful approach is to use relevant contextual points to illuminate analysis of the text, embedding these points in every paragraph. The most successful candidates referred to a range of different types of context: not just historical, but also social, cultural and biographical. Many also made pertinent points about the production and reception of the text.

Andrea Ashworth: *Once in a House on Fire*

Most candidates were able to make at least sensible points about the presentation of the police in the extract. For example, many identified the verb ‘strolled’ as an indication of the police officers’ lack of urgency, and some went on to suggest that this could be read as a metaphor for the attitudes of authority figures as a whole when confronted with domestic violence. Others wrote convincingly about how Terry’s interaction with them implies his confidence that he will evade the consequences of his actions, with their deferential use of ‘Sir’ and his friendly reference to them as ‘lads’. Some commented convincingly on the gendered nature of the adjective ‘hysterical’.

Candidates could take a variety of possible approaches in the essay question. Some took up the prompt in the question to examine Ashworth’s presentation of the police, the legal system and the local council, a perfectly valid approach. Others cited evidence relating to her descriptions of education and of the family’s interactions with social services and the health service. The overarching view was that ‘outside agencies’ are portrayed as at best well-meaning but ineffective, often incompetent and disorganised, and sometimes actually doing more harm than good – for example, the eventual prosecution of Terry results in retribution from him which the authorities seem powerless to prevent. Several candidates, however, wrote more general essays that mainly focused on the presentation of domestic violence with only brief reference to the question.

Jenny Diski: *Skating to Antarctica*

No responses were seen on this text.

Dave Eggers: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*

No responses were seen on this text.

Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood*

Nearly all candidates were able to write thoughtfully about the presentation of Perry’s dysfunctional childhood in the chosen extract, making the connection between his upbringing and his later life of crime. Many cited the reference at the start to Perry’s mother telling him ‘to find a new home’ as evidence for her hostility and coldness towards him, going on to identify the adverb ‘peacefully’ as an indication that his life with his father was more stable and loving. Few, however, saw the more subtle point that everything in the extract is mediated through Tex’s narrative voice as he attempts to justify his upbringing of Perry and cast it in a moral light (‘That was the way I raised my kids’). Some misunderstood ‘depression’ in the first sentence of the second paragraph as a reference to Tex’s mental health but most were able to identify the ending of the extract as ironic in the light of Perry’s subsequent development.

In their answers to the essay question, many candidates productively linked Capote’s presentation of childhood with his implied critique of the American Dream. Other relevant contextual factors included biographical details from Capote’s own life, and the ‘nature/nurture’ debate. The most successful answers cited a range of evidence from the text, making internal connections between the presentation of Nancy’s childhood with that of Perry and Dick. Others veered away from the question, focusing more on ‘family’ than specifically ‘childhood’, while some wrote more general essays about the presentation of Perry and Dick with little reference to the question.

George Orwell: *Homage to Catalonia*

The best extract answers, as usual, tracked through the extract carefully and explored how effectively Orwell built mood and tone using a variety of linguistic and literary techniques. For example, many commented on the effect of the onomatopoeia in 'spitting', 'crackle' and 'whizzed' in conveying the chaos and noise of battle but were able to show how Orwell contrasts this with a degree of ironic detachment ('One even had time to think a little', for example). There was also a focus on how Orwell emphasises how a lack of equipment ('I had no bombs left') highlights courage in the face of adversity as he and his comrades go on fighting regardless. Less successful extract responses often included large amounts of contextual information, which is self-penalising as AO3 is not assessed in task (i).

The essay question gave candidates plenty of opportunities to cite relevant evidence from across the text. The most effective responses generally included a good range of contextual points without over-relying on biographical context. They followed the cue in the question to examine 'different types of bravery' by going beyond Orwell's own physical bravery to consider, for example, his admiration of the bravery of his comrades, such as Smillie and Kopp.

B(i)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Purposeful and accurate use of a variety of technical terms, not confined to word classes (AO1).
- A suitable balance of literary and linguistic terminology, demonstrating evidence of 'integrated study' (AO1).
- Ensuring that each selected quotation is accompanied by at least one technical term (it is often possible to attach several terms to a single quotation) (AO1).
- Showing at least a clear awareness of the writer's reasons for employing specific linguistic and literary devices, making sensible comments on how meanings are created, and showing at least an awareness of subtext (AO2).
- A thorough approach, tracking sequentially through the extract and covering a good range of points (AO2).
- All points about meaning are relevant and linked back to the question (AO2).

