GCE A Level Examiners' Report

English Language and Literature

A Level

Summer 2026

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Introduction

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

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

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

Further support

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

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

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Executive Summary

Examiners and moderators noted how well many candidates responded across all externally examined components and the NEA this summer.

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

- Candidates who knew their texts and technical features thoroughly were most likely to succeed.
- The best responses used a range of technical terms confidently (AO1) and explored approaches meaningfully (AO2).
- Using a range of specific, relevant contexts – biographical, historical, social, religious, literary and political – and considering how they influence the creation and the reception of the texts is the most successful approach to AO3.
- In making connections between texts, it is helpful to 'signpost' them, using 'similarly', 'however' and so on. This also needs to be followed up with a specific and meaningful link.
- For the NEA, careful editing and proofreading could make a significant difference to candidates' attainment.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 1: POETRY AND PROSE

Overview of the Component

Candidates engaged well with the tasks set this year, with pleasing responses seen to both unseen texts in Section A, as well as detailed consideration of the studied novel seen in Section B. The majority of candidates used their time effectively to write focused responses on all three tasks required. There were a few rubric infringements seen, primarily in Section B where some candidates answered part (ii) first and then answered a different part (i) question. Candidates can respond to the tasks in any order within their answer booklet but need to be mindful of choosing both part (i) and part (ii) from the same numbered question.

In a subject where candidates are rewarded for using purposeful and accurate terminology, leading to perceptive and thoughtful analysis of texts, it is disappointing to see so many still relying primarily on word classes and sentence moods. Identifying these techniques rarely leads to insightful analysis. Increasingly, there is also an issue with candidates applying more specialised terms, such as juxtaposition, anaphora and epizeuxis, but with high levels of inaccuracy, leading to limited useful argument. It would be helpful for candidates to be aware of general categories of terms, such as repetition or metaphor, and the more specific terms that sit within this, such as anaphora, epiphora, epizeuxis and diacope, or personification, hyperbole, synecdoche and metonym. When used accurately, specialised terms often lead to very effective analysis, but thoughtful AO2 comments may also arise from using the more generic term, such as repetition or metaphor, particularly when this is used with greater accuracy.

Contextual knowledge and understanding, linked to arguments, accounts for a significant number of marks available, particularly in Section B. Some excellent responses were seen that detailed, for example, Blake's political views in reference to the significance of place, or Brontë's own personal grief affecting the speaker's attitude to death in 'Remembrance'. However, candidates are often seen to limit their contextual points to biographical detail or basic historical context, omitting the variety of social, religious, literary or political context that might illuminate their arguments further.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: POETRY

There were many thoughtful and insightful responses to both poetry questions this year, with candidates often demonstrating good understanding of the unseen texts and frequently choosing sensible *Anthology* poems for comparison. The best responses focused their arguments and analysis on the task prompt ('significance of place' or 'death and responses to it'), while weaker responses wrote about poems in more general terms. Many candidates began their essays with task-focused introductions, which helped with overall argument and organisation. However, a significant number wrote more generic introductory paragraphs, attempting to note purpose and audience for each text when this was not particularly useful to consider.

Choice of *Anthology* poems continues to be an issue for a number of candidates. At times, this is because candidates choose poems that are only vaguely linked to the task focus or perhaps choose poems that are linked contextually but with little evidence to be found within

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the text to support close analysis. On other occasions, candidates choose poems that they are perhaps familiar with from GCSE studies, and this sometimes results in a GCSE-style response rather than the close linguistic and literary analysis required at A level.

Poetic terminology was often used effectively in responses, with many noting the metre of 'The Voice' or the sonnet structure of 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' and making thoughtful comments on the effect of these techniques. It is important for candidates to understand that, while rhyme and rhythm are both phonological techniques, these terms cannot be used interchangeably. Candidates are also reminded of the need to separate out the notion of the speaker from the poet, or to engage with this as a contextual point if the poem is widely considered to be autobiographical.

Question 1

There were some interesting responses to Text A, 'A Portable Paradise', reflecting thoughtful reading and understanding by candidates. A few attempted to make assumptions beyond what was evidenced in the text, and these responses tended to be less convincing and with less close analysis. Some of the best responses noted the voice of the grandmother dominating the poem, as well as the metaphor of light towards the end of the poem. Candidates are reminded to use the words from the task to help focus their response, as those who focused solely on 'the natural world' did not fully engage with the question set.

Question 2

This question was slightly more popular than Question 1, with some very good analysis focusing on the overall structure of the extract from 'Home Fire', as well as the use of patterning, antithesis, imagery and anaphora. As with the unseen poem in Question 1, some candidates spent time speculating on other events in the novel, which detracted from their close analysis rather than adding to it. The task focus being 'death *and* responses to it' required candidates to choose *Anthology* poems that engaged emotionally with the idea of death, so poems such as 'Remembrance' and 'The Voice' were more successful choices than 'Spellbound' and 'To a Child Dancing in the Wind'.

SECTION B: PROSE

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the text they had studied, selecting evidence from throughout their chosen novel to support varied arguments. As noted in last year's report, this is an open-book exam and therefore quotations need to be used accurately and attributed to the right character and situation. Improvements could still be seen in use of context in part (ii) responses; many candidates rely repetitively on social and historical detail rather than drawing on the variety of contextual detail that can fully illuminate argument and understanding.

