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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
GCE  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2023**

## Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' reports offer valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. They are written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and detail how candidates have performed.

This report offers an overall 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 goes on to look in detail at each question/section of each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>i</sup>

The information found in this report can provide invaluable 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	WJEC offers an extensive annual 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.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
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 6 months after the examination.	<a href="http://www.wjecservices.co.uk">www.wjecservices.co.uk</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the overall subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="http://www.wjecservices.co.uk">www.wjecservices.co.uk</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="http://www.wjecservices.co.uk">www.wjecservices.co.uk</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with invaluable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## Subject Officer's Executive Summary

All papers functioned as expected this year with all four exam papers being accessible to all candidates. The NEA is now familiar to centres and moderators are, in general, impressed with the accuracy of assessment.

In Unit 1 candidates performed much better than in 2022, partly because it has been a much less interrupted year for candidates than 2022 and partly because the poem from the *Anthology* seemed to be familiar and accessible. Another factor which may have improved performance was that the Gothic novel task in Section B was something which candidates were able to do very well in most cases. This also meant that candidates seemed to have more time to compare features in 2 (iii).

Unit 2 asks candidates to write a number of essays in very tight time conditions, and examiners are always impressed with what some candidates are capable of producing. In general, candidates did not perform as well in this paper as they did in Unit 1. While there were some excellent, thoughtful and sophisticated responses, there were also a number of candidates who did not have a sound knowledge and understanding of the texts and failed to organise their time effectively in the exam.

Some candidates engaged well with the extracts and wrote sound, thoughtful essays on the set Shakespeare plays in Unit 3. There was still an issue with candidates using pre-learnt essays which was detrimental to the quality of their response. Some failed to write enough while others seemed to use a modern version of the text, which was problematic for integrated study. In general, performance was not as strong as in previous years.

Despite some excellent responses in Unit 4, there are still too many candidates who refer to and analyse only to a narrow range of terminology. There is also an issue with some candidate having a lack of understanding of genre and form. Yet, candidates seemed to have performed better in this unit than in previous years with candidates revealing a good knowledge and understanding of the set tasks and thoughtful and sensitive discussion of the unseen texts.

The Principal Moderator noted that some of the issues seen by moderators last year in Unit 5 (NEA), such as lack of proofreading and first drafts being submitted were not part of the process this year. Centres' assessment was generally sound and while AO2 remains the strength of this unit, centres' understanding and candidates' use of AO3 has also improved.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
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.	<a href="#">Terminology Tree</a> <a href="#">Glossary of Terms</a>	The Terminology Tree can be found on the 'Training' tab on the <a href="#">subject-specific website</a> . Click on the 'Materials from previous events' tab to access the resources and download the autumn 2022 materials. There are accompanying resources in the PowerPoint and in the delegate booklet.
Context must be addressed in part (ii) responses and should be relevant to the question being answered.	<a href="#">Unit 2 Knowledge Organiser (AO3 focus)</a>	Knowledge Organiser
Candidates need to demonstrate clear understanding of <i>how</i> dramatic tension is created (if that is the set question).	<a href="#">Unit 3 resources from the autumn 2022 CPD series</a>	These resources can be found on the 'Training' tab on the <a href="#">subject-specific website</a> . Click on the 'Materials from previous events' tab to access the resources and download the autumn 2022 materials. There are accompanying resources in the PowerPoint and in the delegate booklet.
In Section A of Unit 4, use different parts of each text, not just the beginning.	<a href="#">Linguistic and Literary Analysis (Poetry)</a>	Blended Learning resource with a focus on poetry in the first two sections.
In creative writing, use a style which is appropriate for audience, form, genre and purpose.	<a href="#">Creative Writing 1</a> <a href="#">Creative Writing 2</a>	Blended Learning resources.

# GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

## Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### UNIT 1: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE WRITING

#### Overview of the Unit

In Unit 1, candidates have two questions to answer: one on a comparative analysis of a poem and an unseen text in Section A and a creative writing question in Section B which has three strands to it. Effective planning of time is essential to a successful response to this unit. Most candidates answered every question on the exam paper and, in most cases, easily met the rubric instruction to write approximately 400 words for 2 (iii). Time management and completion of the entire paper was improved from last year and it was clear that most candidates had been well-prepared for writing in timed conditions and they knew what was expected of them for each question.

Technical accuracy and the quality of written expression is assessed in AO1 for Questions 1 and 2 (iii) and in AO5 for Question 2 (i) and (ii). Candidates are reminded on the exam paper that assessment will take into account the quality of written communication used in their answers. Again, there was an overall improvement in the quality of written expression this year, particularly notable in Section B, 2 (i) and (ii); this applies equally to handwriting and presentation.

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 (iii). The number of candidates who used a range of terms was pleasing, particularly those using terms relating to form and structure and engaging with more difficult syntax terms; the best responses used a range of technical terms confidently (AO1), explored approaches meaningfully (AO2), addressed the influence of contextual factors (AO3) and made thorough comparisons and contrasts between the texts (AO4). Weaker responses struggle to use technical terms, with many using just one or two basic terms and instead taking a descriptive approach to the poem's meanings though this was far less of a problem this year than last year.

Another improvement was in comparative analysis; the majority of candidates made sound comparisons between the poem and the unseen text in Section A and then between their own texts in Q2 (iii). There are online CPD resources available on the WJEC website to assist with the teaching of terminology as well as frameworks for supporting comparative responses and it is clear that many centres are making 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 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' by Christopher Marlowe, taken from their *Anthology*, and had a choice of unseen text; they could write either about an extract from an article 'Why I hate living in the countryside' by Iona Miller from *The Telegraph Online* or a transcribed extract from Michael McIntyre's standup routine on the countryside.

All three dealt with the presentation of attitudes to the countryside and candidates were asked to compare and contrast how they had been presented in the poem and one of the unseen texts. Most candidates chose to write about the article extract, with few choosing the spoken transcript to compare to Marlowe's poem. This perhaps reflects a growing reluctance amongst candidates to choose to discuss spoken language. As was my observation last year, centres could remind candidates that the spoken transcript often offers an opportunity for them to engage with a wide range of terminology related to phonology and prosodics and can provide some rich contrasts to the *Anthology* poem. Given that candidates will be studying a spoken drama text for Unit 2, it is worth them thinking of their work here on speech as transferable from that paper and terms like intonation, stress, paralinguistics and discourse features such as adjacency pairs can often be rich ground for analysis.