Areas for improvement:

- Similarly to Section A, there was still often confusion about the definitions of basic features, particularly word classes (AO1).
- Ensure full coverage of the extract. Avoid writing exhaustively and repetitively about a few short quotations (AO1/AO2).
- As in Section A, some over-used the terms 'positive' and 'negative' at the expense of more precise analysis (AO2).

B(ii)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Beginning with a clearly focused introduction, including a clearly defined line of argument (AO2/AO3)
- Referring to two or three key episodes from different parts of the text to support the line of argument: given the time constraints of this task, this should be realistic for candidates (AO2)
- Referring to a reasonable variety of contextual factors which are relevant to the wording of the task, including social/historical and, if appropriate, relevant information about the production and reception of the text and biographical details about the writer (AO3)
- The best responses skilfully interwove this specific and relevant contextual information with analysis of meanings, showing a clear grasp of how these contextual factors influenced the production of the text (AO2/AO3)
- Finishing with a meaningful conclusion that revisits and sums up the line of argument (AO2/AO3).

Areas for improvement:

- Avoid memorising and then attempting to adapt a generalised set response (e.g. an essay on the presentation of Perry and Dick in *In Cold Blood*.)
- An introduction which summarises the plot of the text is self-penalising and will score no marks.
- As half the marks for this question are awarded for context, candidates self-penalised if they included no, little or irrelevant contextual material.
- The opposite of this approach – a context-led essay – is equally inappropriate as it takes candidates away from detailed textual analysis. This was a particular issue with *Homage to Catalonia*.
- Some candidates still need to take care with timing, ensuring that they spend twenty-five minutes on task (ii) in order to do it justice.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 4: CRITICAL AND CREATIVE GENRE STUDY

Overview of the Component

This component is internally assessed and externally moderated. It allows learners the opportunity to independently select an area of prose study that interests them and to study one text (chosen from Appendix A in the specification) provided by WJEC Eduqas within that genre. In addition to this, learners are given the opportunity to select wider reading texts to inform their studies in this component. Learners complete a comparative assessment on their chosen genre and texts. In reflecting on their research undertaken, learners are then required to produce two pieces of original writing related to their selected genre.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

SECTION A: GENRE STUDY

It was pleasing, once again, to see a wide range of genres, texts and tasks in evidence in the work submitted for external moderation. As the specification is now well established, majority of centres are giving candidates flexibility in their choices of texts and tasks. In some centres there had been even more freedom given for candidates to choose their own genre to focus on, which often resulted in a number of interesting responses and candidates were clearly engaged in their work. A minority of centres had prescribed both genre and texts which did tend to offer candidates limited independence and in some cases, candidates referred to similar extracts in the texts and outcomes were uniform and formulaic. It should be noted that the NEA is an opportunity for candidates to be more independent in their study on the course.

Once again, this year the genres of dystopia and gothic were popular choices. However, there has certainly been a broadening out of genres offered to candidates over recent years, with centres offering texts from the genres of crime, romance and identity. As with previous years, certain texts remain popular - such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and *1984* in the dystopian genre. *Frankenstein*, *The Woman in Black* and *Rebecca* are often used in the gothic genre studies, as is *The Bloody Chamber*. Increasingly, centres are encouraging candidates to select their wider reading texts and this is to be applauded. In addition to these texts, moderators this year saw work on *Strangers on a Train*, *The Talented Mr Ripley* and *The Moonstone* in the crime genre and also *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *The Great Gatsby* were used as candidates studied the genre of romance. Candidates had been guided to select texts with sufficient level of challenge. Generally, novels are popular for the genre study, but if a short story collection is used, candidates are required to refer to more than one short story. This was sometimes the case this year when, for example, candidates studied *The Bloody Chamber* in the gothic genre.

A wide range of tasks were in evidence this year and majority of centres had offered candidates the flexibility to choose a topic from their own interests. This is still recommended at best practice and allow candidates to be more independent in their studies. Questions were often carefully worded to allow candidates to focus on the relevant assessment objectives and also to adopt an integrated approach to the study of language and literature. Many centres use the suggested opening stem: "Using integrated literary and linguistic approaches..." which assists in signposting the candidates from the outset. Moderators saw some excellent work this year on the themes of social control, female identity and obsession. Some centres use a critical quotation in titles, which can be a successful way for candidates to develop an argument. Questions with a narrow focus often work well and allow candidates to craft perceptive responses. Bibliographies and footnotes are useful in demonstrating the breadth of candidates' wider reading and research in the genre.