It is good to see students engaging thoughtfully with the tasks set and considering relevant events, characters and relationships to reference as part of their argument. However, candidates are reminded to consider the focus of their response as phrased in the task, leaving anything that might be considered a counterargument for a possible final paragraph. Those who started their answer to Question 11(ii) with Celie's lack of friendship at the beginning of the novel struggled to justify their argument in relation to the task set. Similarly, some candidates choosing 3(ii) began their essay with Jane's lack of happiness at Gateshead. This approach seems to be linked to candidates writing about the beginning of the novel in their first paragraph, then the middle in their second paragraph and the end in their final paragraph. Whilst this provides some structure to a response, it often does not lead to insightful arguments with well-selected evidence.

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Another common issue seen this year was candidates using the steer from part (ii) to inform their analysis of the given extract. While the extract chosen is linked with the concerns noted in the whole-text question, candidates are reminded that the task for part (i) is more focused on close analysis linked to character and relationships or situations. Those who used the steer from part (ii) to focus their paragraphs often complicated the task unnecessarily, moving away from detailed close analysis of the extract.

Jane Eyre

Question 4 proved more popular than Question 3 this year, with the best responses on 4(ii) being aware of Jane's relationship with a range of characters including John Reed, St John Rivers, Rochester and Brocklehurst. As the task required focus on relationships, it was interesting to see candidates noting the differing marriage proposals of Rochester and Rivers. However, this approach occasionally saw responses that were more about the male characters' personalities than their interactions with Jane.

Extract responses were less confident than responses to part (ii) questions, with many students relying on basic terms, such as declarative, rather than noting more specific and purposeful techniques. Some candidates wrote well on the spiritual imagery in the extract from 4(i), and some answering 3(i) engaged well with Jane's adoration of Helen.

Great Expectations

There were only a few responses on *Great Expectations*, with both Question 5 and Question 6 attempted. Task 5(i) generated some good responses with candidates noting the use of pathetic fallacy and the contrast between the characterisation of Pip and Magwitch. Responses to 6(i) tended to be slightly less accurate, with some candidates confused as to whether it was Magwitch or Pip speaking, resulting in limited useful analysis. In the whole text responses, candidates selected relevant moments to analyse, considering Pip's fear of his sister and also his first encounter with Miss Havisham for 5(ii) and the loyalty and trust of both Herbert and Joe for 6(ii).

Atonement

Most candidates who answered on this text chose Question 7, focusing on the significance of truth and memory in the novel. In answers to 7(ii), there was clear evidence of knowledge and understanding of the novel, with references to the different accounts of the fountain scene, as well as Briony's illness and the way the 'facts' of the story were distorted. Some responses became slightly narrative, however, which led to less detailed analysis. A few responses to 7(i) misread the references made to Robbie's time in prison, perhaps not recognising the frequent use of flashbacks within his narrative.

Those who answered on Question 8 demonstrated some good understanding of the extract and selected clear evidence to support the whole-text response on 'men and masculinity'. Many adopted an extract-based structure to this part (ii) question, which did not allow for consideration of similarities in masculinity across different parts of the text.

The Remains of the Day

No responses were seen on *The Remains of the Day* this year.

The Color Purple

The majority of responses seen were on this text, with most candidates choosing to answer Question 11 ('the importance of friendship') rather than Question 12 ('the use of the natural world to convey significant ideas'). In both whole text tasks, candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of the characters and their relationships, selecting evidence from throughout the novel. However, those who only noted which characters are friends, or where the natural world is referenced in the text, tended not to analyse in such specific detail as

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those who considered what was gained from friendships (‘importance’), or how beliefs and ideas were conveyed through the natural world (‘significant ideas’).

In responding to *The Color Purple*, candidates need to be aware of Walker’s use of language and form throughout the novel. A significant minority of candidates assumed that Celie’s use of African American Language was solely reflective of her lack of education and not having been taught Standard English. This suggests a failure to understand Walker’s choice of the epistolary form and the way it allows for authenticity of voice and the personal tone of letters to be conveyed through less formal language. The epistolary novel also provides a means for Walker to give a voice to the otherwise voiceless victims of abuse, in this case Celie and Nettie, and so construct her womanist novel. It is therefore slightly dispiriting that so many candidates choose the opening line (“You better not never tell nobody but God”), the voice of the male abuser, as the first quotation in their essay. Candidates who select evidence purposefully recognise that later passages in the text are often more significant.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 2: DRAMA

Overview of the Component

This year there were a number of really admirable responses seen, where candidates not only knew their texts and technical features thoroughly (essential for a mark in the higher bands), but presented nuanced, well-controlled arguments in lucid, fluent prose. They were a delight to read. There is also a very pleasing general trend towards more purposeful use of terminology, rather than simple word class, sentence mood or similar labelling without meaningful discussion of it.

Problems that commonly impeded success included lack of focus on the question, combined with assertion of focus. This is often seen as a long paragraph on an irrelevant topic – perhaps part of a previous essay they had written – ending with a mere mention of the current question key words, although unrelated to the discussion they offered. Unfortunately, irrelevant material will attract few marks. Narrative is another pitfall – simply retelling the story – which some candidates resort to in the absence of any analytical discussion. Simply labelling a few word classes or sentence moods will not redeem this kind of problem either and is unlikely to move beyond Band 2.

A number of candidates this year used the term ‘direct address’ referring to a second person pronoun in character-to-character dialogue. This is incorrect: the term properly belongs in prose analysis, as many candidates will remember from their non-fiction prose study for GCSE Language. In drama, where all the text is dialogue, this label is inappropriate generally because all the address is ‘direct’ in a sense. What it denotes in drama is the breaking of the fourth wall, the rare occasions when a character *directly addresses the audience*, (the parallel with the prose example can be seen clearly there).