Candidates on the whole wrote well about 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love', a popular and accessible poem at the start of the *Anthology*. Candidates handled analysis well, acknowledging Marlowe's persuasive purpose and idyllic presentation of life in the countryside as a device to woo his love. Last year, coverage of the poem was an issue, but this was better this year, with most engaging with the whole poem rather than just the beginning and end. Candidates offered analysis of a range of the imagery which Marlowe uses, from comments about the purity of lambs' wool, the significance of coral and amber and their availability and the general bucolic landscape the poet presents. There were few misreadings of the poem this year and the poem offered candidates the opportunity to discuss language choices and contextual factors.

Evaluation of contextual factors was particularly successful this year with the best responses offering both biographical and social contextual factors, considering the politics of gender in the Renaissance poem, the irony of Marlowe's city-living, as well as some contextual receptions of the poem, with some extending their discussions to include Sir Walter Raleigh's 'The Nymph's Reply...'. Notwithstanding, there were some candidates who did not include any contextual references, and this sometimes involved whole-centre approaches to Section A. If a candidate makes no contextual references, then they will only be able to achieve marks for AO3 for overview and summary.

Most candidates securely identified tone and attitude in the poem and demonstrated understanding of some of the subtler ideas of persuasion and the romanticisation of country life in the poem. Errors in the identification of terms was sometimes an issue here, as in Question 2 (iii). 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. This year, sentence mood presented some problems and some responses started with the claim that 'Come live with me...' was a declarative. Listing was a key feature in this poem and there was some age-old confusion over syndetic and asyndetic lists. A return to the formal instruction of language levels, such as Form, Grammar, Lexis, Imagery and Sound, is advocated at the beginning of the AS course and as the underlying mechanism for analysis for every type of text encountered on the course. There are some excellent Blended Learning resources on literary and linguistic terminology on the WJEC website that can be used both in the classroom and independently by candidates as revision. Literary terms were more successfully identified and analysed; this examiner smiled at the reference to Marlowe's exaggeration as 'superbole' more than once.

## **Section B: Creative writing and commentary**

### **(i) and (ii) Creative writing**

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 connections can be made in 2 (iii) 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.

Question 2 (i) asked candidates to write a script of a television advert, a spoken piece, and a register with which hopefully they were familiar. We read a range of secure and engaging responses, promoting the benefits of a staycation in the British countryside. There were plenty of descriptions of what Britain has to offer holidaymakers, with many choosing to dispel the idea that the weather might be a problem and instead showcase rural locations and emphasise that during a cost-of-living crisis, the biggest benefit of all might be financial. Some wrote in a script format, and this was acceptable, using dialogue between characters as an entertaining way of promoting as the tourist board, using brackets to indicate what the images on screen would be. Most contained a secure sense of audience and purpose and candidates showed themselves to be familiar with television advertising, the more successful of which confidently crafted descriptions with original imagery and thoughtful angles on countryside holidays.

Less successful were those whose responses contained many technical errors, responses where subject and verb disagreed, some which slipped unsuccessfully between past and present tense, and those where a second person voice became third person and struggled with even tone; equally, there were some candidates who failed to move beyond simply outlining some very general descriptions of what a very specific rural location looked like.

Some did not fully respond to the task and did not consider the importance of the countryside brief, writing instead about London, or other UK cities. Overall, the novel task was much more successful, with many candidates achieving the appropriate tenor and register for the written piece. Candidates clearly had some experience of the gothic or horror genres, if not from literature then from film, and the countryside setting allowed for lots of descriptions of trees, bad weather conditions, isolated rural mansions and plenty of opportunity for main characters to get lost in the woods. There was more evidence this year of candidates deliberately choosing features in both pieces which matched for purposes of comparison in 2 (iii) and it was pleasing to see this forward-planning.

### **(iii) An analytical commentary**

In my report last year, I noted that it is in responses to this question that candidates who had not managed their time effectively struggled and that this was a particular problem in 2022. There was a huge improvement in the length and completion of 2 (iii) responses this year. Examiners noted the number of candidates who wrote responses which offered clear and – key here – sustained comparisons of features in both pieces. Simply put, on the whole candidates found much more to compare this year within their written pieces. 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 candidates that they should prepare and plan for these links by including similar and different features in their two pieces.

Some candidates were still 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. However, as noted, the majority were able to find plenty to comment on. 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 seems that the use of a range of terms is crucial to their analysis of language choice and impacts too (AO2, 10 marks), which in turn has an impact on the quality of links (AO4, 15 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 vlog with no textual analysis, will fail to hit the assessment objectives soon enough.

## Summary of key points

### Section A

Successful responses:

- avoided lengthy introductions which rewrote the examiner's rubric or gave unnecessary details about intended audience and purpose
- used a range of terms from across the language framework accurately and applied them sensitively in order to comment on meanings
- used the question 'how attitudes to the countryside are presented' as a focus throughout the response, dividing different aspects of their presentation between paragraphs
- embedded references to contextual factors throughout their response, making these references relevant and central to readings of the poem and moved beyond just biography
- 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:

- Avoid long opening paragraphs which 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 seasons) and then candidates should 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 aren't using the same few terms time and time again.
- Explore connections between texts in a range of ways; compare the presentation of seasons through content, through 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

Successful responses:

- demonstrated a secure awareness of genre, audience and purpose in 2 (i) and 2 (ii)
- built in a range of features in both creative tasks in order to compare them in the commentary 2 (iii)
- 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, making sure that they respond to all elements of it.

Areas for improvement:

- Section B, Question 2 (iii) 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 (ii), and responses needed to do more than just comment on one written piece and then another.
- Length of responses to 2 (i) and 2 (ii). Exceeding suggested word length is self-penalising as it leads to timing problems with 2 (iii).

# GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

## UNIT 2: DRAMA AND NON-LITERARY TEXT STUDY

### Overview of the Unit

This examination asks candidates to write a number of essays in very tight time conditions, and examiners are always impressed with what some candidates are capable of producing. This was again in evidence this year, with a large number of very impressive and thoughtful responses to three essays. There was, of course, a wide range of responses, and a few common threads tended to dominate where candidates did not perform as successfully as others, aside from the more obvious elements of sophisticated and accurate terminology, mature analysis or discussion, and integrated and relevant context. However, many centres are to be congratulated in the way they have worked with candidates in preparing them for this examination.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A: Post-1900 drama

The most popular text in this section by a long way was again *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This section consists of a choice of two two-part questions which address a specified extract (AO1 and AO2), and then an issue from the extract elsewhere in the whole play (AO1, AO2 and AO3).

