

GCSE Examiners' Report

English Language
GCSE
November 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 unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and component level. 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
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Executive Summary

Component 1

In general, candidates found the 20th century extract more challenging than previous series. The surface of the narrative was quite straightforward but some of the candidates found the characters and the relationships between them less straightforward to understand and comment on.

Section A

- Responses should be coherent and cohesive. Bullet points are only suitable for Question 01.
- Relevant, insightful answers are valued over lengthy but unfocused ones. Candidates must think about the key words in the question.
- For 10-mark questions, a methodical approach is generally most effective.
- Enough time should be allocated for Question 05 to provide a substantial, coherent answer. The attempt rate for this question was lower than all the other questions on the paper meaning too many candidates lost out on a potential 10 marks.

Section B

- Candidates should focus on both structure and content in narrative writing and plan carefully regardless of which option is given.
- Candidates should avoid tense inconsistencies as they weaken writing quality.
- It is important for candidates to maintain control of expression and technical accuracy; lengthy writing without precision is problematic.

Component 2

The two reading texts were accounts of British royal coronations. The six questions covered the four reading assessment objectives, and almost all candidates were able to respond to the events in the two accounts. The writing tasks were an article and a talk.

Section A

- Successful responses in high-tariff questions (1.2, 1.4, 1.6) were detailed, methodical, and had a range of points with sensible, sometimes insightful comments.
- Effective use of well-chosen quotations with contextual detail, strengthens answers and supports comments.
- Careful reading of questions is essential. Many marks are lost when candidates misinterpret or lose focus.
- Quotations must be clear, complete, and explained. Using incomplete text fragments is ineffective.
- For Question 1.6, candidates should avoid using grids.

Section B

- Successful writing responses were sustained, clearly structured and focused on the audience and purpose. They balanced information and persuasion.
- Very brief responses (well below 300–400 words) rarely scored well because they lacked range, detail, and development.
- One recommended structure that candidates could practise is an introductory paragraph, followed by three or four paragraphs exploring specific, relevant points and finishing with a simple concluding paragraph. This approach can help shape and sustain responses effectively.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2025

COMPONENT 1

Overview of the Component

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across 5 assessment objectives (AOs)

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
- AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
- AO5 Communicate clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences and organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.
- AO6 Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Section A

The reading material for this paper was an extract from 'Cannery Row', a short novel written by John Steinbeck and set in the coastal town of Monterey in California in the 1930s. As in much of Steinbeck's work, the context for the novel was the Great Depression but this passage was free standing and did not require detailed historical knowledge as it focused on a small range of characters and the relationships between them.

The surface of the narrative was quite straightforward but some of the candidates found the characters and the relationships between them challenging.

Section B

This section followed a familiar pattern and there was the usual choice of four titles which allowed the candidates to write imaginatively or from personal experience. All four titles attracted significant numbers of candidates, although the option which required a given ending was the least popular choice.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1** This was a predictable question and tested the candidates' ability to identify explicit and implicit information. All of the relevant points were concentrated in the opening paragraph of the passage, and the paragraph was only four lines in length. The candidates needed to read the question with some care as the focus was on the store, as opposed to its owner, but a concise list of relevant facts did the trick here.

For example, the first line of the passage revealed that the store was untidy (it was 'not a model of neatness') and that it was small. It consisted of a single room. The items for sale provided everything a man could want or need to be happy. Some simply but accurately suggested that this showed that the store sold a wide range of merchandise. The store opened at dawn and did not close until there were no more customers, or the last dollar had been spent.

Those candidates who disentangled the information into a clear and precise list of individual details scored full marks without much difficulty. It was sensible to begin each bullet point with 'The store...' or 'It...' but some candidates lost marks because of repetition (untidy/cluttered) or a lack of precision in expression.

- Q.2** This question engaged the candidates with the main character in the passage, Lee Chong, and asked for initial impressions based on two short paragraphs of text. Some of the impressions were quite straightforward. For example, the writer explicitly informed his readers that Lee Chong was not a greedy man. However, he was in the business of making money and if anyone had money to spend he was available. It was possible to infer from this that Lee Chong worked hard or worked long hours.

His attitude to credit was more complicated. He obviously allowed credit and everyone owed him money. He never 'pressed' for payment, and he seemed to be tolerant and relaxed about debts. However, when the debt became too large, or 'ridiculous', he would cut off credit. He trusted his customers but within limits. He was a man of some contradictions and some candidates found it difficult to cope with this rather enigmatic character. Some thought that he loaned money but that was not correct. He allowed credit.

Lee Chong knew his customers and he seemed to be a realist. When it came to temptation. For example, he was vigilant and stood guard on the whisky and cigars, understanding the special attraction held by those items and not allowing himself to be distracted by 'cunning minds'. Some suggested he was shrewd and, although not harsh or grasping, he was still a businessman in pursuit of a profit. He was prudent and no fool.

The question required the candidates to get the measure of the character but Lee Chong was neither wholly 'good' nor wholly 'bad'. Dealing with complexity proved rather demanding but most candidates made at least some progress. Some range of impressions supported by reference to the text was enough for full marks.