Some candidates are misapplying the term ‘grand style’ to almost any expressive passage in Shakespeare, whereas it is properly used for the intensely heightened language of, for example, Lear in the storm (‘Blow winds, and crack your cheeks…’), Lear’s ‘wheel of fire’ speech, Othello’s ‘antres vast and deserts idle’ address to the Duke and senators in Act 1 Scene 3, or his valedictory speech in the final act, for example. (See ‘Reading Shakespeare’s Dramatic Language: A Guide’, Adamson et al, 2001).

Word processed responses are a sensible alternative in cases where a candidate’s handwriting is illegible, for example, but they should be presented in double spacing and a font with a legible size. Margins should also be wide enough for examiners to enter annotations. Some scripts were also seen this year where there were so many typing errors that the points were virtually incomprehensible. Clearly, in these cases, nothing has been gained by using a keyboard.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: SHAKESPEARE EXTRACT

The extract question on the chosen Shakespeare play is designed to offer candidates the opportunity to analyse part of the play in real detail, without the need for recalling quotations. It only assesses AO1 and AO2, so candidates should be reminded not to offer comments

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about context, as they are unlikely to attract marks unless they relate directly to the reading of the extract.

Most candidates now offer an appropriate introduction where they place the extract in its context in the play, give an overview of what they see as the most significant features (dramatically and linguistically) in that scene section, and then quickly move into a detailed account of the passage. This structure is very much to be encouraged.

The extract question offers candidates a chance to analyse Shakespeare's use of dramatic conversation from not only a literary but a technical linguistic perspective. Increasing numbers of centres are teaching conversation analysis and politeness theory effectively now, with useful insights into, for example, the power dynamics of the relationships involved, speaker dominance, turn taking and adjacency pairs, to name but a few. This should not be seen as an alternative to more conventional, nuanced reading, rather a supplement to it.

Some of the pitfalls that can arise are misreading of speaker attributions when the text is close and quoting based on lineation, lines instead of meaningful sentences. This year some mistook Lear's 'Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd' for Regan's speech, or in the *Othello* extract from Act 3 Scene 4, misread ''Twas that hand that gave away my heart' as Othello speaking, quite skewing the reading of the scene. Others writing about the *Lear* extract attempted to comment on, for example, 'Have a command to tend you' as an isolated clause, whereas the preceding line 'where twice so many' would have made sense of it. Conversely, some insightful responses to the *Othello* extract observed the dramatic significance of Emilia being present throughout the whole conversation between Othello and Desdemona, which always attracted marks.

The best accounts of this year's *Othello* extract dealt in detail with the painful dramatic irony created in this part of Act 3 Scene 4, and the contrast between Othello's corrupted thoughts (seen in his lewd adjectives and hellish references) and Desdemona's good will and innocence. There was widespread misunderstanding of Othello's aside 'O, hardness to dissemble', but accounts which recognised that he is expressing his difficulty in pretending courtesy and polite enquiry when he is feeling hurt and anger, attracted credit, particularly if they observed the contrast between Othello here and Iago, who has no difficulty whatsoever in 'dissembling'.

Most candidates found relevant and interesting features to write about in the the *King Lear* extract, but again there was a passage which confused many, namely Lear's 'O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars/ Are in the poorest thing superfluous… Man's life is cheap as beast's.' Lear is arguing that even the poorest beggars have some possession that is superfluous to their needs, and if you do not allow human nature more than nature needs, man's life becomes as meaningless as a beast's. Some of the responses commented appropriately on the proleptic sense of 'basest beggars' for Lear's imminent exile from civilised life, even if they were not able to give a fuller account of the meaning.

Many responses to the extract from *Much Ado About Nothing* dealt appropriately with the dialogue in the second part of the passage, and the contrast of tone and mood between Benedick and Beatrice, although surprisingly few offered accounts of the comedy or irony of Benedick's sung verse and prose soliloquy that precede the dialogue.

There were no responses on either *Antony and Cleopatra* or *The Tempest* this year.

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SECTION A: SHAKESPEARE ESSAY

Most centres are now preparing candidates well for the Shakespeare essay question, where context is double weighted, and this year again there was a great deal of interesting and appropriate material offered in this respect. It needs to be repeated however that without the foundation of a well-constructed analytical argument, the context will struggle to attract more than Band 2, as it needs to be relevant to the argument. Note that the Band 4 descriptors for AO3 involve "*evaluation* of the impact of contextual factors in shaping the production and reception of the play", so historical, social or cultural information will only attract significant marks when it is *relevant to the analysis.*

Several centres are encouraging candidates to include critical responses to the texts, a trend that seems to be on the increase. While the reading of critical works is very much to be commended, and can enhance a reading or analysis, it can only ever be a supplement to AO3 contextual material, not a replacement for it. Some Literature specifications invite critical interpretations as part of their assessment criteria, but that is not the case in this one.