In the Advance Information for this year, a 25% section of the play had been identified as potential extract choices, although it is difficult to establish whether this helped candidates in their preparation. There was very little evidence of candidates wasting time discussing context in part (i) of the question, but there were still too many responses which were overlong. For this question, 2 pages of A4 is ample space for them to track through and discuss language in detail. With three essays to write in 2 hours, this unit is time sensitive, and candidates should spend time preparing themselves under timed conditions and writing to a certain length, even if they try this at home.

Perhaps most alarming this year was the significant increase in rubric infringements, where candidates discussed the specified extract from part (i) in their response to part (ii). There were a number of candidates who were unable to be rewarded for their work simply because they had already been assessed on that section of the play. The guidance in the question is very clear – it is in bold – and candidates are self-penalising if they return to the specified extract from part (i) of the question.

Part (i) should be a relatively brief response of approximately two pages of A4, but candidates need to try to extend the range of terminology they use, as too many still rely simply on-stage directions and sentence mood. There were a number of cases where candidates had used an appropriate quotation and identified a term but did not specify where in the quotation this term was or identify which word they were discussing. There was also the odd occasion of poetic terminology, such as caesura, appearing in discussion of a modern play.

When moving on to part (ii), the usual issue of context re-appeared this year. Whilst candidates are rewarded for discussing the importance and impact of contextual issues, they need to be relevant and candidates should avoid over-generalisations at all costs. For example, when discussing the relationship between men and women in 1940s America for *A Streetcar Named Desire* it is not correct to state that 'physical violence between men and women was the norm'. Neither is it appropriate or relevant to list biographical features of an author's life which do not relate to the specified question. Context is more heavily weighted in this section and candidates should aim to fully integrate this discussion as a relevant aspect of their response.

As part of their preparation, candidates could create multiple essay plans on a range of characters/themes, based on different episodes from the play. This should help to ensure that they have a wide enough scope from which to draw when they sit the examination, and should help them avoid limiting their response, and ultimately their mark, in the examination. But they do need to be warned again about using pre-prepared essays which do not answer the set question, as this year there were too many instances of essays simply not engaging with the question.

### **Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

Williams's play continues to be a text which candidates enjoy and there were some spectacular responses. Of the two questions available, more appeared to write about the relationship between men and women, with most focusing on Stanley's interaction with both Blanche and Stella. However, more thoughtful responses also considered Blanche and Mitch, or even Blanche and Alan. On a few occasions, Steve and Eunice were brought into discussion as a counterpoint to the protagonists. Those who discussed the relationship between Blanche and Stella predominantly tracked their changing interactions throughout the play, from their initial reunion to Stella's 'betrayal' at the end. There were some very confident responses to the extract for Question 1, which were able to maturely discuss the tension in their dialogue.

### **Peter Shaffer: *Amadeus***

Very few responses were seen on this text.

### **Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard: *Shakespeare in Love***

This text continues to be popular with centres and candidates clearly enjoy studying this screenplay. Of the two questions, Question 5 was far more popular as it enabled candidates to discuss one of the protagonists in detail. There were some excellent responses on the extract with many candidates discussing Viola and the Nurse with confidence. When discussing Viola elsewhere in the play, candidates selected wisely, demonstrating some real thought when it came to episode selection and essay content. The very best responses were able to discuss both her romantic and practical nature and exemplified this in the choices they made. It was also pleasing to see how context is being used appropriately for this text, especially as there was an abundance to select from for this question.

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

Very few responses were seen on this text.

### **Diane Samuels: *Kindertransport***

The majority of candidates wrote about the presentation of daughters from Question 10 and there were some mature responses which moved between Evelyn and Faith very fluently. A number of candidates also managed to incorporate a discussion of how mothers influenced daughters, and this allowed them to expand their answer to incorporate Lil and Helga. Discussion here was hindered if they did not make it specifically relevant about *how* this had an impact on the presentation of daughters. Where candidates discussed the presentation of prejudice for Question 9, contextual analysis was especially helpful and important.

Those who performed well here demonstrated the ability to not only discuss anti-Semitic attitudes, but also the prejudices of Helga on her return, and approaches to children.

### Summary of key points:

- Only discuss the set extract in part (i).
- Avoid discussing the set extract in part (ii).
- Linguistic and literary terminology must go beyond identification of sentence mood.
- Part (ii) carries more marks than part (i) and this should dictate the amount of time spent on each essay.
- Context must be addressed in part (ii) responses and should be relevant to the question being answered.
- Specify the terminology being discussed.

### Section B: Non-Literary text study

In this section, *In Cold Blood* is the most popular text, followed by *Once in a House on Fire*.

Candidates are required to select one essay question from a choice of two, and in their response demonstrate knowledge of the whole text, whilst addressing AO1, AO2 and AO3. It is therefore essential, as with Section A part (ii), that context is an integral aspect of their discussion, and sweeping generalisations should be avoided. There is also a tendency in this section for candidates to slip into narrative or simple description of the events in the text which relate to the question. Again, unless discussion is grounded in analysis of language, then candidates are penalising themselves.

Candidates who perform well in this section tend to follow a fairly basic structure of an overview, three to four episodes from the whole text followed by a brief conclusion, ensuring that they have integrated all of the AOs throughout their response. There were many examples of this approach. As mentioned in the report on previous occasions, context (AO3) is heavily weighted in this section, and some candidates still struggle to integrate it throughout their responses in Section B. Once again, examiners noted a number of responses which tried to encompass the whole text in their answers. This prohibits candidates from discussing the language in any real detail and leads them into a descriptive response which does not answer the question. Candidates should be encouraged to select three to four well-chosen episodes from their text and spend some time considering *how* their selection helps them to answer the question. In order to reach the top bands for AO2, candidates need to demonstrate sustained and perceptive analysis of language. The very best responses internally contextualise the episodes they discuss and begin their analysis with topic sentences which clearly establish their point and relate their discussion to the question.

#### **Andrea Ashworth: *Once in a House on Fire***

This text continues to be popular with centres. Of the two questions on offer, more candidates responded to the presentation of conflict (Q12) rather than employment/making a living (Q11). Responses to Question 12 unsurprisingly saw candidates predominantly discuss the violent actions of both Peter and Terry. They focused on the physical conflict inflicted on Lorraine, Andrea, and her sisters, but some also discussed the mental and verbal conflict in evidence. They were also able to link this into engaging contextual discussion of gender. There were the inevitable contextual comments about 'all men being violent' which did not serve candidates well, but those who branched out to discuss other aspects of conflict, such as the conflict between Lorraine and her daughters over her choices, or even Andrea's own internal conflicts, performed well.