- Q.3** This question was worth ten marks and covered a significant section of text. The question tested AO2 but the issue of 'how' a writer presents a relationship involves content as well as language and narrative technique. It was perfectly sensible to work methodically, looking at what the characters did and exploring the nature of the relationship between Lee Chong and Horace Abbeville as well as the writer's technique.

It began with Lee Chong reflecting one evening with 'humour and sadness' on a deal he had done with Horace the previous afternoon. He understood the elaborate game they had played but felt regret that it was necessary. He did not gloat or feel anger. There was nothing vindictive or triumphant in Lee Chong's feelings about Horace.

The passage then revealed exactly what had transpired to prompt Lee Chong to feel amused but sad. Horace Abbeville was described as 'a worried gentleman' who approached the store feeling uneasy about his debt. He was obviously a well-known and regular customer who had accumulated a debt which was 'second to none'.

The writer described Horace's face as 'sensitive' and he was apprehensive, flinching at Lee Chong's 'stern' expression and his finger tapping the counter in a gesture of impatience. Some candidates, quite rightly, pointed to some tension in the relationship. Horace seemed to know that he had reached his credit limit and he acknowledged his debt, 'simply' stating that he owed 'plenty of money'. Lee Chong played along and nodded 'gravely' to underline the apparent seriousness of the situation. Very few candidates got a sense of the elaborate game being played by Horace and Lee Chong. Nevertheless, Lee Chong knew Horace and his tricks too well to be taken in and was waiting for him to reveal his plan. The writer used dialogue and body language to show both men playing a role. Horace attempted to play on Lee Chong's emotions by claiming that he would hate the shadow of his debt hanging over his children and admitting that Lee Chong would offer no more credit, not even a pack of spearmint. Some candidates did see Horace's attempt to 'guilt-trip' Lee Chong. Lee Chong continued the 'game', his face suggesting agreement with Horace's analysis of the situation and his words repeating that Horace owed 'plenty of money'. All of this section of the text showed both Lee Chong and Horace playing their parts in a drama they both understood but Horace then produced the face-saving solution. One perceptive candidate described the situation as 'a complex power play'.

Horace offered to clear his debt by giving Lee Chong a building, which was 'flimsy' and already used to store Lee Chong's fertiliser and for which he had no immediate use. He told himself that it could be useful and 'valuable' in the unlikely event of a factory wanting to expand. However, Lee Chong did not dwell on the details and he quickly took the opportunity to resolve the situation with 'dignity' intact on both sides. The deal was concluded with mutual respect and Lee Chong threw in a bottle of whisky. The final touch was that no Abbeville child ever knew the lack of a stick of spearmint. The whole performance was really just an exercise in keeping up appearances.

The better answers saw the underlying decency and subtlety in the relationship but few candidates saw through the pretences to the essential kindness and generosity of Lee Chong.

- Q.4** This question covered a longer section of text and focused on the character of Mack, the leader of a band of homeless men with 'no families, no money and no ambitions', who appeared in the narrative just when Lee Chong was grappling with the problem of what to do with his newly-acquired building. Some candidates inferred that Mack was lazy or poor and that was quite reasonable. Some argued that he was 'a leader' and therefore must be smart.

Lee Chong 'stiffened' when Mack entered his store, fearing a concerted raid on his stock. Mack clearly had previous form as an experienced shoplifter or thief but on this occasion he 'laid out his cards with a winning honesty' and got straight to the point. Lee Chong just nodded and waited, knowing that he had to be on his guard as he was dealing with a slippery customer. Few candidates grasped what Mack was up to here and most did not see that Mack was a hustler and had a hustler's persuasive and plausible manner. Mack then presented his compelling case for him and his friends moving into the building. Mack made his proposal as if it were an act of generosity which would protect Lee Chong's interests. Mack painted an ominous picture of what might happen to the building without supervision by him and his friends. Kids might knock out the windows or the place might burn down if left unattended. In effect, Mack was operating a 'protection racket' but never was it done with such an air of innocence. Mack was blackmailing Lee Chong and using implied threats to get what he wanted. However, Lee Chong looked into Mack's eyes and

saw only a desire to make everyone happy. The writer used Lee Chong's vision of the future to indicate the pressure Mack was exerting. Mack had Lee Chong's mind picking its way 'as delicately as a cat through cactus', seeing the broken glass, smelling the smoke and seeing the flames creeping up the walls. Mack's trap had been 'sweetly done' and Lee Chong admitted to himself that 'he was beaten'. The writer had earlier described the 'negotiation' as a game of cards and the metaphor was appropriate. Lee Chong knew he was beaten. Mack had played his hand with consummate skill.

Mack proved to be 'generous' in victory, allowing Lee Chong to save face by agreeing to pay rent and keeping up the pretence by trying to negotiate a figure. No rent was ever paid (and no-one ever expected it to be paid) but Mack had his own moral code. He honoured his side of the bargain and assumed the role of Lee Chong's protector when drunks or kids threatened the store. Mack and his friends became loyal customers of Lee Chong and also adopted the maxim that 'you cannot steal from your landlord.'

The better candidates saw that a character who could have been presented in a very negative way was in fact amusing and engaging. He was an opportunist and a sharp operator who engaged in blackmail and extortion but he was part of a long tradition of lovable rogues. However, most candidates struggled to get the measure of the character and were often very unconvincing in their assertions.