Question 2(b) on betrayal was by far the most popular choice for *King Lear* candidates, and there were a number of superb responses seen, giving thoughtful and detailed accounts of the theme in the play, along with a range of appropriate contextual references, including the pressing contemporary issues concerning the court of James I and the loyalty or otherwise of his courtiers and subjects. There was a very wide range of definitions and interpretations of betrayal, including Cordelia or Kent's "betrayal" of *Lear,* which may be going a little too far. A number of responses defended Edmund's actions in terms of his 'betrayal' by society as an illegitimate son, which can work to an extent, although it must be remembered that he is 'some twelve or fourteen moonshines /Lag of a brother', so as a second son would not inherit Gloucester's title or lands even if he were legitimate. Similarly, although he embarrasses Edmund by calling him 'the whorseon', Gloucester tells Kent that Edgar, the elder son, is 'no dearer in my account'. Edmund is seemingly valued, as well as "acknowledged", which not all illegitimate children were at that time. Many candidates took the 'public and private' elements of the question from the given quotation and made fruitful arguments in line with those. A few interesting responses to Question 2(c), on servants and service, were seen, the best among which considered the significance of service in a play so full of selfish desires for personal power. Again though, the definition of 'service' was stretched to the limit at times: Edmund as a servant of the goddess Nature was among the more interesting of these.

The *Othello* essay choices were somewhat more evenly distributed, although most chose 4(c) on the presentation of women as powerless victims. Most, even those whose knowledge of the play was weaker, were able to discuss Desdemona, Emilia and sometimes Bianca in sensible terms, noting their powerlessness in a patriarchal society but also the moments when they show agency and voice. There were some extremely interesting arguments put forward in response to 4(b), considering whether or not Shakespeare is inviting his audience to be less racist. Many candidates seemed to appreciate this opportunity to express a real opinion and defend it with detailed analysis. Discussion of the play in terms of its morality play generic features is starting to be seen more widely than in previous years, and this can be very fruitful, providing it is understood. *Othello* is probably not itself actually a morality play, as many asserted, but the influence of that genre, particularly in the characterisation of Iago, Desdemona and Othello, offers rich analytical insights.

The useful Aristotelian terms 'hamartia', 'anagnorisis' and 'peripeteia' are frequently used in responses, although often misspelt and, more problematically, misapplied.

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SECTION B: POST-1900 DRAMA

As discussed above, there is some excellent work being done on the context of the modern plays, particularly the pair of mid-20th century American dramas (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) but both points made in the above section – concerning relevance to argument and the need for more than just critics – stand here too.

The most popular modern drama text was, as in previous years, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Most people chose Question 15 on human isolation and fear, and many excellent accounts were seen. 'Fear' was generally treated more successfully than isolation, as it was usually found easier to exemplify. 'Isolation' often resulted in drifting towards the practice essay topic of entrapment, with the "occupy the same cage" metaphor a frequent offering, which candidates sometimes found difficult to justify. On the whole, the Big Daddy question (14) was more often successfully tackled and allowed many candidates to demonstrate really thorough and insightful knowledge about Big Daddy, the Old South and Williams's attitudes to them. Centres might consider encouraging candidates to look further afield in the play for their evidence and analysis than the few most popular quotations that seem to crop up most regularly. This is a rich, deep play, and there is more to find than most candidates are aware of.

One of the pitfalls seen this year in several responses was digression from the question topic by offering an alternative focus to the 'To what extent' element of the question. For example, some wrote briefly about Big Daddy in Question 14, but then spent the rest of the essay offering critiques of other characters who also represented negative qualities, which meant that the majority of the essay was irrelevant.

Some strong responses were seen to Question 12 on attitudes to the family in *Kindertransport*, the more popular question of the two offered, although when a candidate knew their dramatic effects and related technical features, they were able to gain high marks in Question 13, on the use of different time periods in the play.

Both power (Question 8) and performance (Question 9) proved to be fruitful topics on *The History Boys*, with many successful answers there, and fewer gratuitous quotations of the taboo lexis than in previous years. Where it was used, it was analysed purposefully and gained credit accordingly.

Summary of key points

- Good work has been seen in increasing purposeful analysis of language.
- Once again, detailed textual knowledge and understanding is of primary importance, along with sustained focus on the question topic.
- Candidates should be encouraged to practise the extract questions with particular attention to careful reading of speaker attribution and characters on stage (stage directions generally).
- Care is needed in choosing quotations from blank verse: they should make sense.
- Finally, critical opinions are welcome, but they do not replace contextual information.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

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COMPONENT 3: NON-LITERARY TEXTS

Overview of the Component

In Section A, candidates are presented with three unseen spoken extracts which share a unifying theme or topic. Their task is to produce a comparative essay analysing the similarities and differences between these three texts in terms of how they use linguistic, literary and spoken features to convey attitudes about their common subject-matter. The challenge of this task should not be under-estimated, and it was once again pleasing to see so many candidates producing responses that, at the very least, made sensible comments about how meanings were created. Many candidates went beyond this, and some answers were truly impressive in the breadth and depth of their coverage. This specification has been in force for many years and it is obvious that centres have become adept at guiding their students in how to apply close reading techniques to unseen extracts. Similar techniques were evident in many candidates' responses to the extract question in Section B, with many also showing wider knowledge and understanding of the text and its contexts in the essay question. As always, however, some candidates self-penalised by producing largely narrative responses that essentially paraphrased or described the texts under consideration.