### **Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood***

Candidates continue to produce highly impressive work on this text and it was again the most popular text on the paper. More candidates opted to discuss the relationship between Perry and Dick (Q14) than marriage (Q13), but the quality of responses for Question 14 varied greatly. For a significant number of candidates, their response simply drifted into a discussion of Perry and Dick, with each character being treated separately, rather than what the question was actually asking. The best responses to this question tracked through the text exploring how and why their relationship developed in the way it did and discussed the changing nature of their relationship right up until the very end of the book. Responses to Question 13 were generally well written, although not always specifically about marriage. In some cases, responses descended into a discussion of parents and their impact on children, especially when discussing Perry's parents. Most analysed the marriages of Herb and Bonnie Clutter, Tex and Flo, and Mr and Mrs Hickock, but the very best responses also explored Al and Marie Dewey and used them as an example of a more modern and successful marriage. A few candidates discussed Nancy and Bobby in a discussion of marriage, but this was only relevant when they explored Herb's advice/refusal to Nancy and the contextual implications about marriage and religion at the time.

### **Dave Eggers: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius***

For this text, Question 15 was far more popular than Question 16. Candidates quite rightly tended to focus on the influence of Eggers' parents on him and his approaches to parenting Toph. There were a number of well-selected episodes chosen, especially those which came from the beginning and end of the text. The very best responses were able to explore how Eggers self-evaluates his own parenting style as he develops throughout the text, especially drawing on the importance of his mother and his self-doubt. There were very few responses seen to Question 16.

### **Robert Minhinnick: *Watching the Fire-eater***

Very few responses were seen on this text.

### **George Orwell: *Down and Out in Paris and London***

Candidates were asked to respond to either how Orwell presents unemployment (Q19) or attitudes towards prejudice (Q20). Responses to Question 19 relied heavily on work and living conditions in both cities with perhaps an over-focus on employment rather than unemployment. Whilst discussion of employment was relevant, candidates lost marks when they did not return to the original question in detail. Discussion of the squalor of accommodation and living conditions was important here, especially when discussing the 'London' part of the text. There was engaged discussion of prejudice with some candidates commenting on Orwell's own prejudices, which garnered some interesting contextual analysis.

#### **Key points:**

- Spend a short period of time selecting the three to four most effective episodes for discussion.
- Answer the set question.
- Avoid narrating/describing the text, follow S/E/A and include at least one term for each quotation.
- Ensure that context is used in a meaningful and productive manner and is referenced throughout the response.
- Internally contextualise episodes and begin paragraphs with a topic sentence which establishes your point and answers the question.  
Aim for sufficient coverage of the whole text without feeling it necessary to discuss everything.

# GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

## Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### UNIT 3: SHAKESPEARE

#### Overview of the Unit

This unit requires candidates to respond to a given extract on the set Shakespeare play they have studied and to write one essay (from a choice of two) on the same Shakespeare play. All set texts were attempted, with *King Lear* remaining the most popular Shakespeare text studied. For both Section A and Section B, the strongest responses integrated linguistic and literary features (AO1) with detailed analysis of how meaning was created (AO2). Many responses, however, lacked a range of terminology and there was a need for more precise application of terminology in both Sections A and B. For Section B, the most secure responses saw contextual knowledge being *applied* meaningfully to the Shakespeare text. Far too many candidates relied on a generic contextual introduction.

As highlighted in reports from previous examination series, given the AO1 weighting for both Section A and Section B on this paper, terminology needs to be at forefront of teaching this unit in preparation for the 2024 series. Candidates need to be reminded that discussion of a *range* of literary and linguistic terminology is essential in an integrated course. Terms also need to be applied with accuracy. This year, for example, there was some confusion over vocatives, abstract/concrete nouns, stative/dynamic verbs, syndetic/asyndetic listing, declaratives, etc.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A: Extract Analysis

For Section A, candidates are required to respond to an extract on the set text they have studied. This extract is printed on the paper itself. The advice is to spend 45 minutes responding to Section A. Responses were seen on all the texts on the specification, with *King Lear* the most popular.

In order to prepare for this section, centres had been given Advance Information regarding the Act from which the extract question would be taken. As with last year, it is questionable how useful this approach was in terms of benefitting candidates. Once again, it led to candidates within some centres discussing the same quotations and making remarkably similar points. There was an increase in the number of candidates unable to internally contextualise the material and treating the material as an unseen.

Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of *reading the set question and shaping their response* to address the requirements of the question asked. Some candidates completely ignored the question and simply provided a general discussion of what was happening in the extract or selected one character to write about. This was particularly noticeable in the dramatic tension questions where candidates often struggled to engage with the task and their focus drifted. Long-winded introductory paragraphs did not aid candidates and were in fact a waste of the candidate's time. At most the introduction to Section A needs to be a sentence, briefly offering internal context on the given extract.

There are still too many candidates offering irrelevant contextual detail at the expense of close focused analysis of the extract itself. Candidates also need to be reminded that their focus should be on the extract printed in the examination paper and that they should not be digressing and discussing other parts of the play.

Writing stamina seemed to be a significant problem for candidates this year. There was a significant increase in the number of under-developed responses that were a side to a side and half. Some responses were less than a side. For a 45-minute response, examiners expect to see a substantial amount of writing and to see *coverage of the whole extract*. Work that is too brief is self-penalising. Better responses provided sustained analysis of the extract, covering *a range of points*, and exploring language/meaning *in detail*.

Given the AO1 weighting for this question, *a range of literary and linguistic terms need to be correctly identified*. Best responses saw a wide range of terminology being purposefully applied and used *to explore how meaning was created* in the text studied. However, once again it was noticeable the limited knowledge that a number of candidates had and there was an increase in the number of responses where there was little or no evidence of terminology.

Imprecise use of terminology remains an issue. Once again, declaratives were used incorrectly with candidates citing part of the whole sentence as support. Candidates also cited a quotation without specifically identifying the term they were analysing (e.g. citing the whole sentence for a vocative, verb phrase, superlative, etc.) Very few candidates were able to distinguish between syndetic/asyndetic listing, passive/active verbs and distinct types of alliteration.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

Very few responses were seen. Candidates offered some relevant observations on how dramatic tension was created. Better responses were selective in their choice of material and clearly focused on the question.

### ***King Lear***

There were some very insightful responses exploring how Shakespeare created dramatic tension through language/character/plot/staging. Less successful responses tended to lapse into description. Some candidates ignored the question and just wrote about the presentation of the characters. There was also a basic lack of understanding in some cases with candidates muddling up Goneril (who was not actually on stage) and Regan, misinterpreting Gloucester's longer speech and struggling to say anything meaningful about the fight between Cornwall and the servant.

