



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
AS**

SUMMER 2018

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Unit	Page
Component 1	1
Component 2	5

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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COMPONENT 1: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE WRITING

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; we are now seeing this being dealt with effectively and most candidates are answering every question on the exam paper. In cases where candidates did not plan their time effectively, they did not complete, or in some cases attempt, the commentary on 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 are assessed in AO1 for Question 1 and Question 2(c), and in AO5 for Question 2 parts (a) and (b). In some 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 using just one or two basic terms. Others had difficulty linking the approaches identified to the meanings in the texts for Question 1 or in their own writing for Question 2 (c), and some 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.

Section A: Comparative Analysis of Poetry and Unseen Text

Candidates had to write about the poem 'A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General', taken from their anthology, and a choice of unseen texts. They could have written either about an extract from a eulogy given by Barack Obama for Ted Kennedy or an extract from an obituary written by Hunter S. Thompson about Richard Nixon. All three dealt with the legacies of political figures and candidates were asked to compare and contrast how political figures 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 use the eulogy for Ted Kennedy as a counterpoint to Swift's poem, and some preferring to consider the way that negative attitudes are conveyed through the Richard Nixon obituary. 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 mock shock shown in the opening lines, as well as considering the parallel syntax in "Nor widows' sights, nor orphans' tears", and dealing well with the possible meanings of the text. There was misreading of the poem in some cases, with some candidates struggling to read Swift's satirical tone and wondering instead whether the poem might be a nostalgic homage to a great and benevolent leader. Most candidates, however, securely identified tone and attitude in the poem and demonstrated understanding of some of the subtler sarcasm in the poem.

On the whole, candidates handled comparisons well, identifying some key connections between the texts. Most responses correctly commented on the poetic form and metre of Swift's poem and made useful connections to the similar negative description of a corrupt and immoral political leader in Text C. Productive links were also made to the unseen extract from Obama's speech with many candidates identifying key points of comparison between the two texts, with most commenting on the parenthetic asyndetic list used by Obama to outline the different laws which Kennedy championed, contrasting this to the Duke's lack of empathy to others. Most candidates securely identified the audience and purpose for this spoken text, and better responses made reference to its colloquial aspects. Similarly, candidates were able to compare the attitudes of Swift and Thompson's obituary with many looking at the similarities of language used in the two, such as the use of metaphorical and rhetorical features to describe political figures. It was impressive to read work from candidates that dealt particularly well with AO4, exploring connections. Rather than just offering a blanket comparison of 'negative' presentations in the poem and Text C, some were able to see nuances in the presentation of political figures and commented that Thompson's tone was much more vitriolic and less subtle than Swift's own, 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). Errors which occurred most frequently were the misidentification of sentence types in the poem, with the first two lines analysed as simple or even complex sentences. 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. Listing often proved to be challenging, with misidentification of both syndetic and asyndetic lists. Some candidates dealt very well with some challenging aspects of syntax in unseen texts, and this was pleasing to see as they had obviously been very well prepared for the examination.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Avoided lengthy introductions rewriting the examination rubric or giving unnecessary details about intended audience and purpose.
- Used a range of terms from across the language framework accurately, and applied them thoughtfully in order to comment on meanings.
- Used the question 'how political leaders are presented' as a focus throughout the response, dividing different aspects of their presentation between paragraphs.
- Adopted 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.
- Ensured 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

- Focus on attitude and tone to help with AO2, 'Analyse the way meanings are shaped'. A useful strategy would be considering a sentence starter such as 'Political leaders are presented as being...' and using this to focus first readings of texts and initial annotation.
- 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 aren't using the same few terms time and time again.
- Explore connections between texts in a range of ways; compare the presentation of leaders through content, technical terms and features. Offer nuanced and detailed connections which 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 and connections are embedded in the two written pieces so that pertinent comparisons 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 examiners are, for AO5, 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.

- Q.2 (a) Write a blog entry entitled ‘The World Needs Inspirational Leaders’. OR,**
Q.2 (b) Imagine that you are a tour guide, leading a walking tour entitled ‘Heroes and Villains: A Walking Tour!’ Write an extract from your talk.

Question 2(a) asked candidates to write in a genre and register with which they were hopefully familiar. There was a range of lively and engaging responses, from ones which discussed the failings of current political leaders with some humour, sarcasm and vitriol – no doubt influenced by Thompson’s tone in Section A – to responses that expressed grave concerns and ended with calls to arms. Most contained a strong sense of audience and purpose, and candidates showed themselves to be familiar with blog writing, the more successful of which framed the blog post as ‘Topic of the Week’, or ‘Politics Thursday’, for example. Less successful were those whose responses read more like motivational speeches or even advertisements; equally, there were some candidates who failed to move beyond simply outlining some very general criticisms of nameless leaders. Candidates are reminded to read the task thoroughly – some did not address the task which asked them to offer practical advice for future leaders.