Whatever the chosen set text in Section B, high-quality responses shared the same features. These answers tracked through the extract chronologically without omitting long sections, made a variety of points sharply, demonstrating evidence of integrated study by using a range of accurate technical terminology. The converse was generally true for the less successful answers, which often ignored large sections of the extract, used a limited range of terms, were often reliant on summary and narration, and sometimes misunderstood basic meanings. There also seems to be a growing trend for candidates to include contextual information in their extract answers – sometimes in quite considerable detail – and this is self-penalising as AO3 in not rewarded here. As usual, effective essay answers made close reference to the text, linking their textual evidence to the wording of the question and embedding a variety of contextual points (including social, historical, literary, biographical and reader-response). It is still the case that relatively few candidates use their contextual knowledge really effectively by linking it to their analysis of meanings. Examiners are still seeing a large number of essay responses which include large sections of context not always relevant to the question, or, on the other hand, omit context completely or only give it cursory treatment.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPOKEN NON-LITERARY TEXTS

This year, the connecting theme was attitudes to work. As usual, the three spoken extracts were carefully selected to give all candidates fair opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application of spoken language features but also to enable them to access the highest possible mark. Effective answers demonstrated the same characteristics that they always do in this section. They explored all three texts in roughly equal detail; made a wide range of points with a clear focus on how the different speakers express their attitudes towards work; accurately applied a variety of technical terms from both linguistic and literary study; and explored precise and valid comparisons and contrasts throughout the essay. Less successful answers correspondingly made the same errors as

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usual: they often featured long and repetitive introductions which made little or no close reference to the texts; repeatedly used vague terms such as 'positive'/'negative' when commenting on attitudes; made few or very generalised links between texts; and/or included a conclusion which merely repeated points already made, sometimes word-for-word.

Candidates were told that Text A had a 'motivational' purpose, and nearly all were able to use this as a cue to analyse how the speaker related to her audience. Several securely identified the mention near the start of the speaker's experience ('I started 27 years ago...') as part of the ethos appeal, enhancing her credibility and possibly also giving her listeners an incentive to strive for promotion. Many were also able to comment effectively on the connotations of Rose's pronoun use, with the extensive use of the first-person singular being seen as an assertion of her status and achievement as an individual, and the first-person plural identified as a signifier of her commitment to teamwork. Many candidates, however, still experienced difficulty in correctly labelling different times of pronoun, and many described the possessive determiner 'our' as a pronoun. The first-person plural 'we' was often labelled as a 'collective' or 'inclusive' pronoun. A few candidates took a slightly more cynical approach, for example by asserting that abstract nouns such as 'culture' and 'passion' were rather clichéd and predictable ingredients of a speech such as this. Interestingly, a number of candidates assumed that the speaker was male.

The vast majority of candidates grasped that the speaker of Text B was expressing her feelings about being overworked and stressed. Many were able to move beyond simply commenting on lexical choices to make some thoughtful points about how prosodic features contributed to how she conveys her attitudes, for example, by noting that the lack of timed pauses lends the extract a frenetic pace which mirrors the nature of the speaker‘s job. The repeated emphatic stress on the abstract noun ‘stress‘ and the repetition of ‘you gotta‘ were also seen as evidence of her lack of control over her work. However, ‘gotta’ was frequently misidentified as either a modal verb or an imperative. As is usual with transcripts, some candidates ignored the prosodic features altogether and treated the extract as a written text, a self-penalising approach. As with Text A, some assumed that the speaker was male.

Some candidates treated Text C in less detail, with some making hardly any reference to it at all. Those who did analyse it more thoroughly were able to see that the speaker's attitudes to work contrasted strongly with those of Text A. Most selected the noun phrase 'grumpy and exhausted workhorses' but few were able to analyse the zoomorphism of 'workhorses' convincingly, beyond asserting that it was a 'negative' or 'pessimistic' depiction of work. Similarly, few commented in any depth on the metaphor of 'putting work on a pedestal' and what it revealed about the speaker's attitudes.

Summary of key points

AO1, AO2 and AO4 are all assessed in Section A, with AO4 being double-weighted. The following points outline features of successful and less successful answers: all have appeared in previous reports on this Component but are repeated here as answers generally demonstrate the same features each year.

AO1

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Purposeful and accurate use of a wide range of technical terminology demonstrating integrated study and not restricted to word classes.
- Using specific terms relating to prosodic features in transcripts – most of these are identified in the key.
- Accurate and well-controlled written expression.
- Consistent use of a more formal register.

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- Outlining a clear line of argument in the introduction and following this up with a clearly structured answer that supplies evidence to support this line of argument.
- Showing a clear understanding of the nature of spoken texts by using terms such as ‘speaker’ and ‘listener’ or ‘audience’.
- A concise and meaningful conclusion, returning to the line of argument outlined at the start.

Areas for improvement:
- Greater accuracy in the application of word classes, even the most basic ones. Many candidates confused ‘abstract nouns’ and ’adjectives’.
- The issue of candidates quoting entire sentences (or more) but then referring to a word or phrase within that sentence using a term such as ‘noun phrase’ appeared to increase this year. Examiners cannot give credit for this.
- There was frequent confusion about the definition of a ‘modal verb’.
- Long and repetitive introductions were self-penalising, as were introductions that paraphrased the descriptor paragraphs, or, in some cases, copied them word-for-word.
- There was continued confusion about the difference between a ‘phrase’ and a ‘clause’, and widespread inaccurate use of the term ‘verb phrase’.
- Conclusions which merely repeat points that have already been made are self-penalising and will gain no extra marks.

AO2
Characteristics of successful responses:
- Thoroughly analysing <u>how</u> attitudes to work were presented in the three texts, with precision, going beyond basic terms such as ’positive’ and ’negative’.
- Relating comments about meanings to the identities and attitudes of the speakers, and the audiences, purposes and genres of the texts.
- Including a range of precise and detailed comments on how meanings are created.
- Exploring implicit meanings, going beyond the more obvious ones.

