
Student responses with examiner commentary

A-level English Language and Literature
Paper 1: Telling Stories 7707/1 Section A

For teaching from September 2015

For assessment from June 2017

Introduction

This collection of resources gives examples of student responses to questions from our A-level English Language and Literature specimen materials, with accompanying examiner commentaries. The student responses are extracts from full answers that exemplify the kinds of approaches students ought to take and the analytical frameworks with which they should be familiar.

The response in this resource relates to A-level Paper 1: Telling Stories, Section A (Remembered Places). Please see the separate resources for examples of student responses, with accompanying examiner commentaries for A-level Paper 1 (Sections B and C) and A-level Paper 2.

Paper 1: Telling Stories (7707/1)

As detailed in the specification (4.1), the aim of the area of study examined in this paper is to allow students to learn how and why stories of different kinds are told, and why stories are 'telling', or valuable, within societies. Students will explore the ways in which writers and speakers present stories and learn how language choices help shape different representations of different worlds and perspectives. This part of the subject content requires students to apply their knowledge to narratives that construct different views of a particular place; prose fiction that constructs imaginary worlds and poetry that constructs a strong sense of personal perspective.

Section A: Remembered Places

In Section A, students are presented with two extracts from the *AQA Paris Anthology*. Students will be expected to call upon the wide range of linguistic and generic features they have studied when exploring the diverse collection of non-literary material in the anthology, as well as considering issues around the questions of representation and viewpoint.

Question 1:

Compare and contrast how the writers of these texts express their ideas about people living in or visiting Paris.

You should refer to both texts in your answer.

Assessment objective(s) covered:

AO1 (15 marks)

AO3 (15 marks)

AO4 (20 marks)

Total marks available: 40

Student response

In 'Understanding Chic', Fraser-Cavassoni has a negative experience of the French because of the slap she receives. However, we see that her opinion of Paris is very favourable, as demonstrated by words such as 'undaunted', 'bounced' and 'enthusiasm'. This shows Cavassoni to have a positive view of Paris. These terms have connotations of energy and a lack of criticism. When talking about the slap, Cavassoni says, 'A Frenchman not a guard'. The emphasis on the nationality of the man and that he is working there, and therefore has no responsibility for the law, indicates that the French are fastidious and not afraid to cause offence. The indefinite article, 'a', suggests that the man can be seen as representative of all Frenchmen.

This kind of generalisation can be seen in 'What do you wish someone had told you?' post, but they demonstrate a different attitude to those living in Paris. The first post states 'French people are not cold or rude'. Although this is a positive statement it still describes the French as one identity. It also suggests through the use of negation that there is a stereotype of French people being cold and rude. By having to state they 'are not' like this, the author implies an awareness of the cultural stereotype of French people being impolite that he has to address in order to then dismiss. This correction of a widely held stereotype is typical of a post such as this, where the audience would be wide and the register mixed.

Fraser-Cavassoni in 'Understanding Chic' uses her negative experience, the slap, as a basis for an analogy for what French People are like. Her generalisations are modified by her statement that it is 'unfair' to suggest all French people are inclined to slap. The disclaimer is appropriate for the text, which takes the form of a memoir, and therefore self-reflection is likely to be present. She creates the term 'slap instinct' to describe the Parisians' mentality as well as saying 'defensive, they had to attack'. These terms are suggestive of something animalistic within the people living in Paris that Fraser-Cavassoni blames on the history of sieges in the city. This is an unsubstantiated claim that is really only the personal opinion, or musing, of the author that is expected in the context of a memoir. The implied depersonalisation of the Parisians demonstrates that Fraser-Cavassoni feels them to be somewhat unstable and sometimes dangerous.

Moreover, the memoir is written from a time when she was thirteen, therefore the perception of the attitude of the Parisians has changed over time, shown through the phrase 'in retrospect'. In contrast, the online extracts are likely to be written immediately after their visit to Paris, therefore the negative attitude is heightened. Furthermore, the colloquial tone of the online extracts allows the reader to exemplify certain phrases. For example, the online extract often uses capital letters,

whereas the memoir uses capital letters to indicate clauses that the author wishes to be foregrounded.

Examiner Commentary

AO1

The student expresses her ideas well and maintains a strong focus on the text at all times. She uses terminology precisely and accurately (eg 'the indefinite article') and provides a thoughtful and developed interpretation of the texts. Ideas are explored throughout (eg the developed discussion of the 'slap instinct' and the exploration of self-reflection and personal opinion). There is a good focus on ways of narrating and the use of narrative voice and particular registers: a great deal of ground is covered in discussing stereotyping, attitudes to culture, and aspects of implied readership and genre.

AO3

The student makes some clear and well-considered points on the memoir as a distinctive genre, and how Fraser-Cavassoni's language choices are typical of this kind of writing. She is also able to draw on the discourse conventions of message boards in exploring her ideas. She makes some developed points on the contexts in which the texts were written (eg on the difference between Fraser-Cavassoni writing retrospectively, and consequently reflecting on her initial thoughts from a distance, and the traveller probably writing after a recent trip to Paris).

AO4

There are clear connections made between the texts. The student has thought carefully about the sections of the texts she wishes to write about (eg identity of the French, comments on place and culture, reasons for wanting to recount experiences of travel, audience and register). Her writing draws both on similarities and differences and these are well signposted through the use of appropriate discourse markers.

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