### ***Much Ado About Nothing***

Very few candidates attempted this question. There were some very insightful responses exploring how Shakespeare created dramatic tension through language/character/plot/staging. Better responses had a clear overview of the extract and candidates were able to select relevant material to support their readings. Less successful responses tended to lapse into description and became narrative.

### ***Othello***

There were some very insightful responses exploring how Shakespeare presented the characters and situation at this point in the play. Better responses had a clear overview of the extract and candidates were able to select relevant material to support their readings. The very best responses had a clear grasp of the contrast in the ways in which Othello and Brabantio were presented. Less successful responses tended to lapse into description and became narrative.

### **The Tempest**

Very few candidates attempted this question. There were some very insightful responses exploring how Shakespeare presented the characters and situation at this point in the play. Better responses had a clear overview of the extract and candidates were able to select relevant material to support their readings. Less successful responses tended to lapse into description and demonstrated only basic understanding.

#### **Summary of key points**

- Read the question carefully and *answer the question that has been set*.
- *Terminology* must be *wide-ranging and applied accurately*.
- Candidates should *refer to at least one term per cited example*. This term should be specifically supported by the example.
- *Avoid description/narration*. Candidates should be encouraged to adopt the SEA (Statement/Evidence/Analysis) approach.
- Include a *brief introductory sentence* placing the extract in the context of the play or immediately begin addressing the question.
- *Avoid irrelevant contextual detail*.
- Candidates need to demonstrate clear understanding of *how* dramatic tension/comedy is created (if that is the set question).
- Candidates need to analyse *how* meaning is created.
- Provide candidates with *timed examination practice* to develop writing stamina.

#### **Section B: Essay**

For Section B, candidates need to produce one essay from a choice of two on the same text that they used for Section A. Candidates are expected to show wider knowledge of the text as a whole. It is acceptable for candidates to refer to a selection of key episodes in detail as long as they place them within the context of the whole text, and they are relevant to the actual response. The selection of examples to support their argument also addresses AO1, as this assessment objective considers their line of argument and the organisation of their response.

The best responses clearly constructed an argument which addressed their chosen question. There was a lack of coherence, however, seen in many essays where candidates did not answer the question or provided a 'pre-prepared essay'. For example, one of the *Othello* questions asked candidates to discuss how far women are forced to conform to gender roles. Several candidates chose to write about the Desdemona with little focus on the actual question itself. There was also an increase in descriptive/narrative approaches and theses tended to score poorly across the AOs. Brevity was a significant issue in Section B with an increase in the number of candidates producing essays of less than two pages. Writing stamina is an area of focus and should be built into teaching of this unit for the 2024 series.

AO1 carries a significant number of marks in Section B. In order to access AO1 candidates need to learn a sufficient number of relevant quotations and then apply a range of literary and linguistic terms to access the marks available. Some candidates had been extremely well-prepared, and some excellent responses were seen which incorporated a range of sophisticated terminology. However, there were many examples of students misquoting or making up quotations. The analysis of made-up quotations clearly could not be credited. There was a noticeable increase in the number of students citing Shakespeare in translation and providing quotations in modern language. Again, these could not be credited. Candidates also need to be reminded that they should not quote from the extract provided for Section A and they will not be awarded marks for doing so.

As with Section A, some candidates needed to be far more specific in identifying language precisely and the generic application of terminology was once again seen. Many students used little or no terminology at all in their response to Section B. Furthermore, some candidates provided very limited textual support and were unable to offer supporting quotations. This impacted on the marks that could be awarded for AO1 and AO2. There was also an increase in candidates treating characters as people rather than constructs, and this led to descriptive responses. Candidates need to be reminded to include the author (e.g. Shakespeare presents/conveys/highlights, etc.) and the audience in their responses which would help them to avoid a narrative approach.

Context (AO3) is clearly important in Section B. Some candidates attempted to apply context meaningfully to their set text and used it with some purpose to support their argument. The very best responses used contextual detail to illuminate their arguments. Several candidates opted for a generic contextual introduction and would have benefitted from embedding this detail throughout the essay.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

There were a limited number of centres studying this text. Question 6 required candidates to discuss how Shakespeare presented the conflict between personal and political responsibility. This resulted in some insightful readings of the text with very high-level analysis from the best candidates. Less successful responses tended to use a character-based approach which led to more descriptive responses. Question 7 focused on Shakespeare's presentation of Cleopatra. Candidates engaged meaningfully with the text and had plenty to say in relation to this question.

### ***King Lear***

Question 8 – power as a corrupting and destructive force – was a popular choice. Candidates selected a wide variety of detail from the play and were able to produce coherent arguments. Some responses, however, tended to focus heavily on Act 1 Scene 1 and failed to show understanding of the play as a whole. Question 9 – Lear as a tragic hero – was also well received and several insightful essays were seen. The best responses were able to consider the concept of the tragic hero and how this was represented in Lear's character. The best responses clearly focused on the question and constructed a coherent argument. There were a considerable number of candidates who had a limited or no grasp at all of what constitutes a tragic hero. These responses tended to be character driven, adopting a narrative approach, scoring poorly.

### ***Much Ado About Nothing***

There were a limited number of centres studying this text. Question 10 was the more popular and focused on Shakespeare's presentation of Benedick. Some responses were character driven and largely narrative. However, there were some insightful responses which covered a range of valid points and effectively used context to shape the argument. Question 11 focused on the text being a criticism of society. Very few responses were seen.

### ***Othello***

Question 12 asked candidates to consider Iago as the embodiment of the Machiavellian villain who audiences find difficult to resist. This was a popular question, and the best responses established a clear argument, embedding the relevant contextual factors and clearly addressing the question. Weaker responses were narrative driven and demonstrated limited understanding of the concept of the Machiavellian villain or why audiences may engage with the character of Iago. Question 13 asked candidates to discuss how far women are forced to conform to gender roles. Several candidates chose to write about the Desdemona with little focus on the actual question. These responses were character driven and focusing on a single character was an extremely narrow approach.

There were, however, some very perceptive essays seen where candidates had engaged meaningfully with the question and several original interpretations were evident.

### ***The Tempest***

Question 14 asked candidates to explore the presentation of control and imprisonment. This was a popular question, and the best responses established a clear argument, embedding the relevant contextual factors and clearly addressing the question. Less successful responses were character/narrative driven. Very few responses were seen to Question 15, the significance of the title of the play.

