



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
AS**

SUMMER 2019

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Component 1: Comparative Analysis and Creative Writing

General Comments

In Component 1, candidates have two questions to answer: comparative analysis of a poem and an unseen text, and creative writing, which has three strands to it. Effective planning of time is essential, and we are now seeing this being dealt with effectively as most candidates are answering every question. In cases where candidates did not plan their time effectively, they did not complete, or in some cases, attempt, the comparison of their own writing and therefore were not able to achieve higher than half of the marks for Question 2. In this situation, it was often the case that the candidate had written over-long creative pieces and this had cost them valuable time for the commentary.

Technical accuracy and quality of written expression is assessed in AO1 for Question 1 and 2(c) and in AO5 for Question 2(a) and (b) which candidates are reminded of in the exam paper. In many responses, however, written expression contained lapses, not only in key spellings but in sentence construction, punctuation use, and sometimes in clarity of meaning.

It is vital that candidates are equipped with a wide-ranging set of technical terms before attempting this exam, in particular for Questions 1 and 2(c). The best responses this summer used a wide range of technical terms confidently (AO1), explored approaches meaningfully (AO2), and made thorough comparisons and contrasts between the texts (AO4). Weaker responses often struggled to use technical terms, with many including just one or two basic terms; had difficulty linking the approaches identified to the meanings in the texts for Question 1 or in their own writing for Question 2(c); or failed to compare and contrast effectively. There are online CPD resources available on the Eduqas website to assist with the teaching of terminology as well as frameworks for supporting comparative responses. It is vital that centres make full use of the resources on offer to best serve the interests of their candidates.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Comparative Analysis of Poetry and Unseen Text

Candidates had to write about the poem 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge (September 3, 1802)' by William Wordsworth, taken from their anthology, and a choice of unseen texts; they could either write about an extract from a novel, 'If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things' by Jon McGregor (2002), or an extract from a television news report entitled 'London. Best city in the world?' by reporter Phil Black for CNN news channel (2016). All three dealt with the presentation of cities, in particular London, though the television news report also mentioned Sydney, and candidates were asked to compare and contrast how cities had been presented in the poem and one of the unseen texts.

There was a reasonably even distribution of responses to the unseen choices offered, with some choosing to explore the novel extract as mirroring several aspects of Wordsworth's poem, and some preferring to consider the way that negative attitudes towards London were conveyed through the news report.

On the whole candidates handled the analysis of the poem well, identifying some key linguistic and literary features, with most choosing to focus on the description of London's beauty shown in the opening lines, as well as considering the listing in "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples", and dealing well with the possible meanings of the text. There was misreading of the poem in a handful of cases, with some candidates struggling to read Wordsworth's passionate tone and wondering instead whether the poem might be a satire on industrialisation and the corrupt in power. There may be some room for this interpretation in Wordsworth's choice of early morning setting, before the "mighty heart" wakes, though to suggest Wordsworth's hatred and condemnation of London is going too far. Most candidates, however, securely identified tone and attitude in the poem and demonstrated understanding of some of the subtler ideas in the poem. On the whole candidates handled comparisons well, identifying some key connections between the texts. Some responses correctly commented on the poetic form and metre of Wordsworth's poem, though few made use of the fact that it was a sonnet written in iambic pentameter, and most made useful connections to the similar positive description of a beautiful and melodic London in Text C. Many commented on the fact that despite their overall similarities in tone, McGregor's London was urban, busy and he is drawn to its chaos and noise, whereas Wordsworth's London is particularly still and silent, and described as part of a pastoral landscape.

Productive links were also made to the unseen extract from Black's news report speech with many candidates identifying key points of difference between the two texts, with most commenting on the minor sentences used by Black to outline the chaos of London, "So many people. Everywhere", contrasting this to Wordsworth's unpeopled city. Most candidates securely identified the audience and purpose for this spoken text and better responses made reference to its polarised aspects for entertainment news reporting. It was impressive to read work from candidates that dealt particularly well with AO4, exploring connections. Rather than just offering a blanket contrast of 'positive' presentations in the poem and Text C, some were able to see nuances in the presentation of cities and commented that whilst Black's tone was much more satirical and negative than Wordsworth's, they shared a similar love for London, and attempted to account for the reasons behind this.

Errors in the identification of terms was a sometimes an issue here, as in Question 2(c), the most frequently of which was the misidentification listing in the poem, with the lists used on the sixth and tenth lines analysed as asyndetic, rather than syndetic. There was some problem identifying word classes in all three texts, in particular a tendency to struggle with narrative voice and confusion over nouns and pronouns. Some candidates dealt very well with some challenging aspects of syntax in the unseen texts, particularly the imperative mood in Text B, and this was pleasing to see, as they had obviously been very well-prepared for the examination.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- a range of terms from across the language framework accurately and applied sensitively in order to comment on meanings
- using the question as a focus throughout the response, dividing different aspects of their presentation between paragraphs

- a comparative approach, either moving between the two texts throughout the response, or dealing with the poem first before moving on to the unseen text and then making connections
- even coverage of the poem and the unseen text of choice, considering material from the whole text, rather than solely focusing on openings and endings.