Introductions were often used effectively by candidates to address the conventions of their chosen genre, present their chosen texts and consider their overarching argument. Less successful responses contained biographical and historical information irrelevant to their selected focus. In the planning stages it is apparent that centres have continued to address the range of terminology used by candidates in their essays. Use of terminology was varied across the work seen. In higher level responses, it was clear that candidates were able to consider terminology from across the 'Framework of Language' with confidence and accuracy. These candidates also often employed a fluent academic register throughout the responses. Further down the samples submitted for moderation, candidates tended to focus more on word level analysis and the range of terminology in some work was very narrow. Moderators noted some incorrect use of terminology which could have been addressed in the drafting process. It is worth encouraging candidates to proofread and correct technical errors in their work during the drafting process as the degree of written expression and accuracy is taken into consideration when awarding marks for AO1.

Candidates engaged well with meaning in the texts studied, making AO2 a solid aspect of the study. Well focussed questions, once again, assisted candidates to explore meaning and fluently embedded references and quotations characterised stronger responses. Once again, feature spotting and descriptive retelling were apparent in some weaker essays. In a similar way those candidates who used contextual detail to drive forward their arguments were more successful than those who recounted relevant contextual points. As this is a genre study, it is also important to encourage candidates to explore how their chosen text features tropes of the genre as well as how the texts either conform to or subvert conventions.

With regard to AO4, generally candidates made clear connections with their texts and had clearly been guided to select novels or short stories with the comparative element in mind. Approaches which had been structured well often considered points of contrast and comparison throughout, with comments on the partner texts often illuminating ideas in the core text.

Summary of key points:

- Offer a range of tasks for candidates with a narrow focus on specific themes or presentation of characters
- Encourage candidates to use a broad range of terminology from all aspects of literary and linguistic study (AO1)
- Encourage proofreading for candidates to sharpen their technical accuracy (AO1)
- Encourage candidates to establish clear links with terminology and meaning, supporting points with detail from both texts (AO2)
- Ensure that candidates understand how to use context to develop their arguments throughout the essay (AO3)
- Select texts with an appropriate level of challenge to allow for successful comparisons (AO4)

SECTION B: RELATED CREATIVE WRITING

Candidates are required to submit one literary and one non-literary piece of writing in this section of the folder. As indicated in the specification: “one of the pieces of writing must be in the same genre as that studied in Section A. Both pieces of writing must be informed by the research and study completed for Section A.” Whilst majority of centres adhere to these guidelines, in some cases it was difficult to determine the connections between the research and particularly the non-literary pieces. It has been suggested that candidates include a text descriptor (which would not be counted as part of the advisory word count) to allow candidates to give an overview of authorial intent and also highlight the link between research and task. Cover sheets also should be used to indicate the intended audience and purpose of the work. In addition to this, it is important for candidates to consider the audience and purpose of their writing. If candidates write articles or reviews, for example, then considering the type of newspaper or magazine it would be published in during the planning stages would allow the piece to have a sharper focus. Technical accuracy and written expression is an important element here and careful proofreading should be encouraged throughout the drafting process.

Across the work seen this year, short stories, openings and extracts remain popular tasks and candidates had clearly been encouraged to write to their strengths. There were fewer monologues and screen plays this year, but these can work well as creative pieces. Titles of stories should be encouraged as part of the process as some candidates had neglected this.

Moderators saw a range of styles in this section of the folder. Articles, reviews and speeches were popular once again. As highlighted above, more successful reviews had a strong grasp of the genre and were intended for publication in existing formats. Weaker responses tended to retell plots and resemble essays on their chosen film or book. Less successful pieces were quite restrictive such as biographies of authors and historical figures.

Summary of key points

- Encourage candidates to plan carefully for specific audiences and purposes
- Highlight the importance of proofreading in this section
- Ensure that tasks are suitable and have clear and relevant links to the genre study

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

This was the first year where centres were required to upload samples of work submitted for moderation. This did mean that in some cases the NEA checklist was not uploaded. In future, this should be uploaded as part of the submission for the top candidate in the sample and would aid in ensuring that administration was completed. In some cases this year, cover sheets had not been completed with full titles and word counts.

As the specification is now well established, teachers are familiar with the expectations regarding comments and annotations. Such detailed annotation is helpful to understand where marks have been awarded and remains strong in majority of the work seen by moderators.

Once again this year, moderators saw a great deal of strong work and were impressed with the broad range of texts studied and genres offered. Centres are to be commended for all their hard work in preparing candidates for this component.

Supporting you

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Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

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