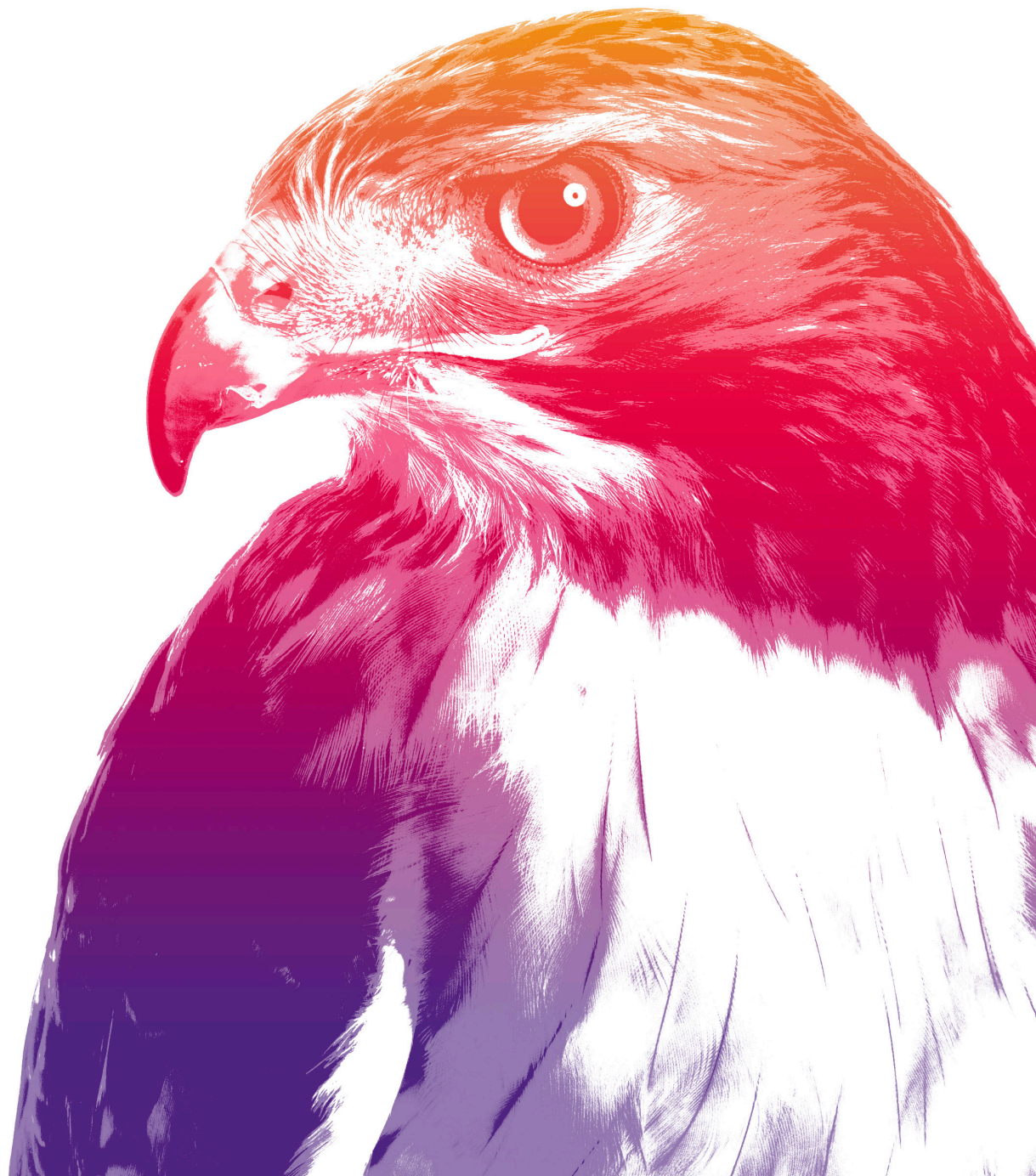


GCSE
**ENGLISH
LANGUAGE**

Teaching synthesis

Further insight series



A ten point plan for teaching synthesis

GCSE English Language (8700)

Further insights series:

The assessment of synthesis on GCSE English Language Paper 2 Question 2

Aims

- To explain the Assessment Objective (AO) and constituent parts of the question.
- To provide one example of a possible methodology to help students to develop the skills required.

This resource should be read in conjunction with:

- specimen papers and mark schemes, available on [Secure Key Materials](#)
- resources and slides used at [Preparing to teach meetings](#).

By way of reassurance, whilst synthesis is a new skill to be assessed at GCSE, early indications from pilot schools are that it is a relatively straight-forward comprehension task.

This resource provides, as part of its explanation, some ideas for teaching and learning. These are shared in the spirit of stimulating professional development and thinking.