Areas for improvement:

- Avoid long opening paragraphs that establish general audience and purpose of texts. A brief introduction is best, outlining key attitudes to the topic in hand – in this case the presentation of cities – and then move on to close textual analysis, avoiding often spurious comments on intended audiences.
- Keep track of the use of a range of terminology from integrated study. To demonstrate 'clear evidence' of terminology, candidates need to make sure that they are not repeating the same few terms time and time again.
- Explore connections between texts in a range of ways: compare the presentation of cities through content, technical terms and features; offer nuanced and detailed connections that consider that whilst two texts might be broadly similar in their presentation, there are still key differences in tone and attitude.

Section B: Creative Writing and Commentary

As previous reports have stated, the key to doing well on this section relies on effective time management and planning in order that enough links are embedded in the two written pieces so that pertinent connections can be made in 2(c) at relative speed. Candidates needed to pay careful attention to genre, audience and purpose in the written tasks and should have made sure that they were producing the text type that they have been set. It would be useful for centres to reinforce to candidates that, for AO5, examiners are looking for evidence of awareness of genre, audience and purpose, as well as register and voice. Quality of written expression is also assessed under AO5.

- 2** **(a)** Write an extract from a novel describing a city in winter.
 (b) Write an extract from a travel vlog for an episode entitled 'This is the best city in the world!'

Question 2(a) asked candidates to write in a genre and register with which hopefully they were familiar. We read a range of secure and engaging responses, including plenty of descriptions of snowball fights, car crashes and bad traffic, and lost gloves, with most concluding with a comment on the beauty of a city in the snow, no doubt influenced by Wordsworth in Section A.

Some candidates chose unusual settings – the Vatican as a city worked particularly well and made for a haunting description of it at night in a storm. Most contained a secure sense of audience and purpose, and candidates showed themselves to be familiar with fiction writing, the more successful of which confidently crafted descriptions with original imagery and thoughtful angles on setting and character. Less successful were those whose responses contained many technical errors, some where subject and verb disagreed, some which slipped unsuccessfully between past and present tense, and those where a first-person voice became second-person and struggled to maintain an even tone; equally, there were some candidates who failed to move beyond simply outlining some very general descriptions of wintry weather.

Overall, the travel vlog task was slightly more problematic, with many candidates struggling to find the appropriate tenor and register for the spoken piece. This is a problem which has been noted in previous reports, and candidates should be encouraged to practise a range of spoken text types to make sure they understand what is required of the genre.

Most candidates used the first-person voice securely, and most were able to adopt the voice of a vlog host with some success. The more successful responses were able to use elements of speech to craft and shape the vlog and engage the audience with a lively, energetic tone ("Hi Guys!" was a common feature here), and some were genuinely imaginative in their use of what constituted features of a 'best city'. Some candidates struggled with the vlog genre, and misread the question, writing a travel guide rather than a vlog spoken piece, so produced pieces very similar to their 2(a) response, florid descriptions of a city with limited sense of audience and purpose.

(c) An analytical commentary

It was in responses to this question that candidates who had not managed their time effectively struggled. Often, over-long responses to Section A and/or creative pieces tended to result in candidates not completing or in some cases even starting this question.

The key to success here was in the strength of the links made between the two written pieces, and it is sensible to suggest to students that they should prepare and plan for these links by including similar and different features in their two pieces. Some were lost for what to compare and offered very general comments, often venturing into evaluation of what was and what was not successful in their written pieces, which is not necessary. Whilst there are a range of approaches that could be taken in this question, those who opted to analyse linguistic and literary features of both pieces concurrently did well, as did those who used the frameworks of language loosely to structure their connections, but who moved beyond it in order to improve the quality of their links. Whilst terminology (AO1) is worth only 5 marks here, it seemed that the use of a range of terms is crucial to successful analysis of language choice and impacts too (AO2, 5 marks), which in turn has an impact on the quality of links made (AO3, 10 marks).

There is a need for candidates to get straight to linguistic and literary analysis in their commentary – long introductions evaluating their general choices, outlining where the rest of their novel would go, or considering intended audiences for their travel vlog with no textual analysis, failed to hit the assessment objectives soon enough.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- secure awareness of genre, audience and purpose in 2(a) and 2(b)
- a range of features in both creative tasks in order to compare them in the commentary 2(c)
- a high degree of technical accuracy in all three tasks, making sure that spellings, punctuation and organisation of material is secure.

