

# GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

## Assessment

|     | GCSE English Literature Assessment Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | What this means                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AO1 | <p>Read, understand and respond to texts.</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</li> <li>use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.</li> </ul> | <p>This AO focuses on two areas of ‘response’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the student’s response to the text – the extent to which they understand the text and its meaning(s) to them as reader</li> <li>the student’s response to the task – the extent to which they produce a coherent response, supported with references to the text.</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |
| AO2 | <p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.</p>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>This AO focuses on writer’s craft: how the writer has communicated meanings to the reader.</p> <p>Ideally students will use subject terminology as a ‘shorthand’ to scaffold their analysis of craft.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| AO3 | <p>Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>AO3 is the understanding of the relationship between the ideas in the text and the contexts of the text, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the context in which the text was written</li> <li>the context within which the text is set (location/social structures and features/cultural contexts/periods in time)</li> <li>literary contexts such as genres</li> <li>the contexts in which texts are engaged with by different audiences.</li> </ul> |
| AO4 | <p>Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>This AO focuses on the student’s use of technical accuracy to communicate ideas to the reader.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## Paper 1 Section A: Shakespeare

There will be one task on each Shakespeare play. Students will respond to a short, contextualised extract from the play as well as demonstrating their knowledge of the play as a whole.

Each question assesses AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

There are 12 marks available for AO1

There are 12 marks available for AO2

There are 6 marks available for AO3

There are 4 marks available for AO4

Starting with this speech<sup>1</sup>, explain how far you think<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare presents<sup>3</sup> Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman<sup>4</sup>.

Write about<sup>5</sup>:

- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in the play as a whole.

### Exemplar response

Lady Macbeth describes Duncan's entrance as 'fatal' straight after hearing he will be coming to her castle, which shows power because she is capable of making instant decisions<sup>6</sup>. Lady Macbeth's language in this extract suggests that she is calling for power from evil spirits to help give her strength to carry out the murder of Duncan. She wants to get rid of her feminine side: 'unsex me here' – which suggests that she sees being a woman as weak, also shown with 'come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall'. It is as if she thinks that she will only be able to carry out the act if her female side is replaced with 'gall' (poison)<sup>7</sup>. On the one hand Shakespeare might be showing her to be a powerful woman, capable of selling her soul to the 'dunest smoke of hell' in order to get what she wants<sup>8</sup>. However it could also suggest that she isn't powerful at all and knows that her female weakness has to be destroyed in order to give her the strength to do what needs to be done<sup>9</sup>.

The fact that Lady Macbeth is destroyed by guilt and remorse shows that this second interpretation of this speech is closer to the truth. Straight after the murder she is nervous and jumpy: 'hark/peace', and has to drink the wine meant for the guards to keep herself strong. She gets angry with Macbeth when he is too shocked and frightened to act, and takes the daggers back to Duncan's room herself. However, she also says that she couldn't murder Duncan herself because he reminded her of her father, which might suggest that she isn't as cruel and heartless as she thinks she needs to be<sup>10</sup>.

## Comments

1. Focus on the printed extract enables students to address AO2 with close reference to text, as well as widening the scope of their response to the play as a whole.
2. Addressing AO1 by asking for a 'response' to an idea, or statement, about an aspect of the play.
3. Focus on Shakespeare as writer in order to remind students to think about the text as a conscious construct and thereby address AO2.
4. This asks students to think about contextual elements (AO3): in this case the idea of 'power' as well as ideas about women within this context.
5. Instruction to look at the bullets, which reiterate and remind students to focus on both the extract and the play as a whole.
6. AO1: clear response to task.
7. AO2: understanding of effects of language use.
8. AO1: Relevant use of direct references.  
AO2: Explanation of effects of language.
9. AO1/AO2/AO3: response to ideas, developing an interpretation of language effects, consideration of ideas of 'female weakness'.
10. AO1: response to Lady Macbeth as powerful woman in the play as a whole with relevant direct references.