### **Summary of key points**

- Answer the *set question*.
- Avoid using the extract set for Section A.
- Responses need to be shaped into a *coherent argument*. A brief plan would be helpful.
- *Terminology needs to be wide-ranging* and applied accurately.
- Candidates should refer to at least one term per cited example. This term should be specifically supported by the example.
- Candidates need to *learn a range of quotations* from the play and *cite them accurately*.
- *Avoid description/narration*. Candidates should be encouraged to analyse how meaning is created and draw conclusions from their points.
- Candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the whole text. An *overview* is essential.
- Centres should prepare their candidates with a *wide and broad understanding of the social, political, historical and cultural context* of their chosen text.
- *Context should be meaningfully applied* and embedded into the candidate's response.
- Centres should also encourage candidates to consider how their chosen texts can be interpreted in contemporary and modern societies.
- Examination practice needs to be embedded across the year in order to build *writing stamina*.

# GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 4: UNSEEN TEXTS AND PROSE STUDY

##### Overview of the Unit

It is encouraging to see that in most centres candidates are thoroughly familiar with the assessment objectives. There were very few responses without evidence of integrated study and at the top of the range several candidates showed command of a wide range of terms and approaches. Candidates need to be reminded to prioritise comparisons in Section A (AO4) and the integration of a range of contextual factors in Section B (AO3) as these Assessment Objectives are double-weighted.

Where candidates have been encouraged to develop their skills of planning and organisation, responses are more likely to achieve well on all assessment objectives. This requires careful reading in Section A and relevant selection for analysis in Section B. Clear and accurate expression is important for AO1 and it is pleasing to see centres where this has been prioritised.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A: Comparative analysis of unseen texts

All previous reports for Unit 4 have stressed the importance of 10-15 minutes spent on reading, re-reading and annotation. This stage should also involve the planning of accurate connections between the texts. Insufficient time spent absorbing the texts tends to produce flawed, superficial or simplified connections. There is no requirement to deal with the texts in alphabetical order but there were several linear responses where comparisons were perfunctory and undeveloped. A variety of thoughtful and accurate links were supported and explored where a clear initial understanding of all three texts had been secured.

##### AO1

##### Planning, shaping and organisation:

There were few who failed to shape the response with an introduction but several who repeated the text descriptors and offered a generalised re-wording of the question. Meaningful introductions will make at least one accurate connection between the texts and show understanding of how the set topic has been approached by writers or speakers. There were some confident overviews involving circumstances, attitudes or genres. These were based on a secure understanding of what Owen, Lewis and Spencer actually had to say in response to death.

One noticeable feature of successful organisation is the use of topic sentences to signal direction. The best candidates chose manageable connections between the texts, supporting them with well-chosen quotations and using relevant terminology in their analysis. Those who start with terminology, such as the ever-popular alliteration, and then try to make accurate connections, are rarely successful.

The strongest responses concluded with accurate linking of the texts, combined with insights gained through their analysis. A brief conclusion helps to shape the response but too many wasted time repeating points already made.

### **Terminology and expression:**

Again, too many candidates mis-spelled names and titles from the question paper and popular terms such as 'simile'. It was also disconcerting to see the writers and speaker referred to only by their first names. Although accounts of poetic form were often inaccurate, many identified the sonnet and some were able to comment on Owen's choice of form. Those who recognised the volta made some valid points on the focal shift of the poem. Caesuras, enjambment and the rhyming couplet were used by some to make convincing comments about meanings. In some cases, however, such features were labelled but not used to answer the question about reactions to death. Some responses lacked any acknowledgement of poetic form, even referring to 'paragraphs' in Text A. Unit 4 always features a poem and candidates should be prepared to comment on its form.

Spoken language features in Text C were often purposefully used and integrated with discussion of language. A few responses made valid use of the concepts of ethos, logos and pathos when analysing the funeral speech. Across the texts, sound use was made of pronoun address, although there were several errors. Fewer candidates, however, were able to use the term determiner accurately. The popular terms most commonly misapplied or misunderstood are still juxtaposition, connotation and lexical set. Many candidates also claim to quote a 'phrase' when quoting a clause or a sentence. Revision of the most common phrase types might be helpful.

### **AO2**

Basic general knowledge is always helpful in Section A. When writing about the speech some used Princess Diana's global celebrity status to underpin their analysis of her brother's eulogy as the identity of the deceased was an important consideration. General knowledge was patchier on Text A. Although there were some confident and detailed readings of the poem, basic misreading was not uncommon. Many recognised this as a war poem but there were also speculations about school shootings or animal welfare. Those who understood the WW1 setting offered the most convincing accounts, both of the poet's attitudes and those grieving in the sestet. Quite a few only referred to the first stanza, which simplified their interpretation and the comparisons made with the other texts.

Some of the very best analysis was on Text B. Unfortunately, some spent too long on the abstract ideas of 'fear' and 'suspense' which open the extract and were unable to spend enough time on Lewis's imagery. There were, however, some perceptive discussions of the literary techniques, especially the 'long valley' simile and the metaphorical ship with one engine.

Some candidates who used a range of accurate terms failed to show their understanding of meanings beyond a basic level. Literal explanations cannot achieve higher than band 2 marks. Unrealistic claims for the effect of phonological techniques cannot be rewarded. In a few centres, there were exaggerated comments about the impact of techniques such as alliteration without considering the meanings of the words quoted.

In some responses, excessive word-class labelling occupied too much time and space, leading candidates to neglect other approaches. Word-classing is most effective when the words are significant, with developed analysis of the meanings created by choosing them. A good example is 'must chug along' in Text B. The modal verb and the choice of dynamic verb are useful choices for analysis as part of the nautical metaphor. This quotation also directly answers the question on 'presentation of reactions to death'. Candidates need to keep the question in mind when choosing material for analysis.

## AO4

In many centres, planning led by connections between the texts has clearly been encouraged. It is more productive to choose links based on meanings and content, using the attitudes, purposes and preoccupations of writers and speakers, rather than features. Choosing a feature-led approach, such as similes, in all three texts, usually makes it harder to develop meaningful linking. A few centres encourage a 'framework' approach, starting with form and structure which are very difficult to compare. This tends to lead to descriptive work which does not directly answer the question. Candidates should be reminded that contrasts can be as revealing as similarities. Responses which concentrate only on similarities tend to simplify the meanings of the texts. Discussions linking two of the texts rather than all three are valid.

Contextual factors, although not rewarded separately in Section A, were useful to consider for this year's texts and led to some well-chosen connections based on the circumstances of the deaths involved. The different genres also provided useful starting points. The private and introspective nature of Lewis's memoir was contrasted productively with Charles Spencer's public performance.

Successful connections included: the relationship between the writers or speaker and the deceased; isolation v unity in bereavement; the status of the dead; the purposes of each text; protest v acceptance; single and large-scale deaths.