Areas for improvement:

- Section B, Question 2(c) responses need to comment on and explore connections between written pieces thoughtfully, which is best done when candidates embed and then comment on a range of linguistic and literary terms.
- Comparisons are key to Question 2(c), and responses needed to do more than just comment on one written piece and then another.
- Length of responses to 2(a) and 2(b): exceeding suggested word length is self-penalising as it leads to timing problems with 2(c).

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Component 2: Drama and Non-Literary Texts

General Comments

In Component 2, candidates are required to answer questions about two texts: one question about a play text and a question about a non-literary prose text. The play text question is in two parts: an extract analysis question and a whole play question. The non-literary text is one question covering the whole text.

Time management is a vital skill for candidates in Component 2, where successful candidates use one hour to answer the play text question and one hour for the non-literary text question. The overwhelming number of candidates demonstrated effective use of time management by answering fully the questions on both sections.

In a few cases the balance of answer length for the play text question did not reflect the balance of marks available. A few candidates wrote longer answers for the extract question than the whole play question despite there being fewer marks available for it.

Overall, candidates' written expression, assessed through AO1, was clear and precise. Occasionally a small number of candidates made grammatical or spelling slips. AO1 is assessed in both sections of Component 2 so candidates should endeavour to write accurately at all times.

More successful responses were underpinned by a secure range of technical terms also assessed by AO1. Candidates who could utilise both linguistic and literary terminology with accuracy could access the highest bands for AO1. A further characteristic of such responses was the candidates' ability to explore meaning, assessed through AO2, in the set texts with care and precision; less successful responses, however, selected material of limited relevance to the question being answered. Whereas more successful answers could make specific and pertinent points about contextual factors and their relevance to the production and/or reception of the set texts, less successful candidates made very broad or vague references to context and in a few cases contextual comments were almost absent.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A Post 1900 drama (open book): Summary of key points

Candidates had to answer a two-part question on a play text. The first part required close analysis of a named extract while the second part called for knowledge of the whole play and relevant contextual factors.

The balance of marks here is important for candidates to consider as part (ii) has more marks available and successful responses reflected this in the comparative length of their responses. It is worth noting that AO3 is only rewarded in part two of the response. Several candidates included fairly substantial contextual observations in their answers to part (i), the extract analysis, where AO3 is not assessed.

Successful responses to part (ii) of Section A typically explored extracts from the play that were wholly relevant to the chosen question and of sufficient length to allow meaning to be explored in some depth. Strong responses could explore the form with insight. Aspects of stage craft were analysed carefully by successful candidates. Less successful responses sometimes referred to “the book” or even “the novel”.

In these part (ii) responses, successful responses integrated contextual factors into the main body of the answer. Higher achieving candidates could link their chosen episodes to relevant context, typically but not exclusively, biographical, historical, psychological or sociological. In less successful responses, context was sometimes referred to in passing in an introduction or conclusion but infrequently in the main body of the answer.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- coverage of a wide range of linguistic and literary terms in both part (i) and part (ii)
- focus on the key word(s) in the question to produce a specific analysis of the text
- good knowledge of the whole play in part (ii) seen in the selection of relevant and substantial episodes
- in part (ii) only, relevant and specific contextual information in the response as appropriate
- clear awareness of the form of the text – a play text intended for performance.

Areas for improvement:

- In part (i) avoid broad introductions and immediately analyse the words and phrases in the named extract.
- Consider balance of marks between part (i) and part (ii) and link to length of response.
- Avoid contextual comments in part (i), keeping the focus on relevant assessment objectives.
- Be able to comment on a wider range of both linguistic and literary terms.

Individual texts:

Alan Bennett: The History Boys

There were no responses seen to this text this year.

Diane Samuels: Kindertransport

This was a very popular choice again this year. Successful candidates could explore the extract question in detail by considering the meanings conveyed by a wide range of terminology. Less successful responses did not cover the extract in sufficient detail or sometimes wrote at disproportionate length on a small number of words or phrases from the extract. Several candidates referred to contextual factors in the extract answer despite AO3 not being assessed here.

In part (ii), whole play question successful responses could quickly identify relevant episodes to analyse and directly link them to their chosen question. There were pleasing responses on “childhood” that demonstrated awareness of this theme through analysis of the characters of Eva and Faith in particular. Question 4 also produced thoughtful responses about characters being shaped by memories of the past, especially Eva/Evelyn. A few responses demonstrated some confusion over names of characters.

Edward Albee: Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf

There were no responses seen to this text this year.

Brian Friel: Translations.

Although a relatively small number of candidates responded to this text, it was pleasing to see successful responses to question 7 and question 8. For the former question, responses considered Owen's return to the rural, Gaelic-speaking setting after living in the anglicised city. High scoring responses to the question about the treatment of women selected several female characters and examined their situations through the language choices made by Friel.