On the whole, candidates found the walking tour task slightly more problematic, with some struggling to find the appropriate tenor and register for the spoken piece. This is a problem which has been noted in previous reports, and I would encourage candidates 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 narrative voice, and most were able to adopt the voice of a tour guide with some success. The more successful responses were able to use elements of speech to craft and shape the talk and to introduce the tour to their audience. Some were genuinely imaginative in their use of what constituted heroes and villains. Many took the task literally and wrote about superheroes such as Batman, Spiderman et al. Where this was done as part of a theme park or film studio tour, it worked reasonably well, but set in a fictional world such as Gotham City, it became less credible and successful, often because in these responses candidates struggled to craft their writing for audience and purpose. Some responses were mature and confidently crafted; sensational tours of Jack the Ripper’s Whitechapel, Sweeney Todd’s barber shop and the Imperial War Museum stand out amongst these.

Technical accuracy and quality of written expression was a problem for many candidates, particularly in 2(a) where some blog posts had issues with organisation, paragraphing and punctuation. Similarly, length of response was an issue, particularly when candidates spent too long and wrote several hundred words more than necessary on 2(a) and 2(b). Candidates are reminded that 2(b) asked for an ‘extract’, and so in cases like these, candidates should refrain from trying to write whole texts – this was an issue with the walking tour tasks where they were saying goodbye to their tour group no sooner than they’d begun.

2(c) An analytical commentary

It was in responses to this question that candidates who had not managed their time effectively struggled. Often, over-long poetry responses 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 is 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 seems the use of a range of terms is crucial to their analysis of language choice and impacts too (AO2, 5 marks), which in turn has an impact on the quality of links (AO3, 10 marks).

Characteristics of successful responses

- Demonstrated secure awareness of genre, audience and purpose in 2(a) and 2(b).
- Built in a range of features in both creative tasks in order to compare them in the commentary 2(c).
- Wrote with a high degree of technical accuracy in all three tasks, making sure that spellings, punctuation and organisation of material was secure.
- Read the task carefully, writing an extract and an introduction rather than a whole text.

Areas for improvement for Section B

- Question 2(c) responses need to comment on and explore connections between written pieces thoughtfully, and this is best done when candidates embed into 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 2a and 2b: 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

As last year, it was clear that the majority of candidates were aware of the relevant assessment objectives in both sections of this component and could respond effectively to each question. The most successful candidates could explore texts in pleasing detail with clear focus of a range of both linguistic and literary terminology to underpin their analysis. There are though still a number of candidates who used a very narrow range of terms. Some answers did not include any linguistic terminology. The advice given last year about ranging more widely than stage directions and sentence mood is still relevant this year. Better answers could use specific and relevant contextual comments for each text. In less successful answers context was often very generalised or showed a very limited knowledge of precise details such as history, culture or social backgrounds to the texts.

Section A: Post-1900 drama (open book)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Candidates applied concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study (AO1) and to analyse how meanings are shaped (AO2) in response to the extracts.
- Focused on a wide range of quotations from the whole extract in part (i).
- Time management reflected the marks available, with appropriate allocation of the time between parts (i) and (ii).

Areas for improvement:

- A number of candidates continue to include significant amounts of contextual information (AO3) which is not rewarded in part (i). Candidates who include such context are not using their time productively as they should focus on those assessment objectives tested here.
- Some candidates wrote at greater length in part (i) than for part (ii) despite part (ii) carrying twice as many marks. Time management was clearly an issue for a minority of candidates.
- Other candidates only covered a small number of quotations from the extract at great length in part (i) rather than endeavoring to analyse more of the given extract.
- There were fewer rubric infringements this year. Candidates should remember not to include the extract covered in part (i) as one of their chosen episodes in part (ii) as the question directs them to **other parts** of the text. Another slip was to answer part (i) of one question and then part (ii) of another question.

Summary of set text key points: considerations for centres:

Alan Bennett: *The History Boys*

There were fewer answers on this text this year. Candidates responded enthusiastically to the play and could select clearly relevant episodes to the question set.

In part (ii) candidates were well prepared for using contextual information (AO3) in order to inform their answer without losing sight of the primary importance of AO1 and AO2. Candidates demonstrated precise and relevant use of valid contextual information in their analysis, particularly in response to the question on education.

Diane Samuels: *Kindertransport*

This proved a popular text again this year and candidates demonstrated a firm understanding of its characters and themes. Candidates could select a range of relevant episodes to explore both suffering and religious belief.