By Act 3 she has already been pushed aside by her husband, who tells her to be 'innocent of the knowledge' of Banquo's murder rather than his 'partner in greatness'. Her power in her relationship has started to disappear<sup>11</sup>. She is finally tormented so much by the murder of Duncan that she goes mad and kills herself. Perhaps Shakespeare is suggesting that Lady Macbeth is powerful in some ways but not others; she is determined and strong when she needs to be, but also feels that she has to completely get rid of her femaleness in order to be able to be strong in a man's world<sup>12</sup>.

### Commentary

The opening sentence shows clear understanding of where this passage fits into the play. There is close focus on particular words/phrases with explanation of possible meanings. Ideas about power are being considered and the student is developing a response to the question as they go, thinking about different interpretations of what Lady Macbeth says and how it fits into an interpretation of her in the play as a whole. There are some appropriate uses of direct reference from other parts of the play, used to support the student's response to the play as a whole.

Overall this response shows clear understanding of the demands of the task. The student deals well with both the extract and their knowledge of the whole play in order to demonstrate their response to ideas about Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman.

## Comments

11. AO3: reference to power in terms of her relationship.

12. AO3: understanding of Lady Macbeth as a female in the context of this world.

## Paper 1 Section B: Nineteenth Century Novel

There will be one question on each nineteenth century novel. Students will consider a short, contextualised extract from the novel as well as widening their response to the novel as a whole.

Each question assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3.

There are 12 marks available for AO1

There are 12 marks available for AO2

There are 6 marks available for AO3

Starting with this extract<sup>13</sup>, how does Dickens present<sup>14</sup> Scrooge as an outsider to society<sup>15</sup>?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider to society in the novel as a whole<sup>16 17</sup>

13. Focus on the printed extract enables students to address AO2 with close reference to text, before widening the scope of their response to the novel as a whole.

14. Focus on Dickens as writer in order to remind students to think about the text as a conscious construct and thereby address AO2.

15. This asks students to think about contextual elements (AO3): in this case societal elements.

16. A reminder to demonstrate knowledge of the whole text outside the printed extract.

17. The question is sub-divided into focus on extract and whole text. Student responses will be marked holistically.

### Exemplar response

Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider in this extract by the way he is described. He uses the weather in the first paragraph to show how Scrooge is 'colder' than anything the weather can throw at him: heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet'. The listing of four types of bad weather intensifies the description of Scrooge being naturally isolated and cold, as if he is, like bad weather, naturally cold<sup>18</sup>. Dickens then goes on to give examples of normal social behaviour in order to show that Scrooge is outside of society<sup>19</sup>. He uses examples of direct address: 'My dear Scrooge, how are you?' in order to highlight how unusual it would be for anyone to address Scrooge like this. This is then summarised by stating that Scrooge doesn't want to be sociable and in fact likes his isolation: it was the very thing he liked<sup>20</sup>.

This attitude is shown later when Scrooge is visited by the charitable gentlemen. Even though it is Christmas, the season of goodwill, Scrooge sends them away very rudely and shows no concern for the fact that some people could really benefit from just a little bit of charity. Furthermore, his nephew cannot get him to come to dinner, even though it would mean he is on his own at Christmas. It is as if Scrooge cares nothing for the whole idea of Christmas;<sup>21</sup> he is like the 'external cold' but on the inside.

It is only when the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge his lonely, cold funeral,<sup>22</sup> that Scrooge finally realises that his loneliness and isolation from society will lead to nothing but misery. He has been shown lots of examples of the warmth and happiness of social people such as the Cratchitts, and also been reminded of how happy he used to be as a member of society, before greed and loneliness made him 'cold'<sup>23</sup>.

### Commentary

This is a clear, relevant response to task, showing understanding of the ideas and of Scrooge as an outsider to society. Evidence, both direct and reference, is used to demonstrate this understanding. There is also a clear explanation of writer's use of language/structure and its effect on meanings.