- Q.5** Constructing a coherent argument which ranges across the whole text is not easy and the fact that this evaluation question comes at the end of the section when time is pressing only adds to the pressure as candidates are aware of how heavily weighted the writing is. This question is often sacrificed but abandoning ten marks is a high price to pay and better management of time would certainly help. Candidates should allocate the time available sensibly to ensure that an excessively long answer to one of the reading questions is not at the expense of 05. Few candidates can afford to throw away ten marks by not attempting the question.

This question asked for a personal response to the character of Lee Chong and proposed that he was 'a character to admire'. The best way to approach this question was to work methodically through the passage, evaluating Lee Chong's character as the story developed.

It was difficult to argue convincingly against the suggestion that Lee Chong was an admirable character but he was a businessman and interested in making money. He was not a charity or a branch of social services but there was no suggestion that he was grasping or predatory in his dealings with his customers. He gave credit to those who needed it and only refused it when debts reached a 'ridiculous' level. Some candidates mistakenly saw him as a money lender or even a loan shark but that was not correct. He was presented as hardworking and the precautions he took in guarding his stock seemed entirely sensible and justified. To some extent Lee Chong allowed himself to be exploited and, although he went through the motions of being in business to make money, his essential kindness was never really hidden.

In his dealings with Horace Abbeville, Lee played the role of the 'stern' businessman but he allowed Horace to initiate his proposition of a face-saving deal and he went along with the pretence, even offering a bill of sale to maintain the formalities. He did not humiliate his customers and the gesture of throwing in a bottle of whisky to sweeten the deal was revealing. The clinching touch for many candidates was the casually mentioned fact that none of the Abbeville children ever lacked a stick of spearmint.

When Mack appeared in the narrative, Lee Chong was quite understandably on his guard and his mind picked its way through the situation like a cat through cactus. However, he knew when he was beaten and he cut a deal with Mack which preserved self-respect on both sides. Lee Chong even persuaded himself that the deal with Mack was beneficial to himself in a variety of ways. And perhaps it was.

Section B

The four options offer opportunities to write imaginatively or from personal experience. The best writing is coherent and convincing and, preferably, legible.

The suggested length of answers is 450-600 words and brief answers are really self-penalising as they lack substance and development. This is not a plea for excessively long narratives but candidates need to give themselves an opportunity to show what they can do and provide enough evidence for examiners to make fair assessments.

- (a) Write about a time when you took part in a race.

This option did encourage some rather predictable tales of triumphs on the football pitch but it did offer the candidates an opportunity to write from experience. The trials and tribulations of sports day featured in a lot of the narratives. Better answers used convincing detail to engage the reader.

- (b) The Celebration.

This title was open and it was possible to interpret it in various ways. Most responses involved a journey from one place to another but some did use the title more imaginatively to describe 'journeys' which were emotional or even psychological.

- (c) Write a story which begins: That phone call changed my life.

This title encouraged the candidates to write about positive experiences, and it allowed plenty of scope. The title explicitly suggested a relatively restricted time frame, but some could not resist stories which covered years.

The age of most of the candidates was reflected in the number of successful driving tests.

- (d) Write a story which ends: ...and I felt rather pleased with myself.

Those who attempted this option had to structure a narrative which reached a given conclusion. That is never a particularly easy task and it requires planning and the ability to conceptualise a whole story. Those candidates who did attempt this option often struggled with structure and the endings were usually awkward.

Characteristics of Successful Responses

- Successful responses to reading questions link comments to quotations from the text accurately and appropriately.
- Successful responses to reading questions have coherence and cohesion. The use of bullet points is only helpful and appropriate in question 01.
- Successful writing has at least some connection to the title.
- Successful writing is often based on personal experience which gives the writing authenticity.

Areas for Improvement

In the reading section:

- In question 01, use a list of bullet points and ensure that the bullets are coherent and make sense.
- In question 05, make sure that enough time is available to ensure that this question is attempted with some substance.
- Answers which show relevance and insight are valued more than those which are lengthy but unfocused. A methodical approach almost always works best.

In the writing section:

- Pay attention to the structure as well as the content of narrative writing (titles where an ending is given require careful planning).
- Inconsistency with tenses is a real problem in writing and it undermines some potentially good writing.
- Control of expression is also an issue. Some candidates write at length but without paying attention to technical accuracy and control.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2025

COMPONENT 2

Overview of the Component

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across 6 assessment objectives (AOs)

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.
- AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- AO3 Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
- AO5 Communicate clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences and organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.
- AO6 Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Section A

The two reading texts for this examination were accounts of British royal coronations. One was a newspaper article about the coronation of King Charles III in 2023, and the other text was taken from Queen Victoria's diary, written on the day of her coronation in 1838.

The six questions covered the four reading assessment objectives and almost all candidates were able to respond to the events in the two accounts. Good candidates used the texts well to support their responses and were able to respond at length to the more demanding questions, while the responses of weaker candidates were frequently quite brief and lacked the range of detail necessary for a convincing response. In some cases, time-management issues meant some candidates could only offer brief and limited responses to the final reading question, while some omitted this question entirely.