Areas for improvement:
- The terms ‘positive‘ and ‘negative‘ (or ‘optimistic‘ and ‘pessimistic‘) will only be credited as ‘basic’ analysis and should be avoided.
- Similarly, many candidates used terms such as ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ to describe the register of texts, without being clear about the meanings of these terms.
- Making only a small number of points about each text, which may be conveyed in exhaustive and often repetitive detail.
- Paraphrasing or describing quotations rather than analysing them

AO4
Characteristics of successful responses:
- Making the analysis of similarities and differences the key focus of the essay, rather than an ‘add-on’: AO4 is double weighted in this section and this needs to be reflected in the essay structure.
- Exploring a variety of specific links between attitudes to work and how they are presented.
- Confidently handling connections between the three extracts, but it is probably more productive to compare, say, A and B, B and C and so on rather than attempting to cover all three together.
- Including a good balance of similarities and differences (not necessarily 50/50, it depends on the nature and content of the three extracts).
- It is very helpful to ‘signpost’ connections using ‘similarly’, ‘however’ and so on. This does then need to be followed up with a specific and meaningful link.

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Areas for improvement:

- Some candidates still wrote at length about generic differences between transcribed and non-transcribed texts (e.g. 'There are no micropauses in Text A' as it is scripted). This approach will gain no marks as it did not answer the question, which specifically asked about how attitudes to work were created. It should be said, however, that this approach did not seem to be so prevalent as it has sometimes been in previous years.

SECTION B: NON-LITERARY TEXT STUDY

As has become usual in this component, *In Cold Blood* was again by far the most popular choice of text, with a small number of centres opting for *Once in a House on Fire* or *Homage to Catalonia*. Once again, no responses were seen on *Skating to Antarctica* or *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*.

As noted in last year's report, the characteristic features of strong and of less successful answers tend to remain fixed from year to year. The most effective answers in part (i) take a methodical approach, tracking through the extract without leaving out large sections. These responses demonstrate integrated study by including a wide range of accurate linguistic and literary terms and show a sustained focus on how the writer has used techniques to convey meanings. Such answers also sustain a close focus on the question, which will always ask candidates to analyse a specific aspect of the extract. Less successful answers used only a limited range of terminology, frequently inaccurately, omitted significant parts of the extract, and made only vague comments about how meanings were created. Answers sometimes wavered in their focus on the requirements of the question. As last year, several candidates included contextual points in their extract responses even though AO3 is not assessed in this task. This approach was, therefore, self-penalising, as examiners cannot award any marks for context in the extract answer: the time spent on described context should have been employed in further close reading of the extract itself.

The advice given in last year's report relating to the essay question remains equally applicable this year. Some responses were brief, probably due either to timing issues or insufficient in-depth knowledge of the text. On the other hand, some candidates produced impressively detailed answers which demonstrated real engagement with the text and the question. It was clear that such candidates had studied the text thoroughly and were able to handle it confidently in order to cite specific evidence. This year, examiners still saw many responses whose focus on the question often wavered, and some very 'general' essays on the text with little relevance to the set question. Again this year, candidates handled contextual factors in widely different ways: strong responses cited a range of points covering many different types of context, not just the historical context of the text, but also relevant factors in the author's biography; the reception of the text at the time of its publication and in the present day; the production of the text; and the literary context. The very best answers were assured in their blending of the analysis of meaning with specific contextual factors. Many less successful answers included no, very little or irrelevant context, often confining what context there was to a single paragraph, usually the introduction.

Once in a House on Fire

Nearly all candidates understood that the character of Auntie Tamara offered Lorraine support and solidarity, but few grasped the more disturbing subtext of the extract. They recognised that the comparative 'more powerful than the police' conveyed the writer's distrust of the authorities' abilities to help the family, and also saw how Auntie Tamara influences Lorraine's appearance and behaviour. Most, however, failed to see the sinister implications of Auntie Tamara's 'more glamorous career' and that the repetition of the adjective 'glamorous' in the third paragraph could be read as implying that Lorraine has followed her into it. Many candidates saw Auntie Tamara's influence as wholly beneficial to

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Lorraine and did not take the opportunity to explore more implicit meanings, which would have given them the opportunity to access higher marks.

The text offers numerous examples of female characters offering each other solidarity – most obviously in the family dynamic of Lorraine and the three girls – and some candidates demonstrated their wide-ranging knowledge of the text by including a variety of examples. Many, however, relied on a 'spotting and listing' approach that lacked an over-arching line of argument. Others produced answers focusing mainly on the presentation of domestic violence with little specific reference to the question. Contextual points often took the form of rather generalised and often over-simplified comments about the place of women in society in the 1970s and 80s.

Skating to Antarctica
No responses were seen on this text.

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius
No responses were seen on this text.