It should not be seen as an authorised approach, or the only approach that students can take to responding successfully to this question.

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AOs SYMMETRY GRID

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5: Writing |
|---------|--|--|---|---|---|
| Paper 1 | <p>AO1 List 4 things... Identify explicit information Identify explicit ideas</p> <p>4 marks</p> | <p>AO2 How does the writer's use of language... Explain, comment on, analyse</p> <p>8 marks</p> | <p>AO2 How does the writer structure... Explain, comment on, analyse</p> <p>8 marks</p> | <p>AO4 To what extent do you agree? Evaluate texts critically</p> <p>20 marks</p> | <p>AO5/AO6 Descriptive or narrative writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate clearly Organise information Use a range of vocab and sentences Accurate spelling and punctuation <p>40 marks</p> |
| Paper 2 | <p>AO1 True/false statements... Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas</p> <p>4 marks</p> | <p>AO1 Write a summary... Synthesis of explicit and implicit ideas and information</p> <p>8 marks</p> | <p>AO2 How does the writer's use of language... Explain, comment on, analyse</p> <p>12 marks</p> | <p>AO3 How the writers present... Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, and how they are conveyed</p> <p>16 marks</p> | <p>AO5/AO6 Students write about their own views As above</p> <p>40 marks</p> |

Assessment journey:
Two equal demand papers which balance progression through the papers.

Reading AO1: P1 Q1 begins with explicit retrieval. This is mirrored in P2 Q1 through true/false statements and culminates in a summary task of both implicit and explicit reference as a pointer to P2 Q4.

Reading AO2: P1 Q2 provides a specific example for analysis. P2 Q3 requires students to select examples of their own.

Reading AO4/3: Evaluation of a section of text on P1 Q4 leads to comparison of two whole texts in P2 Q4.

Writing AO5/6: P1 reading source acts as stimulus for descriptive, and or narrative writing. P2 reading sources support students to write their own views.

1. What is the question assessing?

The question **only** assesses **AO1** which requires students to:

- **identify** and **interpret explicit** and **implicit** information and ideas
- **select** and **synthesise** evidence from different texts.

An assessment chart is available on the previous page, which sets out in sequence the assessment objectives.

It is important to understand that this is the third question in a sequence of three that assesses AO1. Knowing the progression through these three questions helps us to see what the question is assessing more specifically and transparently.

- **Paper 1 Q1** assesses the most straight-forward aspect of AO1: comprehension of **surface meaning and information retrieval**. It does not require any inferential reading.
- **Paper 2 Q1** assesses AO1 through a series of provided statements that require students to select only the ones that are true based on their reading of the source. In order to do this, **some statements require surface reading, whilst others introduce the beginnings of inferential reading**. In this way, it signals an aspect of progression.
- **Paper 2 Q2** assesses AO1 through students' own writing. **As a more extended response, it requires students to show evidence of inferential reading**. As such, it marks the final aspect of progression in the way that the AO is assessed in across the two papers.

2. How is the question worded and why?

This is an example from the second set of sample materials.

- You need to refer to source A and source B for this question.
- The things to see and do at Glastonbury Festival and Greenwich Fair are different.
- Use details from both sources to write a summary of the differences.

For the question to assess synthesis, it requires students to show understanding of information that they have read in **both** sources – the premise being that there is additional demand in them comprehending meaning based on two texts, instead of from just one text.

The question will consistently:

- remind students that they need to refer to **both** sources – students who refer to only one source are not in effect synthesising information and would be capped in level 2 of the mark scheme
- provide students with a specific point of focus for their search, some textual detail to look for that connects both texts **either because something is similar, or something is different, or both details add together to develop a fuller understanding** – the point of focus will be relatively narrow within the scope of the topic or theme as a whole as developed by both sources. The scope of the question will not require students to consider writers' techniques or effects. The question will not reference writers for this reason. These aspects of writers' techniques and effects on readers are separately assessed as AO3 in Q4
- require students to bring the two aspects of textual details together in a written **summary** – the assessment of synthesis is through students' own writing. The word: summary is the medium by which students demonstrate this ability to us. As later points show, a summary can be either one or two paragraphs of their own writing. In the way that we are using the term here, it does not have any particular, or generic requirement beyond this (for example, reduce meaning down or use bullet points etc).

3. What are the skills that need teaching?

There are essentially four skills that students need to develop (three of which are reading and one of which is writing), and in this particular order, the ability to:

1. pick out the point of connection in the question – in the sample question provided, for example, students need to answer on 'different things to see and do'
2. search out the textual details relevant to the focus (or parameters) of the question
3. independently ask themselves: If this is so, what does this lead me to infer/realise/appreciate about what I've been asked to focus on?
4. bring the two sets of details (and implied meanings) together in their own writing.