Section B

In the first of the two writing tasks candidates were asked to write an article for a school or college magazine, with ideas and suggestions to encourage students to be more active. The second writing task asked candidates to write what they would say in a talk to their fellow students to persuade them to support a charity that they felt was particularly deserving.

The first task gave candidates opportunities to offer some information about the importance of becoming more active and then suggest some of the activities that would be appropriate, whilst the second task, whilst being persuasive in nature, also offered opportunities to include information about the work of the charity and its impact, and where appropriate, the personal involvement of the speaker in the charity. As usual, there was an expected length of 300-400 words for each task.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q1.1** This first question focused on the newspaper article, 'King Charles's Coronation: How people watched a day not seen for 70 years', with three one-mark questions that asked candidates to locate and select specific details from across the text. These were the familiar 'search and find' questions, but candidates needed to read the complete article. The first part of the question asked candidates what the weather was like on the day of the King's coronation. In the second paragraph, readers are told about the 'wet May weather', and towards the end of the article the weather is described as 'constant rain'. Most candidates were able to select the correct information without difficulty. The information for the second part of the question: How did Jennifer Lindsey-Clarke celebrate the coronation, appeared in the eighth paragraph of the article. Readers were told that she sculpted a life-sized model of the King's head from more than 17 litres of melted chocolate, and again most candidates correctly identified the information. However, some gave insufficient or incorrect information and failed to gain a mark, and this should serve as a reminder that reading the question carefully and checking the answer is important even in what are straightforward questions. For the final part of this question, candidates had to name one of the celebrities mentioned in the article who watched the coronation in Westminster Abbey. As with the other parts of this question, most were able to gain reward by noting either Emma Thompson or Katy Perry, but some stabbed at the names of people they had read about earlier in the article, with Sandra Hanna, Jon Davies and Karen Greenfield all mentioned in incorrect responses to the question. As in previous examinations, where candidates failed to gain reward it was most frequently a case of not reading the question carefully enough or responding with imprecision or a lack of clarity, rather than an inability to locate the appropriate part of the article. This opening question should have given candidates a clear flavour of the events on the day of the King's coronation and prepared them for tackling the next question.
- Q1.2** The second question asked candidates what impressions the writer gave of King Charles's coronation day, and how these impressions were created. As with previous 'craft of the writer' questions, those candidates who worked methodically through the whole text were usually the most successful, selecting and commenting on the impressions created by the descriptions of the way people reacted and behaved in response to the coronation, or suggesting what impressions were created from the information about the events on the day itself. There were relevant details in most of the paragraphs that offered some impressions about how the day was viewed and the best responses used the whole text, with perceptive comments and textual evidence. Weaker responses sometimes failed to cover more than two or three of the opening paragraphs of the article or largely reduced their responses to a collection of quotations, often with too little explanation or context. In some cases, the quotations were merely fragments from the text that lacked clarity or context.

The article began with the writer explaining how different people around the country reacted to the day of the coronation, and this was followed by an account of the King's journey to Westminster Abbey, details of the ceremony and some description of the scenes as the King and Queen returned to Buckingham Palace and greeted the crowds on the palace's balcony. From the opening paragraph, it was evident that the day was special for some, with the example of a woman from Barnsley in South Yorkshire making the 175-journey to London to 'soak up the atmosphere' in the capital. Readers were told that despite the wet weather, 'crowds came to central London', or gathered in public spaces in towns and cities across Britain to watch the ceremony on giant screens. The writer, Jon Kelly, gave examples of the views of people in various parts of England and Wales to the coronation, these offering different impressions of the what the day meant to them. Some candidates made good use of these opening paragraphs to show impressions that ranged from civic and personal pride, to those who felt it was 'an occasion that mattered', even for those who were not ardent royalists. Candidates were able to explore and comment on the way some people were interested to watch the events on television, while others, like Owen Williams, made it clear they had little interest in the proceedings or in King Charles. Good candidates captured the different impressions created of the day by careful selection of detail. For example, the writer included details of some who celebrated the coronation in unusual ways, with details of a model railway club building a miniature version of the coronation procession, and a chocolatier creating a chocolate model of the King's head, and many candidates gave these details some attention. Whilst some people celebrated, others gave voice to their objections in Trafalgar Square, with shouts of 'not my King.' The writer then described the journey of the King to Westminster Abbey, with the impression here that the 'cheering crowds' were celebrating the event and anxious to 'get a glimpse of the King and Queen.' Readers were told the ceremony was watched on TV around the world and when Charles was crowned King, well-wishers inside and outside the Abbey cried out, 'God Save the King', along with gun salutes fired in celebration across the UK. The impression of a celebratory mood was captured in the writer's description of the 'colourful spectacle of pomp and pageantry' with crowds standing in the 'constant rain' cheering and performing Mexican waves. One further impression of the day was captured by the comments of one woman who waited at the safety barriers at Buckingham Palace to see the appearance of the King and Queen, and having got to the front of the crowd, said 'excitedly' that the experience was 'absolutely amazing.' Good candidates were aware that by using the views and opinions of many ordinary people the writer was able to effectively capture the different impressions of an extraordinary day. Some commented on the use of the photograph on page 2, while others focused on particular language choices made by the writer.