In question three candidates often commented helpfully on the interweaving of time periods in the extract and explored the connections between past and present. Effective question four answers demonstrated relevant contextual knowledge when discussing the presentation of religious belief.

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

This was a very popular choice of text. In question five part (i) higher attaining candidates could explore the introduction of George and Martha's characters in subtle detail. In part (ii) there was ample scope for selecting relevant episodes about power struggles.

In some cases contextual information (AO3) was restricted to narrow historical interpretations while more successful answers could see power in broader terms of culture or sociology.

In question six part (i) there were some subtle explorations of the presentation of Martha. Candidates responding to part (ii) were able to select a good range of episodes to explore her character in particular and women in general. There was a wider focus on contextual factors seen here.

Brian Friel: *Translations*

Although this was taught only in a few centres, there were successful and detailed responses seen. Responses to question seven explored relationships between men and women through a well-selected range of episodes.

Question eight answers typically showed a constructive awareness of contextual issues of production and reception when exploring different attitudes towards language.

AO3 here was often used with precise examples rather than broad brush comments which was helpful for candidates.

Tennessee Williams: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

This continues to be a very popular choice of text. Some question nine responses were very perceptive, but a number of candidates looked at women in a fairly narrow way and so missed opportunities to consider the rich vein of female characters in the play.

Question ten responses often included a thoughtful and sensitive focus on relevant contextual factors when exploring differing attitudes to sexuality.

Summary of general key points:

- Only discuss the set extract in part (i).
- Select key and relevant **other parts** of the text when answering in part (ii).
- Linguistic and literary terminology must go beyond identification of sentence mood and stage direction.
- Specify the terminology being discussed and label it accurately.
- Context should be integrated throughout the essay in part (ii) and avoided in part (i).

Section B: Non-literary text study (open book)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Careful selection of appropriate episodes is a vital skill for success. Successful responses demonstrated knowledge of a range of episodes across the whole text which enabled candidates to cover their chosen question effectively.
- Awareness of the weighting of Assessment Objectives, notably AO3. Being able to explore three distinct episodes which illuminate appropriate contextual issues will help candidates provide a detailed response.
- Addressed the key theme targeted by the question by selecting a wide range of terminology (AO1) exemplified in their episodes, and concisely commenting on how meaning is shaped (AO2) allowed access to marks in the top bands.

Areas for improvement:

- Avoid overly-general contextual comments. More specific focus on context relevant to the set text will enable candidates to access a wider range of marks for AO3 in this section of the paper.
- Ensure selected episodes for analysis are pertinent and relevant to the chosen question.
- Develop knowledge of a wide range of terminology that goes beyond just literary terminology to encompass the linguistic and use it with precision.

Summary of set text key points: considerations for centres:

Andrea Ashworth: *Once in a House on Fire*

This was again a very popular choice with candidates who responded enthusiastically to Ashworth's autobiography.

Question Eleven allowed candidates to select from a wide range of possible episodes which depicted poverty. Higher scoring answers successfully saw beyond descriptions of material poverty to intellectual poverty or poverty of ambition in some characters or situations.

Context could sometimes be handled too simplistically such as linking incidents in Andrea's very early life in the early or mid-seventies to Thatcherism.

Question twelve was a popular choice and allowed candidates to look at a wide range of strong female characters.

Some less successful responses were determined to portray Andrea's mother as a strong character but often the selected episodes did not show her in such a light.

Successful answers here demonstrated a clear knowledge of some of the lesser-known female characters and selected richly relevant episodes to discuss.

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*

This was a very popular text again this year.

In question seventeen, candidates could draw on a wide range of episodes involving very different portrayals of motherhood, although many concentrated on Bonny Clutter and Flo Smith to good effect. Successful answers could use context in precise ways, such as sociological comments about Eisenhower's America.

Question eighteen was by some way the more popular choice as candidates demonstrated contextual knowledge of the American Dream, although less successful responses were often too general in their observations.

Less successful responses spent valuable time exploring the Clutters as an example of the American Dream, which meant they had less opportunity to directly answer the question about the failure Perry Smith's dream.

George Orwell: *Homage to Catalonia*

Too few answers were seen on this text to allow detailed comments, but general comments above regarding characteristics of successful and less successful responses apply equally here.

Summary of general key points:

- Selection of relevant material is essential for a successful response as it informs the line of argument.
- Context should not dominate the response and should reflect the social, historical, cultural and political aspects of the text.
- Avoid overlong quotations.
- Technical accuracy and correct spelling is essential, as is the use of standard English.
- Linguistic and literary terminology should be used for each quotation.



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