In Cold Blood
Nearly all candidates were able to make sensible points about the presentation of Mr Clutter in this extract from near the beginning of the text. Most noted how the start of the extract conveyed his strong work ethic and his adherence to set routines, but some omitted this altogether. Most also commented thoughtfully on how Mr Clutter had 'enjoyed' seeing his wife socialising, perhaps implying his relief at the resumption of 'normality', indicating Mr Clutter's awareness of how others in the community perceive him and his family and his anxiety about the taboo topic of Bonnie's mental health. Some, however, thought that the description 'nervous but smiling, talking to people' applied to Mr Clutter rather than his wife, while others were confused by the reference to Nancy as 'a real Southern belle', thinking that this meant that the family were from the South and that Mr Clutter was displaying 'Southern values' in the extract. Many candidates commented thoughtfully on Mr Clutter's conflicting attitudes to Bobby Rupp, who is seen both as 'dependable and gentlemanly' but also referred to rather disparagingly as 'the Rupp boy', and they understood that Mr Clutter's antipathy to Bobby was motivated by sectarianism, an indication of Mr Clutter's traditional, highly conservative attitudes.

Essay responses varied widely in quality. The best evaluated the presentation of Mr Clutter, Mr Hickock and Tex Smith specifically as fathers, and made some productive comparisons and contrasts between them. These responses made frequent close reference to the text, integrating this analysis with relevant context, including the 'nature/nurture' debate and Capote's own difficult upbringing. Some also included some references to other examples of fatherhood in the text, such as Alvin Dewey. Many answers, however, focused more on 'family' or 'masculinity' than 'fatherhood' and some amounted to little more than character studies of Mr Clutter, Perry and/or Dick. Nearly all candidates referred to the 'American Dream' in some way, often over-simplifying the context or not linking it to the theme of fathers and fatherhood.

Homage to Catalonia
In the relatively small number of responses on this text, the most successful answers again tracked through the extract in a systematic way. Most were able to make sensible comments about Orwell's attitudes and how he expresses them, for example his indignation at 'cynical people' who are sceptical about 'revolutionary discipline'. Most also commented intelligently on Orwell's admiration of the loyalty of the militia soldiers that he commanded.

The most effective answers to the essay question cited a range of relevant evidence from the rest of the text: for example, Orwell's loyal affection towards the Spanish people, his

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loyalty to comrades such as Kopp, but also his loyalty to ideas and concepts such as the ideals of socialism. There is a rich variety of context available to candidates who study this text: many do write context-led responses which fail to include a sufficient amount of close textual analysis and are over-reliant on the candidate's sometimes extensive knowledge of the political situation in Spain. This often draws them away from the question.

Summary of key points

Section B(i)
Characteristics of successful responses:
- A wide range of technical terms used accurately, and going beyond word classes (AO1).
- Evidence of integrated study in the balance between linguistic and literary terms (AO1).
- Attaching at least one technical term to each quotation (AO1).
- Making at least sensible and thoughtful comments about how meanings are created and the likely impact on the reader (AO2).
- Ensuring that all analysis is relevant to the question (AO2).

Areas for improvement:
- Accuracy of technical terminology, particularly relating to word classes. As with Section A, there was still considerable confusion between adjectives and abstract nouns, and also widespread misunderstanding of the different types of pronoun (AO1).
- Candidates need to track through the extract from start to finish, without omitting large sections (AO1/AO2).
- Comments on context should be avoided in this section as AO3 is not part of the assessment.

Section B(ii)
Characteristics of successful responses:
- Starting the answer with a sharply focused introduction, including a clear line of argument (AO2/AO3).
- Selecting two or three key episodes from different parts of the text and analysing them in reasonable detail (AO2).
- Including a reasonable variety of context, such as historical, biographical, literary etc., ensuring that this is relevant to the question (AO3).
- Linking contextual points closely to comments on how meanings are created (AO2/AO3).
- Finishing with a meaningful conclusion that revisits and sums up the line of argument (AO2/AO3).

Areas for improvement:
- Candidates who learn a 'standard' essay (often focusing on domestic violence in *Once in a House on Fire* or the relationship between Perry and Dick in *In Cold Blood*, for example) are unlikely to score high marks.
- Introductions which summarise the plot or text or include everything the candidate knows about context are self-penalising.
- On the other hand, ignoring context or including only a minimal amount will also adversely affect the mark, as AO3 is worth half the marks for this task.
- Timing is still an issue for some candidates. The recommendation is that they spend 25 minutes on the essay.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 4: CRITICAL AND CREATIVE GENRE STUDY

Overview of the Component

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

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

SECTION A: GENRE STUDY

As in previous years, a broad range of genres, texts and tasks were in evidence in the work submitted for the NEA folder. The majority of centres have clearly encouraged their learners to take an independent approach to their studies which led to interesting responses on a wide range of texts. Some centres had selected a particular genre and allowed candidates freedom of text choice and only a minority of centres had prescribed both genre and texts. This approach does tend to offer candidates limited independence, particularly where candidates referred to the same extracts in the texts. Where candidates had been given more freedom in both genre and texts, this often resulted in interesting responses. Centres which encourage this approach are to be particularly commended.

Responses were seen this year across most of the genres in Appendix A with some interesting work on the less popular genres: ‘The Outsider’, ‘War/Conflict’ and ‘Historical Fiction’. ‘Crime’, ‘Dystopia’ and ‘Gothic’ genres remain popular and, in recent years, it has been apparent that centres have been encouraging candidates to explore a wider spectrum of partner texts which is pleasing to see. It should be noted, however, that text pairings should be carefully chosen to enable candidates to make productive links between texts. *Dracula*, *The Woman in Black* and *Frankenstein* were often used in gothic genre studies. *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange* tended to be popular in essays on the genre of dystopia. However, interesting responses were seen on *We*, *Vox* and *Klara and the Sun* in this genre this year as partner texts. Often, candidates select to use novels as either core or partner texts, however it is perfectly acceptable to consider a collection of short stories in the genre. Where this is the case, as in previous years, the advice is for candidates to focus on a range of different stories within the collection.