Candidates who made use of the whole text often gained high marks, particularly where comments were supported by relevant textual evidence. Less successful responses were often brief or limited to just parts of the whole text (and sometimes just the opening paragraphs of the article), and in these responses, quotations, and particularly 'fragments of text', were used less well, sometimes lacking in context or explanation. Whilst there were weaker responses, there were also responses that showed a methodical approach, decent coverage of the article and sensible comments linked to the focus of the question.

- Q1.3** This question asked candidates to read and respond to the second text, which was a passage from Queen Victoria's diary, written on the day of her coronation on June 28th 1838. As usual, the question was in three parts and although simple 'search and find questions', they ensured that candidates read the whole text and should have prepared them for the more demanding question that followed.

The first part of the question simply asked what time Queen Victoria began her journey to Westminster Abbey, and most candidates had no difficulty locating the detail, 10.00 am, although some misread the question and either gave the time she woke up, or the time she got up. The second part of the question asked for a detail that showed Lord Melbourne felt great affection for Queen Victoria. There was a range of details in the third and fourth paragraphs that provided evidence of his affection, including the way he gave her 'a kind and fatherly look' when the crown was placed on Queen Victoria's head, and the way he was 'completely overcome' and 'very much affected' by the ceremony. In the following paragraph, when called upon to honour the Queen, she noted how, upon kneeling and kissing her hand, 'his eyes filled with tears'. Almost all candidates found some relevant detail to answer this part of the question. Finally, candidates were asked what Queen Victoria carried in her hands on the journey back to Buckingham Palace. This detail was included in the final paragraph, with most candidates correctly naming the sceptre and orb, although again there were some surprising errors, some suggesting she carried her crown, and others that she carried her ring in her hands. As with question 1.1, candidates who read both the text and the question carefully gained good marks, but some candidates showed a lack of care in the reading of the question.

- Q1.4** This question asked candidates to respond to the statement: 'Queen Victoria's diary extract shows how memorable her coronation day was' and explain to what extent they agreed with this view. The most effective way of tackling this 'evaluation' question was to work methodically through each paragraph, selecting and commenting on the details of the day from Queen Victoria's perspective, to show how she recorded and responded to the positive, and the less positive, aspects of the day. For example, in the opening paragraph she offers some precise details about the morning: she was awoken very early by the guns in Hyde Park firing a royal salute and the 'noise of the people and the bands'. When she did get up, she is surprised by the crowds of people, before she noted the precise time she left for Westminster Abbey in the Gold State Coach. Most candidates made some use of the details in this first paragraph, before moving on to suggest she was astonished by the scenes she witnessed on the way to the Abbey; she was overwhelmed by the size of the crowds and how they responded to her with 'good-humour and excessive loyalty', and how, in turn, she felt proud 'to be Queen of such a nation', but also alarmed because of the crush and pressure she saw in the crowds. Many candidates offered a view that Victoria found the journey to the Abbey memorable, and particularly noted her description of the 'deafening cheers' that greeted her upon her arrival. In describing the coronation ceremony, she recalls that when the crown was placed on her head, 'it was a most beautiful impressive moment'. Many candidates agreed that this would have been a particularly memorable part of the day for her, although weaker responses sometimes included this text fragment without explanation or context, leaving examiners unclear what 'it' referred to.

Although much of the day was thoroughly positive, Queen Victoria did include some details of the day that were probably memorable for all the wrong reasons, and many candidates commented on Lord Rolle tumbling down the steps in the Abbey, and then the archbishop putting the ring on the wrong finger, and causing Queen Victoria some pain in the effort to take it off. However, at the end of the ceremony, she says she found the people's shouts of 'God save the Queen', and 'the trumpets and the firing of the guns' in one single moment, a 'most overwhelming' spectacle, and good candidates suggested that these events would probably live long in her memory.

Good responses commented on what might be viewed as two memorable details in the final paragraph of her diary, one being the ‘distressing swaying’ of the Gold State Coach, which she found ‘unnerving’ and upsetting as she travelled back to Buckingham Palace, and while this was rarely mentioned in weaker responses, almost all responses were able to comment on the final details Queen Victoria recalls, where she writes of the cheering of the crowds and how she was affected by the show of affection and loyalty; her comment that she would remember the day ‘as the proudest of my life’ seemed a fitting end to what was clearly a momentous and memorable day.

Candidates who gained good marks did so by tracking the diary methodically through each of the five paragraphs and were able to accumulate a range of relevant details that supported the statement convincingly. Weaker responses often failed to make use of the whole text, sometimes limiting their response to just one or two paragraphs. Others made ineffective use of the textual details, often by quoting fragments of text that lacked supportive explanation or context.

- Q1.5** As usual, this four-mark question asked candidates to select relevant material from across the two texts. They were asked to explain briefly what readers were told about the coaches Queen Victoria and King Charles travelled in.