### Comments

18. AO2: explanation of effects of language/structural feature.

19. AO1/AO2/AO3: focus on writer linked to ideas related to context.

20. AO1: direct references to quotations to support response.

21. AO1: references outside the extract with more direct reference from extract.

22. AO1: reference to the wider novel.

23. AO1/AO3: clear understanding of context informs response to task.

## Paper 2 Section A: Modern Prose/Drama

Students will select one question from a choice of two.

Each question assesses AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

There are 12 marks available for AO1

There are 12 marks available for AO2

There are 6 marks available for AO3

There are 4 marks available for AO4

How does Priestley explore<sup>24</sup> responsibility<sup>25</sup> in *An Inspector Calls*<sup>26</sup>?

24. Focus on writer in order to remind students to think about the text as a conscious construct and thereby address AO2.

25. Addresses AO3 by focusing on the key social ideas in the play.

26. The task as a whole assesses AO1 in terms of students presenting a considered 'response' to the task and the text.

Write about<sup>27</sup>:

- the ideas about responsibility in *An Inspector Calls*
- how Priestley presents these ideas by the ways he writes.

### Exemplar response

Priestley explores ideas about responsibility through the way the Birlings behave towards Eva Smith. Arthur Birling explains the family's philosophy when he says 'a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own' which suggests that he feels that he only has responsibility for his own family and himself<sup>28</sup>. This is reinforced by the way the Birlings treat Eva Smith. First of all Arthur fires her from his factory to make an example of her because she asks for higher wages and dares to take responsibility for others by speaking up on their behalf<sup>29</sup>. Arthur's prime motive is to keep wages down so that he could make more profits. Priestley reinforces this through Arthur's constant repetition of 'hard headed man of business', to remind the audience that he is representative of capitalism and the damage it causes. Priestley is showing the audience that a blind belief that generating profits and prosperity for the good of everyone is fundamentally wrong as it causes innocent people to suffer tragic consequences<sup>30</sup>.

Although all the Birlings are responsible for Eva's mistreatment and death in some way, they react differently when they find this out from the Inspector. Mr and Mrs Birling do not change and are only concerned about their reputation the possible 'scandal' or Arthur's 'knighthood'<sup>31</sup>. However, Sheila and Eric do recognise that they have behaved badly by the end of the play<sup>32</sup> and therefore Priestley is suggesting that it is the younger generation that have the responsibility for adopting more socialist principles. Through their attitudes Priestley suggests that socialism is the modern way and that it is young people who will change society for the better<sup>33</sup>.

### Commentary

This is a considered, developed response to ideas. The student has used some direct references to support their interpretation of the ways Priestley explores ideas about responsibility. There is clear understanding of the context of the play, and the student addresses AO2 through their comments on structural development and characterisation.

## Paper 2 Section B: Studied Poetry

There will be one question on each cluster.

Students will respond to the named poem and compare this to one of their choice from the cluster they have studied.

There will be a full list of poems from each cluster printed on the examination paper.

## Comments

27. Bullets provide scaffold and a reminder of the focus of the question.

28. AO1: clear focus on task, relevant example with good use of direct reference.

29. AO1/AO3: understanding of central idea in the task, linked to contextual ideas.

30. AO1/AO2/AO3: focus on writer's craft, use of direct reference and understanding of the contextual influence.

31. AO1: further direct references integrated into comment.

32. AO2: structural comment.

33. AO1/AO2/AO3: thoughtful and developed response to task and text, focus on writer's use of character and contextual factors.

The named poem will be printed on the question paper.

Each question assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3.

There are 12 marks available for AO1

There are 12 marks available for AO2

There are 6 marks available for AO3

Across the qualification as a whole, 23.75% of the marks will be achieved through tasks which ask students to make comparisons between texts.

18.75% of the comparative requirement is assessed through this task.

Compare<sup>34</sup> the ways poets present<sup>35</sup> ideas about power<sup>36</sup> in *Ozymandias* and in **one** other poem from 'Power and conflict'.