Many responses carefully integrated relevant contextual information, especially historic and linguistic points. For question 8 successful responses showed a sensitivity to the clash between the Irish characters and the English soldiers set out in the extract. In part (ii), successful candidates wrote with clarity about Yolland and Lancey in particular and their interaction with a wide range of Irish characters. Again, the context of the Anglo-Irish situation was integrated with care by successful candidates. A few candidates appeared to confuse the context of the play's setting with the context of the play's first production in 1980.

Tennessee Williams: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Responses were seen to both question 9 and question 10. Successful responses to the question 9 extract discussed with clarity the characters of Big Daddy and Big Mama using a wide range of terminology. Less successful candidates were limited by a narrow range of terminology or by being restricted by selecting a limited range of words and phrases from the extract. Some responses wasted time when analysing the extract by including several contextual points when AO3 was not being assessed. For the part (ii) question, successful responses explored death through analysing several characters, notably Big Daddy and Skipper.

There were fewer responses to question 10 and successful responses explored Gooper's behaviour through close focus on the whole extract outlined in the question. Again, some responses strayed into making contextual comments which are not assessed in part (i). In part (ii) of question 10 successful responses selected relevant Gooper episodes from across the whole play and successfully integrated context that was often historic, sociological or political in nature.

Section B: Non-literary text study (open book): Summary of key points

Section B required candidates to answer one question on the whole text of their chosen non-literary text in one hour. Three assessment objectives were assessed here, each worth 20 out of a possible 60 marks.

Overall successful responses to the non-literary texts could quickly identify and explore relevant episodes from across the whole text, so demonstrating a firm grasp of overview. These responses typically integrated specific contextual factors as relevant to their analysis. Less successful responses to Section B sometimes struggled to find episodes of clear relevance to the chosen question. There was some evidence of choosing episodes which may have been pre-prepared or remembered from class work which were of limited relevance to the chosen question. Less successful responses typically demonstrated a narrower grasp of the whole text. Such answers were sometimes characterised by limited focus on context, which affected their marks for AO3.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- a clear focus on the relative balance of AOs
- a range of firmly relevant episodes from across the whole text to answer a specific question
- identify and explore a wide range of both linguistic and literary terms in chosen episodes
- integrated specific and relevant contextual information in the main body of the answer.

Areas for improvement:

- Avoiding shoehorning in pre-prepared episodes which are of limited relevance to the chosen question.
- Better focus on integrating specific contextual comments.
- Clear overview of whole text when selecting episodes for analysis.

Individual texts:

Andrea Ashworth: Once in a House on Fire

Answers were seen to both question 11 and 12, although the former was more popular. Successful responses to question 11 usually selected Andrea herself as a focus although candidates also looked more broadly at her mother and siblings too. Successful candidates could correctly employ a wide range of terminology and explore the meanings behind these choices. Contextual factors dealt with in successful responses included observations about Britain in the 1970s and 1980s especially political and social events under Labour and Conservative governments. Less successful candidates often chose a restricted range of terminology, and contextual comments were sometimes very broad, lacking in specific detail.

Jenny Diski: Skating to Antarctica

No responses were seen to this text.

Dave Eggers: A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius

No responses were seen to this text.

Truman Capote: In Cold Blood

This was by some way the most popular non-fiction text. There were fewer responses to question 17 than question 18. More successful responses to the former question showed a clear selection of episodes which illustrated the concept of patriarchy with insight. Some less successful responses did not fully demonstrate a knowledge of patriarchy and in some cases appeared to confuse it with capitalism. Responses to question 18 were more numerous, and the character-based nature of the question appeared to offer candidates of all abilities with a wide range of episodes to analyse. Successful responses often chose to explore authorial bias in the presentation of Perry Smith's character. Such responses often integrated contextual information about Capote with precise analysis grounded in a wide range of terminology. Less successful responses often contained more simplistic character portraits of Smith and sometimes a lack of factual knowledge of episodes in the text connecting to his murder of the Clutter family. Less successful responses typically had a weaker grasp of relevant context.

George Orwell: Homage to Catalonia

Responses were seen to both questions 19 and 20. Successful responses to the former could select significant episodes centred on different places in the text and carefully explore Orwell's differing responses to each place. Successful responses could integrate contextual factors which could have influenced Orwell's writing such as his own political views and the broader situation in Spain and Europe. Some less successful responses covered too many places in insufficient detail to allow careful exploration of meaning. For question 20 successful responses selected episodes that firmly demonstrated suffering and hardship and discussed these episodes through a wide range of both linguistic and literary terminology. Less successful responses tried to shoehorn episodes into their answers which did not especially demonstrate "suffering and hardship" such as experience of bad weather or eating tinned food. Again, covering too many episodes in limited detail was a feature of less successful responses that resulted in a more superficial exploration of meaning.



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