Dealing with each text separately was the most sensible approach and those who looked at Queen Victoria’s diary first usually had no trouble in noting that she had travelled in the Gold State Coach. This was drawn by eight horses but readers were also told that the Queen found her journey in the coach ‘unnerving’ because of the ‘distressing swaying of the coach. In contrast, King Charles travelled to Westminster Abbey in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach. This coach was heated and had anti-roll stabilisers, and was drawn by six Windsor Grey horses. Like Queen Victoria, he also made the journey back to Buckingham Palace in the Gold State Coach.

Most candidates were at least able to select a detail from each of the texts, although in some cases, some candidates dealing with the newspaper article incorrectly decided that King Charles had made the journey from Barnsley in three coaches, along with Sandra Hanna! However, as in previous examinations, candidates were able to gain full marks with just a sentence or two on each text that gave the precise details.

- Q1.6** The final reading question asked candidates to compare the reactions of people on the day of the coronations, and then to consider how the writers make the reactions of people clear to the readers. Candidates could answer the question either by dealing with each text in order, or by tackling each bullet point in order; either approach allowed candidates to gain good marks if they selected and commented on appropriate details.

In the newspaper article, many candidates recognised that the writer had reported on a range of reactions to the coronation from people across England and Wales. In general, reactions were positive, with some making the journey to London to witness the scenes there and to ‘soak up the atmosphere’ of the occasion. Others enjoyed the occasion by watching the coronation with others on big screens in towns and cities, with some suggesting ‘it was proud moment for the city’ or that it was an occasion not to be missed. The writer explained that many others ‘settled indoors to watch the events on television’ both in Britain and around the world, including one 100-year old, who was sure the King would, ‘make a good job of it.’ Many candidates were aware that not all were supportive of the occasion, with some people claiming to have no interest, and others protesting in Trafalgar Square. However, people’s

reactions were positive overall, the writer describing the ‘celebratory atmosphere’ among the cheering crowds, who performed Mexican waves and were not at all put off by the ‘constant rain.’

Queen Victoria’s diary captured the entirely positive reactions of people to her coronation. Her diary made it clear that there were huge crowds of people lining the route to Westminster Abbey, showing their ‘good humour and excessive loyalty’ towards her, and when she arrived at the Abbey, she was greeted by ‘deafening cheers’, confirming the affection the public felt for her, and when she emerged as Queen, she was greeted by the shouts of ‘God save the Queen’ which she described as ‘very great.’ Finally, making her way back to Buckingham Palace, she once again wrote about the cheering of the crowds, which she described as having ‘increased heartiness and renewed vigour’, and saying how much she valued people’s ‘affection and loyalty’ towards her.

In exploring how the writers made the reactions of people clear to readers, good candidates explored and commented on the way the writer of the newspaper article used the diverse opinions of people across England and Wales to illustrate how people reacted to the coronation, particularly through direct quotation. Others noted how the writer had captured the excitement of some who wanted to see the royal couple, or commented on the language used by the writer to capture the views of the protesters. Queen Victoria’s diary made clear the affection people felt for her in her description of their ‘excessive loyalty’ but also how she was affected by such shows of enthusiasm by the people. Some candidates probed the language of her diary, often commenting on her use of ‘deafening’ to describe the cheering that greeted her at Westminster Abbey.

In responding to the question, a significant number of candidates focused solely on the first bullet point, but accumulating detail from both texts still allowed candidates to gain a mark in Band 3. However, it was those candidates who were also prepared to respond to the second bullet point and could explain ‘how’, who were able to push into the higher bands. Some weaker candidates tried to tackle this question by creating a grid and then adding a few quotations – or fragments of quotations - they thought merited reward. It was an approach that was very limiting: quotations could rarely be used without any context or explanation, and indeed some that were used made little sense. Previous reports have suggested this approach rarely gained candidates good marks and it was a message perhaps worth repeating again here. Also, as in previous examinations, there were candidates whose poor time-management was such that they had allowed themselves too little time to tackle this final reading question in sufficient detail.

Section B

Q2.1 The first of the two writing tasks for candidates was to write an article for their school or college magazine, with ideas and suggestions to encourage students to be more active. Many candidates adopted an approach in which they outlined the benefits of becoming more active, often with statistics and the views of medical professionals to support a more active lifestyle. Sometimes, candidates offered some personal anecdotes about how their own lives, or those of a friend, had been transformed by an activity regime that saw them change from a sedentary lifestyle where ‘being active’ involved only mobile phone-scrolling or lying in bed watching Netflix, into a happier, fitter, healthier individual, with a wider circle of friends as a result of joining a sports club or regular visits to a gym.

Having established the importance of being more active, candidates gave suggestions about the sorts of activities others should consider. Where this shape and structure broadly formed the basis of the article, there were often supportive and detailed responses. Many candidates recognised that not every student would want to spend three evenings a week in the gym or running a half-marathon each week, and there were sensible suggestions inviting readers to try to make time for a short walk each day, or to offer to take the family dog for its walk. Others suggested that simply getting off the bus one stop earlier would be one way to start to improve their health and lifestyle. Suggestions about joining a sports club were frequent, as were suggestions about swimming, dance classes, voluntary work and so on.