4. Getting started and first steps

Students need to ensure that they pick up on all of the requirements set out in the question, in particular, the parameters for their synthesis.

It might help them to circle or highlight the key words in the question in order to do this.

Scan and skim reading skills could be an efficient way of approaching the task in timed constraints.

5. Selecting (text marking or evidence listing)

Students will need practice at searching and locating key details from both sources related to the focus of the question, in the example provided here: about different things to see and do.

One way to build confidence, and independence in this skill, is to introduce students to text marking, or annotation of textual detail through short texts in the first instance, leading up to longer texts later in the process.

As preparation, students can:

- text mark or underline
- highlight
- make marginal lines and notes
- list details or points, perhaps in a simple chart that they get used to constructing for themselves with the information in brackets being that which will change depending on the focus set in the question:

| | Source A | Source B | What's (different) and might be inferred from this? |
|-----------------|----------|----------|---|
| (Things to see) | | | |
| (Things to do) | | | |

6. Textual evidence, reference and quotations (Q)

One methodology that might be useful is to help students build a response around a set approach: **SQI**.

The **Q** relates to quotations (or just as appropriately, textual references). This essentially is the detail taken from both sources that students will use as the content for their summary.

Note

- The mark scheme does not reward the number of textual details cited per se but the standard and quality of their response and the inferences being made.
- Textual references and/or direct quotations can be used – but students are only using them to inform content (not to analyse language).
- Whilst there will always therefore be a number of textual details that students can use in theory, in practice they should be selective about ones that they can infer something about. Equally, students should bear in mind the time that is commensurate with the marks and weighting for this task, and not try to cite too many textual examples which could lead them to treat each superficially.

For example:

| | Source A | Source B | What's different and might be inferred from this? |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| Things to see | Muddy fields and a series of tents, one "has lost its moorings" | "Vendors of gingerbread and toys ... stalls gaily lighted up ... attractive goods" | |
| Things to do | Be entertained by bands on stage – "The acts for 2005 included Coldplay The Killers," | Go to a pantomime "you have a melodrama ... a pantomime, a comic song ..." | |

7. Statements related to the set question (S)

Having selected appropriate textual details, students need to formulate statements in relation to each.

For example, at Glastonbury you can see lots of tents.

8. Making inferences (I)

Students need to develop the ability to independently ask questions of themselves as a reader (or interrogate the text). Questions like:

- what does this suggest to me about (what people did for fun or entertainment)?
- what might I imply from this about (...)?
- what does it make me realise (...)?

Note

The mark scheme will not seek to prescribe what inferences students should come to in their synthesis, but will look to reward the quality (and plausibility) of any inference that a student chooses to make.

9. Bringing it together in summary

The requirement to synthesise information into a summary means that students can either:

- write a single, integrated paragraph as a response to both sources
- write two connected (or linked) paragraphs as their preferred response to both sources.

Note

Discourse markers and connectives work in both approaches and help students to write a more cohesive response.

Sentence stems that signal inferential readings can help to ensure students meet a key requirement of this AO that is being assessed:

- This might suggest to me that...
- You could infer from this that...

For example

Both Glastonbury and Greenwich have a focus on outdoor fun, but whereas modern crowds can enjoy the mud and camp out at Glastonbury in ‘a series of tents ...’ which could be chaotic because “some lose their moorings” or go there to be entertained by bands like “Coldplay and The Killers”, at Greenwich the crowd went for treats to eat like “spice nuts” and “pennyworths of pickled salmon”. This might suggest people have more leisure time to spend at Glastonbury than the crowd at Greenwich who seem to be enjoying a rare day out...

Or:

*At Glastonbury modern crowds can enjoy the mud and camp out at Glastonbury in ‘a series of tents ...’ which could be chaotic because “some lose their moorings” or go there to be entertained by bands like “Coldplay and The Killers”.
However at Greenwich fair...*

10. Next steps to teach comparison

The different ways that students can construct their summary means that skills learned here (for example use of integrated paragraphs or discourse makers and connectives) can also be applied to ways that students approach Q4 on Paper 2.

In this sense, it can act as a pointer to the more challenging question to come. It is important to note the following differences that distinguish the two questions.

- The two questions assess very different AOs in that Paper 2 Q4 assesses AO3.
- The two questions should not require students to duplicate material or over-lap in their responses as both set different aspects within the sources to focus upon.
- In that Q4 assesses AO3, this explicitly requires students to **compare how writers convey** their perspectives, and as such it will always reference the writers in the question in a way that Q2 won't.
- In Paper 2 Q4, the word **convey** (or its equivalent) will require students to consider **effects of language as well as other methods** that could include such things as tone of the writing, use of image to reinforce meaning, testimonies, foregrounding or emphasis, bias (what is present or omitted), level of selectivity of information etc.