### Summary of advice for Section A

- Spend 10-15 minutes on reading, re-reading and annotation.
- Include an introduction with focus on the question.
- Plan connections based on what the texts say about the topic in the question.
- Select material which will answer the question directly and enable you to use a wide range of terms.
- Use different parts of each text, not just the beginning.
- Keep the conclusion short and avoid repetition.

## Section B: Prose Study

### Overview

The most successful responses showed thorough knowledge of the novel enabling swift and relevant selection of material. They offered a convincing planned argument in response to the question chosen and used literary approaches as well as linguistic analysis in their discussion of key episodes. Less successful responses included those who included limited or scanty evidence of integrated study.

While the range, relevance and integration of contextual understanding varied markedly. A few candidates overlooked contextual factors altogether. More successful candidates were familiar with the critical reception of the novel and the views of the writer as well as social and historical factors.

### Texts and questions

*The Color Purple* was the most popular novel, followed by *The Handmaid's Tale*. Some centres had studied *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and a small number wrote on *Emma* or *Great Expectations*. The question on 'difficulties faced by women' was by far the most popular and produced many of the strongest responses on most of the novels.

## Planning and Organisation

Practice in planning and organising Section B essays will always be helpful and in many centres, candidates were thoroughly prepared. The quality of introductions still varies enormously. The most confident examples set the agenda for their argument in response to the question as well as integrating key contextual factors. The least successful offered an overview of the novel without context or question focus.

There were many effectively organised essays, again using topic sentences to signal their direction. In some centres, however, they tended to start at the beginning and move forward, picking up relevant episodes. Chronological approaches are not always unsuccessful but they do tend to cause timing issues. Those who feel obliged to deal with the opening of the novel can spend too long there and limit their choices later in the essay.

The popular question on difficulties faced by women offered enormous choice. There were sound responses on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which followed Tess's experiences through the novel, especially those who selected rigorously and avoided narration. This approach was less successful with *The Color Purple*. Those who organised by character did better, as the difficulties met by Sofia, Shug, Squeak or Nettie provided a wider range. This also worked for *The Handmaid's Tale* with some responses featuring Serena Joy, Moira and Janine as well as Offred. The most assured responses were often those with thematic organisation, taking in aspects of the topic such as financial dependence, sexuality, or the normalisation of violence.

## AO1 and AO2

A significant minority used little or no relevant terminology, even when they had done so in Section A. Practice in analysing key passage should include choosing productive terms and approaches. It was disappointing to see responses where the novel was clearly understood but terminology was confined to a narrow range, usually word classes and sentence moods. Literary concepts and readings were overlooked in several responses, even when potentially productive episodes had been chosen.

Key techniques such as Walker's use of dialect or Atwood's choice of names were often recognised. Many who had studied *The Color Purple* commented on the impact of the dialect but few were able to offer precision in their examples. In *The Handmaid's Tale* the characters' names and many other features of the regime offer opportunities for detailed linguistic analysis. A few confident responses ventured into this rich territory with accurate analysis of the formation of neologisms, for example.

The best responses use a manageable number of relevant quotations and develop their analysis in direct response to the question chosen. Quotation without analysis may show knowledge of the novel but is not evidence of integrated study.

## AO3

There were few responses with little or no reference to context. Several, however, made only very brief references or offered a narrow range. Several were imprecise on time factors e.g. 'when it was written' or repeated the same factor e.g. 'patriarchal society'. Where candidates achieved well on contextual understanding, they had a variety of critical opinions, genre conventions and biographical information as well as social and historical background to draw on. In the strongest responses there was evidence of independent study which should be encouraged. This might involve historical research, studying the views of the novelist or reading other works in the genre. These responses introduced contextual factors in the introduction, connecting them with the question and introduced different aspects of context smoothly and relevantly throughout.

Some candidates showed a sound understanding of genre conventions e.g. 'dystopian', 'epistolary' or 'Bildungsroman'. The most successful were also familiar with other work in the genre, adding depth to their remarks on generic features in the studied novel. For example, one response on *The Handmaid's Tale* used Winston and Julia from *1984* when writing on 'ideas about love'.

### **Summary of advice for Section B**

- Have a clear plan in response to the question you choose.
- Remember that you do not need to start at the beginning of the novel.
- Learn dates, biography and critical opinions.
- Include contextual factors in the introduction and throughout the essay.
- Make sure that you can quickly find important episodes in the novel.
- Practise using a range of linguistic and literary terminology on key episodes.

## GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

### General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

## UNIT 5 (NEA): CRITICAL AND CREATIVE GENRE STUDY

### Overview of the Unit

This unit is internally assessed and externally moderated. It gives opportunities for learners to independently select an aspect of prose study that interests them and to study one text (chosen from a list in Appendix A) provided by WJEC within that genre. In addition, learners are given the opportunity to select wider reading to inform their studies in this unit and to reflect on the learning that has taken place. In reflecting on their studies, learners will then be required to produce original writing related to their chosen genre.

### Comments on individual sections

#### Section A: Genre study

Moderators saw work on a wide range of texts and genres again this year. Gothic and dystopian texts continue to be the most frequently chosen, with candidates tending to engage well with the clear stylistic features of these genres. Crime, Romance, Identity and The Outsider and War and Conflict are also popular choices. Moderators tended to see very little work in the Journalism and Life Writing genres.

Centres had taken a number of different approaches to the delivery of Section A of the NEA. The majority had given candidates access to a range of texts within a small number of genres. Some centres had given candidates complete free choice of both genre and texts leading to an entirely independent approach to the unit. A minority of centres had prescribed genres and texts offering their candidates limited independence in their study and leading to responses which were very similar in content. Where practicality requires common texts to be used, it is best practice to offer candidates a range of tasks from which they can choose.

Text selections were nearly always appropriate and allowed candidates to explore variations within their chosen genre based on social, historical and literary differences between their selected texts. Whilst there are always popular choices with regards to the core text for study (*1984*, *Brave New World*, *Dracula*, *The Woman in Black*, *The Great Gatsby* etc.), it was pleasing to see diversity in the selection of wider reading texts. Moderators saw some very effective work linking a core text from the appendix in the specification with some interesting contemporary texts. Bibliographies included with the work were very useful and demonstrated the care and attention that candidates had given to researching their chosen genre.

Moderators saw a wide range of tasks again this year with the majority of centres offering candidates flexibility in selecting their area of focus allowing for an appropriate level of independent study. The strongest responses were based on tasks which allowed candidates to explore context whilst addressing the question. Broader tasks such as those which ask candidates to explore how texts established their genre, tended to result in responses which lacked sufficient depth of analysis. Narrower areas of focus tended to work more effectively.