### Exemplar response

Both *Ozymandias* and *My Last Duchess* show the effects of power and how it corrupts. Shelley describes *Ozymandias*' 'sneer of cold command' as if to suggest that he is a cruel and heartless leader, only concerned with his own power and the immortality it will bring. The Duke in *My Last Duchess* is similarly concerned with his own power and status<sup>37</sup>. Although the monologue is supposed to replicate a conversation, there is no opportunity for his listener to speak – Browning writes the monologue to show the Duke's self-obsession and that he is not interested in anyone's views other than his own<sup>38</sup>.

*Ozymandias* might have had 'cold command' of his 'lands', just like the Duke 'gave commands'. Both poets are concerned with the effects of power and how in the wrong hands it corrupts<sup>39</sup>. The Duke is shown to be misguided as Browning uses imagery to hint at the Duchess' kindness and gentle spirit (white pony) to prove that she is innocent and has been killed for nothing<sup>40</sup>. *Ozymandias* is shown to also be cruel: 'sneer of cold command' – however he has been left with nothing: 'the lone and level sands stretch far away'. It could be argued that the Duke has also been left with nothing<sup>41</sup>: he has a statue of 'Neptune' which is made of cold bronze. He doesn't realise this himself however, as he cares nothing for human relationships and is far more concerned, like *Ozymandias*, with his pride and reputation.

Ultimately both leaders are shown by the poets to be corrupt. Both poets feel that power in the wrong hands has devastating consequences on the innocent. However, although both poets show that this corruption is punished in the end, perhaps it is the Duke who is shown more clearly to be the true despot as Browning uses the dramatic monologue to show first hand how completely self absorbed he is<sup>42</sup>.

## Comments

34. Key command word used to remind students that they are forming a comparative response to two poems (AO1).

35. Focus on writer in order to remind students to think about the texts as a conscious construct and thereby address AO2.

36. This asks students to think about contextual elements (AO3).

37. AO1: clear comparative approach, understanding of ideas.

38. AO2: understanding of effects of form on meaning with relevant use of terminology.

39. AO1/AO3: direct references linked to interpretation, understanding of contextual ideas.

40. AO2: reference to language choice/imagery, relevant use of terminology.

41. AO1: developed comparison.

42. AO1/AO2/AO3: evaluative comparison of ideas linked to context with reference to form.



## Commentary

A thoughtful comparison which becomes exploratory as it develops. The student holds both poems together which enables a considered comparison to be made as to the extent to which both poems deal with ideas about power. By the end, this comparison becomes evaluative as there is a judgement made as to which poem demonstrates the effects of power more strongly. There are clear explanations of the effect of form on meaning, and the ideas about the corruption of power, and the poets' attitudes towards this, are very well explained.

## Comments

## Paper 2 Section C: Unseen Poetry

Students will complete two tasks in this section.

The first task will be a question on the first unseen poem, worth 24 marks.

The second task asks students to compare this first poem with a second unseen poem and respond to a short comparative task, worth 8 marks.

The response to unseen poetry as a whole assesses AO1 and AO2. There are 12 marks available for AO1  
There are 20 marks available for AO2

Across the qualification as a whole, 23.75% of the marks will be achieved through tasks which ask students to make comparisons between texts.

5% of the comparative requirement is assessed through this task.

27.1 In *To a Daughter Leaving Home*, how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about her daughter?<sup>43</sup>

43. (AO2) focus on writer's methods.

44. (AO1) response to text.

## Exemplar response

In this poem, the speaker is the voice of a parent, describing a memory of watching her daughter learn to ride a bike. The mother describes her fear of her daughter coming to harm with the use of 'loping along beside you', as if she is terrified of letting go and letting her daughter move away from her. This is then reinforced with the use of 'wobbled' to suggest the daughter's vulnerability and fear that she may come to harm. However, the daughter is confident and shows this through 'pulled away' and 'screaming with laughter' – she doesn't appear to have any fear of her new skill and is excited by the ability to 'pull ahead'<sup>45</sup>. The contrast between the parent and the child is shown through the language used to describe them; the mother's mouth 'rounds in surprise' whereas the daughter is 'pumping, pumping for your life'<sup>46</sup>.