Good responses included a range of ideas and suggestions, frequently concluding with a supportive sentence or two, along the lines of, 'You can do it.' Weaker responses often struggled to shape their articles to include some balance between why being active was important and the suggestions of activities, and indeed some failed to include any ideas or suggestions for being more active at all. Most candidates had a clear notion of their intended audience, but some weaker responses appeared to aim the article at college governors or a school's headteacher, some wrote their response as a letter and a few offered what appeared to be a promotional article from a gym or leisure centre. Examiners saw articles of good length but weaker responses were often brief, lacking both range and development, making it difficult to gain marks in the higher bands.

- Q2.2** In the second writing task candidates were asked to write what they would say in a talk to students in their school or college, in order to persuade them to support a charity that they felt deserved support. Many candidates shaped their talk so that they began by offering some information about the particular charity, the work it carried out, the impact it had and why it deserved the support of the students, before moving on to suggest how it might be supported, some simply suggesting donating money, while others suggested money-raising activities in the school, items that could be donated to the charity, or practical hands-on support through volunteering or sponsored activities. As with the first task, some candidates offered first-hand experience of involvement with the charity and many included persuasive tales about how individuals had been supported through the particular charity's work. Candidates chose a wide range of charities, from well-known national and international organisations to much smaller or local groups, and ranged from those charities working to find cures for health conditions and diseases to those supporting the homeless; animal and children's charities, local hospices and emergency services such as RNLI and air ambulance services were also the focus of candidates' talks. The most successful responses gave some clear information about the charity and the scope of its work, and why it warranted the support of the school or college. They then explained how students could effectively support the charity, often with some persuasive anecdote or explanation about how any donations would be used. Tone was important here, and good candidates recognised that, in appealing to students, the talk needed to be measured as well as persuasive. Examiners enjoyed many of these engaging responses but weaker responses sometimes struggled with the task, in some cases failing to name a charity but simply suggested that supporting charities was important and worthwhile. Others gave little information or few details about how students could support a charity. These responses tended to be brief, possibly the result of issues of time-management and sadly, some candidates failed to tackle the task at all.

There was an expectation that each of the writing tasks would be in the region of 300-400 words, and good responses were usually of this length, allowing the topic in question to be developed in some detail. Weaker responses were often much briefer, and as a result, aspects such as range, detail or development tended to be limited. Candidates could gain up to 8 of the 20 marks available for each writing task for vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling (VSSPS), but accuracy was an issue for many, with responses containing errors which cost candidates valuable marks.

Characteristics of Successful Responses

- Good responses in the key, high tariff reading questions (1.2, 1.4 and 1.6) were usually detailed and showed a steady accumulation of a number of points that gained reward. These responses showed a methodical, careful approach to reading the text and made sensible, sometimes insightful, comments that clearly responded to the question.
- Good reading responses made effective, and sometimes quite extensive, use of quotations from the text(s). These were well-chosen, with appropriate contextual detail or explanation, and provided strong supporting evidence for the comments they were linked with.
- Good writing responses were sustained, clear about the intended audience and had some shape and structure. In both tasks, good responses balanced a range of information with some persuasion, whether in 2.1 that was to encourage others to be more active, or in 2.2 to support a particular charity. In each of these tasks, good responses were assured and engaging, as well as persuasive.

Areas for improvement

- Careful reading of questions is a pre-requisite for success and too many marks were lost because candidates failed to check exactly what was being asked for in some of the questions. Some of the responses to the reading questions continue to lack clarity or precision, and in some cases, lose the focus of the question.
- Quotations can be very useful in supporting a viewpoint or as evidence, but they need to be clear and precise; the use of `text fragments` that do not make complete sense is still widespread. In most cases, quotations need to be given some explanation or contextual detail for them to be effective.
- As a way of responding to 1.6, the use of a grid is to be discouraged, as points of detail are rarely explained well or in sufficient detail, and quotations are often reduced to `fragments` that make limited sense. In some cases, candidates sometimes strained to pursue comparisons that may not have existed, purely in order to establish a detail in each side of the grid.
- Writing responses that are brief (well below the expected 300-400 words) rarely gain good marks, because they lack range, detail and development. The exam paper gives space for some planning of the work and this would be a useful step for many. Whatever the task, the suggestion of a brief introductory paragraph, followed by three or four paragraphs that explore specific points relevant to the topic and finishing with a simple concluding paragraph has been recommended in previous reports, and this too would help candidates shape their responses.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2025

COMPONENT 3

Overview of the Component

The vast majority of candidates entered were resitting GCSE English and opted to carry forward the Spoken Language grade they were awarded in the summer series. Centres where no candidates were entering for the first time were therefore not required to upload any recorded evidence of the candidates' presentations for monitoring. They did need to make this clear, however, by entering *Carry Forward* next to the candidates' names on the IAMIS online mark sheet by the November 5th deadline.

As in previous November series, there was a small number of candidates sitting GCSE English for the first time or entering new work to improve their Spoken Language grades. This meant that the centre was required to upload recordings of these candidates' presentations for monitoring. It was then the responsibility of the assigned monitor to check that the centre's assessment was secure and the correct grades had been awarded for each candidate. In a few centres, recorded evidence had not been uploaded making it impossible to monitor the accuracy of the centre's assessment and the grades awarded. It was also not acceptable merely to upload a copy of the relevant criteria as a word document. Where new work is submitted, all centres must provide recorded evidence of the candidates' presentations as evidence of the accuracy of their assessment.