One of the most engaging responses seen this year focused tightly on the presentation of railway stations in two travel writing texts. Candidates who chose a narrow focus tended to craft focused and perceptive responses. Some centres provided a critical quotation in the task which candidates were required to engage with when constructing their argument. This approach worked well and allowed candidates to make some perceptive observations. Candidates who responded to tasks which signposted the relevant assessment objectives tended to have more structured arguments.

Last year, there was a noticeable narrowing of the range of terminology applied in the genre studies seen. It was pleasing to note that this seems to have been addressed this year, although there was still a tendency to focus on word level identification. In terms of terminology, candidates are expected to apply a wide range of terminology to their analysis of quotations from the texts studied. As candidates can edit and draft the non-examination assessment, the expectation is that this range will draw from all aspects of the framework and should include both literary and linguistic approaches. In stronger responses, moderators saw candidates who applied a wide range of literary and linguistic terminology with confidence and precision. Where marks were awarded in Band 5, moderators expected to see candidates engage with language on both word and sentence level. Moderators also noted a lack of precision in the application of terminology in a number of responses seen. Of particular note was the tendency to cite sentences or phrases but then make vague reference, for example, to the impact of 'the verb' in the sentence without explicitly identifying that verb. This is an issue which can be easily rectified during the drafting process.

It was pleasing to see that most candidates had clearly planned their responses, using topic sentences to organise their ideas into comparative paragraphs. For the most part, candidates were able to use an appropriately academic register. This year, moderators noted more issues with the crafting of purposeful introductions which addressed the central arguments of the genre study. The strongest introductions gave a comparative overview of the key issues within the selected texts. Weaker responses tended to lapse into description or simply give an overview of the history of the writer and/or genre, making little reference to the texts themselves.

As always, AO2 continues to be an area of strength in the NEA. Across much of the work seen with candidates engaging well with the key ideas explored within their selected texts. The strongest responses tended to use the Statement/Evidence/Analysis (SEA) approach to very good effect, linking terminology to meaning to progress their arguments. Weaker responses tended to lapse into description, failing to provide adequate textual support for their points.

AO3 continues to be the area in which moderators see the most generosity in terms of assessment. The strongest responses dealt with the conventions of their chosen genre, and the typicality of their texts within it, in some detail. This was a very effective approach and allowed candidates to demonstrate the knowledge they had gained from critical and literary research. Candidates who had read a range of texts from different eras within their chosen genre were, perhaps, better equipped to address this as they were able to consider the changes that had taken place within the genre. Candidates should explore a range of contextual points but they must be relevant to the question. Sections of biographical or historical detail which are not relevant to the essay's focus should not be credited for AO3. Reference to reader responses and critical readings of the texts also proved very useful when used to illuminate the argument. Contextual points should be fully integrated into the argument. Effective task setting helps with this.

The majority of candidates were able to make clear connections between their chosen texts allowing them to access the range of AO4 marks available. In the most successful responses links were made from the outset and interwoven through the entire genre study. Fully integrated links between the core text and wider reading resulted in some very fruitful veins of argument. Weaker responses on AO4 tended to be characterised by a lack of comparisons through the body of the essay, instead leaving all comparisons to the introduction and conclusion or dealing with the texts separately.

### **Summary of key points:**

Candidates should:

- use topic sentences to effectively organise arguments (AO1)
- craft introductions which provide an overview of the central arguments of the genre study (AO1/AO2)
- apply a wide range of literary and linguistic terminology (AO1)
- establish clear links between terminology and meaning, exploring *how* do the identified literary and linguistic features create meaning/effect (AO2)
- link all points clearly back to the question being addressed (AO2)
- ensure that all contextual points are relevant to the essay topic (AO3)
- include a range of contextual detail e.g. literary, biographical, historical, social etc.
- make specific reference to the conventions of the chosen genre and how the selected texts fit into that genre (AO3)
- adopt a comparative approach from the outset (AO4)
- ensure that links are relevant to the question (AO4).

### **Section B: Related creative writing**

Candidates are required to submit a writing piece which has been influenced by the knowledge gained through their genre study. Narrative writing, including short stories and opening chapters, remains the most popular writing type chosen by candidates. This is an entirely appropriate genre and enables candidates to demonstrate their understanding of their chosen genre. Some candidates were able to show some originality in the structure of their stories using appropriate techniques such as multiple narrative voices to the good effect. Across much of the narrative writing seen, characterisation and setting were handled.

Other than narratives, moderators saw non-literary texts such as reviews, articles, speeches and TED talks. All of these genres worked best when there was a clearly identified audience and purpose. Candidates who provided a brief text descriptor outlining this clearly signposted their intent to their moderator. With regards to texts for performance such as speeches and TED talks, candidates need to demonstrate their understanding of the spoken elements of these texts. That is not to say that they need to apply prosodic markers, but there should be a sense that these texts are often performed to a live audience.

Inappropriate tasks were in the minority again this year, although moderators still saw work which was based on the characters of the genre study. This approach should be avoided as it is self-limiting and impacts upon flair and originality. There were less issues with technical inaccuracy this year. Candidates had clearly made the most of the drafting and editing process in order to carefully proofread their work.

## **Summary of key points:**

### **Candidates should:**

- have clear links to the knowledge gained from the genre study
- show clear awareness of genre by either conforming to or subverting conventions
- use a style which is appropriate for audience, form, genre and purpose
- use language choices which reveal detailed knowledge of literary and linguistic features and their impact
- use wide ranging vocabulary
- have a clear sense of audience and purpose.

### **Administration**

Annotation on the work submitted for moderation was generally very good and referenced the appropriate assessment objectives and band descriptors. In a minority of cases, annotation on the work was brief or entirely absent.

A number of centres did not supply the non-examination assessment checklist again this year. Where this was missing, administrative errors occurred. A minority of candidate and teacher signatures were missing from the cover sheets provided with folders. It is a requirement of the specification that all work is authenticated by both the teacher and the candidate.

### **Conclusion**

As this specification has been in place for a number of years now, it is clear that centres are comfortable with the demands of Unit 5. Moderators found much to enjoy in the work seen this year and it is pleasing to see new tasks, texts and writing topics emerge year on year.

## Supporting you

### Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team are on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4292

Email: [gceenglish@wjec.co.uk](mailto:gceenglish@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/english-language-and-literature-as-a-level/#tab\\_overview](https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/english-language-and-literature-as-a-level/#tab_overview)

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

### WJEC Qualifications

As Wales' largest awarding body, at WJEC we provide trusted bilingual qualifications, straight-forward specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.

We support our education communities by providing trusted qualifications and specialist support, to allow our learners the opportunity to reach their full potential.



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<sup>i</sup> *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.*