45. Using references to support the interpretation being developed (AO1).

46. Focus on writer's use of language (AO2).

There is a tension between the mother's reaction to the event and the daughter's. The use of repetition in 'pumping, pumping' suggests the daughter's desire for independence and freedom, with 'for your life' used ambiguously to suggest that the daughter is not only desperate to learn to ride a bike, but also to be an independent person in the world, leading her own 'life' <sup>47</sup>. While the mother is 'waiting for the thud', which is clearly a metaphor for the daughter coming up against a hurdle in her life, the daughter is 'screaming with laughter' which suggests that she has a very different attitude towards becoming independent. This phrase almost works as an oxymoron, contrasting 'screaming' (which hints at the mother's internal fear and anxiety) with the daughter's 'laughter'. The clash between these two words intensifies the difference between the mother and the daughter's attitude towards becoming independent <sup>48</sup>.

Overall, the poem uses this event, often seen as a staging post in childhood, as an extended metaphor to explore attitudes about growing up, showing a contrast between the mother's anxiety and the daughter's confidence <sup>49</sup>.

### Commentary

This is a thoughtful, detailed response. Evidence has been integrated into the body of the response in a very judicious manner throughout. The ideas in the poem have been clearly understood and the response deals very well with these ideas and how the writer has communicated them. There is a thoughtful focus on examining a range of ways in which the poet has used language, and in some cases specific language techniques, to communicate and suggest meanings. References to specific terminology are precise, relevant and appropriate to the ideas being examined.

27.2 In *Poem for My Sister*, and '*To a Daughter Leaving Home*', the speakers describe watching someone they love grow up. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets describe <sup>50</sup> these feelings?

### Exemplar response

Both of these poems are about the relationship with a young child. However, one of the differences is that in *To a Daughter* the speaker is her mother, whereas in *For my Sister* the speaker is the older sister. What the poems have in common is that both of them show that they are worried about the young person and don't want them to grow up. This is the main similarity between them <sup>51</sup>.

Both of the poems show that the adult world is possibly dangerous. They both use metaphors to show this, with riding a bicycle in the first one and wearing high-heeled shoes in the second one. Both of these metaphors are for ordinary things, but both show that there is danger: 'wobbled' is an idea used in both poems to show how innocent and vulnerable the young girls are <sup>52</sup>.

## Comments

47. Beginning to develop a detailed response to how ideas are communicated through language (AO2).

48. Detailed focus on effects of specific techniques with use of relevant subject terminology (AO2).

49. A very thoughtful overall response which summarised the main idea and links clearly to the main way the writer has presented this idea (AO1 / AO2).

50. (AO2) focus on writer's methods.

51. Clear comparative comment.

52. Clear similarity between use of method in both poems with relevant terminology.



Also, both poems describe the young people as being full of life and enjoying playing. In the first one she is 'screaming with laughter' whereas in the second one she is 'playing hopscotch'<sup>53</sup>. Both of the girls are also shown by the poet to be independent and looking after themselves. The main difference is that one is a mother and one is a sister. However, both of the poems have the same theme and use a metaphor to express this idea of being afraid for the young person as they grow up'<sup>54</sup>.

## Comments

53. References linked to interpretation.

54. Comparative examination of effect of writers' methods on reader.

### Commentary

This is a thoughtful comparison of methods with effective use of details to support the explanation of the effect of methods throughout. A range of direct references are used to support the comparison. The references are used effectively to support the comments on similarities and differences. The focus on similarities is entirely appropriate and relevant, and is supported with a summative focus on the main method used by both writers to present a similar idea.