In line with the specification requirements, teachers deciding on the grade for each presentation should have applied the competency assessment model rather than using a best-fit approach. The competency model requires that **all** the criteria for a grade have been met before the grade can be awarded. If even one criterion has not been met, the candidate cannot be awarded that grade and should be awarded the grade below. In instances where the assessment was not judged by the monitors to be secure, the centres will be contacted by letter in the Spring Term to clarify why the grade(s) awarded were not in line with standards. This contact is intended as support for centres to help them adjust their marking in time for the summer series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

It was noticeable this year that there were very few examples of candidates being awarded Distinction grade and most of those candidates awarded Pass grade had been accurately assessed in line with agreed standards.

However, the marking of Merit grade was often less secure and in a significant number of cases monitors judged the assessment to have been inaccurate. Merit criteria specifies that candidates must express challenging ideas, using a range of vocabulary and organise their material clearly to meet audience needs. They also need to demonstrate that they have achieved the purpose of their talk and have responded with appropriate formality and detail in response to feedback on their presentation. Those candidates awarded Merits did not always meet all these criteria and should have been awarded Pass grades instead.

- It was encouraging to note that the candidates in general did not rely on simply reading from scripts, demonstrating some audience awareness through eye contact and varied intonation.
- However, the relatively relaxed conditions were not always helpful to candidates aiming beyond Pass grade and a slightly more formal set-up might have been an advantage.
- While the candidates often exhibited more confidence and fluency in line with their age and most seemed well motivated and engaged, they were too often hindered by the poor topic choices. It seemed clear in many cases that the candidates would have benefited from more guidance on how to select topics with the appropriate level of challenge. Many of the talks were enjoyable and delivered in a lively manner but the descriptive material often led to a straightforward and factual, even chronological, account which disadvantaged the candidates and limited them to Pass grade.
- Monitors were impressed by the fluent expression of candidates for whom English was a second language. However, when their material was a personal account, such as describing their experiences of moving to the UK, there was not the challenge or range of vocabulary needed to satisfy Merit grade criteria. A topic like this could have been adapted slightly to inject a little more complexity and objectivity instead of relying solely on an anecdotal approach, giving the speaker more opportunity to express challenging ideas. For instance, the task could have been given a clear purpose to achieve in advising representatives from the government, local authority or the school or college's senior leadership how best to facilitate the transition to a new country.
- In some cases, the candidates had met Merit criteria in their talks, having tackled suitably challenging content, but fell at the last hurdle as their responses to questions in the feedback section were too brief and perfunctory, lacking the required formality and detail.
- Sometimes this seemed to be the result of inadequate preparation by the candidate but there were also instances where the teacher's interruption of the candidate's initial talk or informal, overly chatty feedback affected the quality of the questions and the responses, limiting the candidate to Pass criteria only.
- As in the summer series, there were occasions where well-meaning teachers, seeking to put the candidate at his or her ease, took over the structure of the talk or dominated the Question-and-Answer section. This meant that the candidate had not clearly organised their material in the talk or gave responses which were brief and straightforward, sometimes saying less than the teacher.

Characteristics of successful presentations.

Candidates tend to perform better when they have been:

- guided by a teacher when choosing their topic to ensure an appropriate level of challenge.
- advised of the benefits of having a clearly defined purpose to achieve.
- shown examples of successful presentations demonstrating some effective strategies to engage the audience.
- advised against simply reading a written script
- guided on how to use online resources, including AI, to their advantage.
- made aware of the drawbacks of simply downloading unedited material.
- encouraged to practise their presentation
- reminded of the importance of the question-and-answer section and advised on how to respond to suitably challenging feedback.

Some key areas for development

Centres might consider some of the following suggestions to help candidates prepare for this component:

- assign one member of department the overall responsibility for Spoken Language
- share and consolidate good practice in the department and aim at consistency in approach.
- ensure all teachers involved in assessment are fully familiar with the specification requirements and the assessment criteria.
- standardise the centre's assessment to ensure it is in line with the exemplars.
- review departmental practice in relation to task setting to ensure all candidates are advised on an appropriate level of challenge and the importance of a clear purpose to achieve.
- advise candidates against simply reading from scripts and encourage them to practise their presentations.
- give candidates opportunities to see and discuss examples of presentation skills, using the standardising exemplars.
- advise candidates on how best to make use of internet resources, including AI.
- make candidates aware of the importance of the Question-and-Answer section and the need to prepare for this aspect of the presentation.

Support for centres in preparing for Component 3

In order to help centres and individual teachers involved in assessing candidates for the Spoken Language component, there is further advice in the Principal Monitor's Report for the summer series 2025. In addition, there is practical guidance on the Eduqas website covering key points such as task setting, presentation skills and the feedback section, as well as how to apply the competency assessment model. The standardising exemplars available to download from the Eduqas Portal are also a valuable resource for teachers and candidates showing clearly successful and less successful approaches to the presentation.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

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

Tel: 029 02240 4288

Email: gcseenglish@eduqas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [GCSE English Language | Eduqas](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Eduqas](#)

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Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

Regional Rep Team

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