In the essays themselves, well-worded questions were often used to signpost candidates to focus on the relevant objectives and adopt an integrated approach to the study of language and literature. The opening stem “Using integrated literary and linguistic approaches…” remains a good way to encourage this from the beginning of the response.

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It is apparent that centres have taken on board previous advice on question setting and moderators saw an interesting range of themes and topics. Due to the suggested word limit on this essay, it is important for titles to be tightly focussed. Moderators saw some excellent work this year on a wide variety of themes and topics and it was clear that candidates were very engaged in their studies.

As was highlighted in previous reports, introductions can be an effective way for candidates to weave in the focus of each assessment objective and particularly consider how their chosen focus either adheres to or subverts the conventions of their chosen genre. On the whole, it is apparent that centres had considered a wider range of terminology in their preparation and planning for the unit. At the top of moderation samples, there was often a broad range of both linguistic and literary terminology and candidates used this with confidence and precision; these candidates also adopted a fluent academic register. Further down the rank order of the samples, word level terminology was more characteristic, with some errors which could have been eliminated in the drafting process. Once again, encouraging candidates to proofread and edit is always to be encouraged.

The well considered themes in questions across the essays, encouraged candidates to engage with meaning, making AO2 a focus. Embedded references and quotations were a focus of good responses. Stronger work also tended to integrate AO2 with the other AOs to construct a purposeful argument. Contextual information was often used by higher level responses to develop the argument introduced in the opening of the essay and these candidates often demonstrated a clear awareness of the conventions of their genre. Candidates are tending to move away from 'bolted on' context which often does little to drive the argument forward. It is also important for candidates to consider the aspect of AO3 that is concerned with the 'reception of the text' as well as the writers' intentions in the 'production' of texts.

Most candidates were able to make clear connections between their chosen texts allowing them to access the range of marks available for AO4. Occasionally the choice of texts made this more difficult for some. As highlighted earlier in the report, text choice is important here. A clear comparative topic sentence to open a paragraph is an effective way to ensure that AO4 is a focus of the response. Less successful work tended to deal with the texts separately although very few responses of this kind were seen.

Bibliographies and footnotes were used by some centres and this is a useful way to demonstrate the breadth of wider reading and research in the genre.

Summary of key points

- Consider offering a broad range of tasks and texts for candidates across selected genres.
- Encourage candidates to use a broad range of literary and linguistic terminology (AO1).
- Encourage candidates to establish clear links with terminology and meaning (AO2).
- Encourage candidates to engage with all aspects of AO3 including the 'reception of texts' (AO3).
- Select texts carefully with an appropriate level of challenge to allow for comparisons within the genre (AO4).

SECTION B: RELATED CREATIVE WRITING

Candidates are required to submit one literary and one non-literary piece of writing in this section of the NEA folder. The specification indicates "one of the pieces of writing must be in the same genre as that studied in Section A. Both pieces of writing must be informed by the research and study completed for Section A."

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As the majority of candidates study a literary text for their chosen genre, their literary related creative writing then follows that genre. However, in some non-literary pieces this year, it has been difficult for the moderators to understand the link between the research and the writing. Text descriptors have been suggested previously and this is a good way for candidates to give a brief overview to contextualise their writing particularly for the non-literary piece. They would be able to indicate the links between the research undertaken and their final written piece. It should be noted that the words in this brief descriptor would not be counted in the advisory word count.

Across the work seen for the literary section, short stories, openings and extracts remain popular choices. Monologues and screen plays can also work well for some candidates and centres may wish to consider broadening their choices for candidates in future years. A great deal of excellent work was seen by moderators with a number of pieces being of publishable quality. It was apparent that candidates have been encouraged to write to their strengths and they have been clearly engaged with this aspect of the course. In some of the pieces, candidates had lacked the creative opportunity to give their story a title.

In the non-literary section of the folder, candidates submitted a range of text types. Reviews, articles and speeches were popular, with some opting to develop extracts from podcasts and websites. Generally, those tasks with a clear intended audience and purpose worked well. Once again, some of the journalistic pieces were of publishable quality. Topics were wide ranging and it was pleasing to see that candidates had been given the opportunity to write to their own interests. In very few cases, candidates in a centre completed the same task and this tended to limit creativity. Technical accuracy and the quality of written expression was generally very good, but inaccuracy in the mid and lower ranges was more prevalent. Careful editing and proofreading are a crucial part of the drafting process and candidates should build this into the preparation for their submission of work.

Summary of key points

- Encourage candidates to title their short story or extract for the literary section.
- Ensure that tasks have clear and relevant links to the genre study and this is highlighted in the text descriptor or on the cover sheet.
- Highlight the importance of proofreading and drafting in this section.

Task marking
Comments on approaches to internal marking

This was the second year where centres were required to upload samples of work submitted for moderation and as a result, more centres had included the NEA checklist with the work of their top candidate.

As the specification is now well established, it is clear that centres have put in place systems of internal standardisation. Centres are familiar with expectations regarding annotations and comments and these are very helpful to indicate to moderates where marks have been awarded. In just a few cases, comments on the cover sheet had not been filled in, which is a requirement and can act as a summative comment on the assessment objectives overall for the essay and creative pieces.

Once again this year, moderators saw a great deal of strong work and there was much to enjoy in moderating the folders. Centres are to be applauded for all the hard work that goes into preparing candidates for this unit.

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