

Spotlight on GCSE English Language

with Jonny Kay

Post-16 English expert





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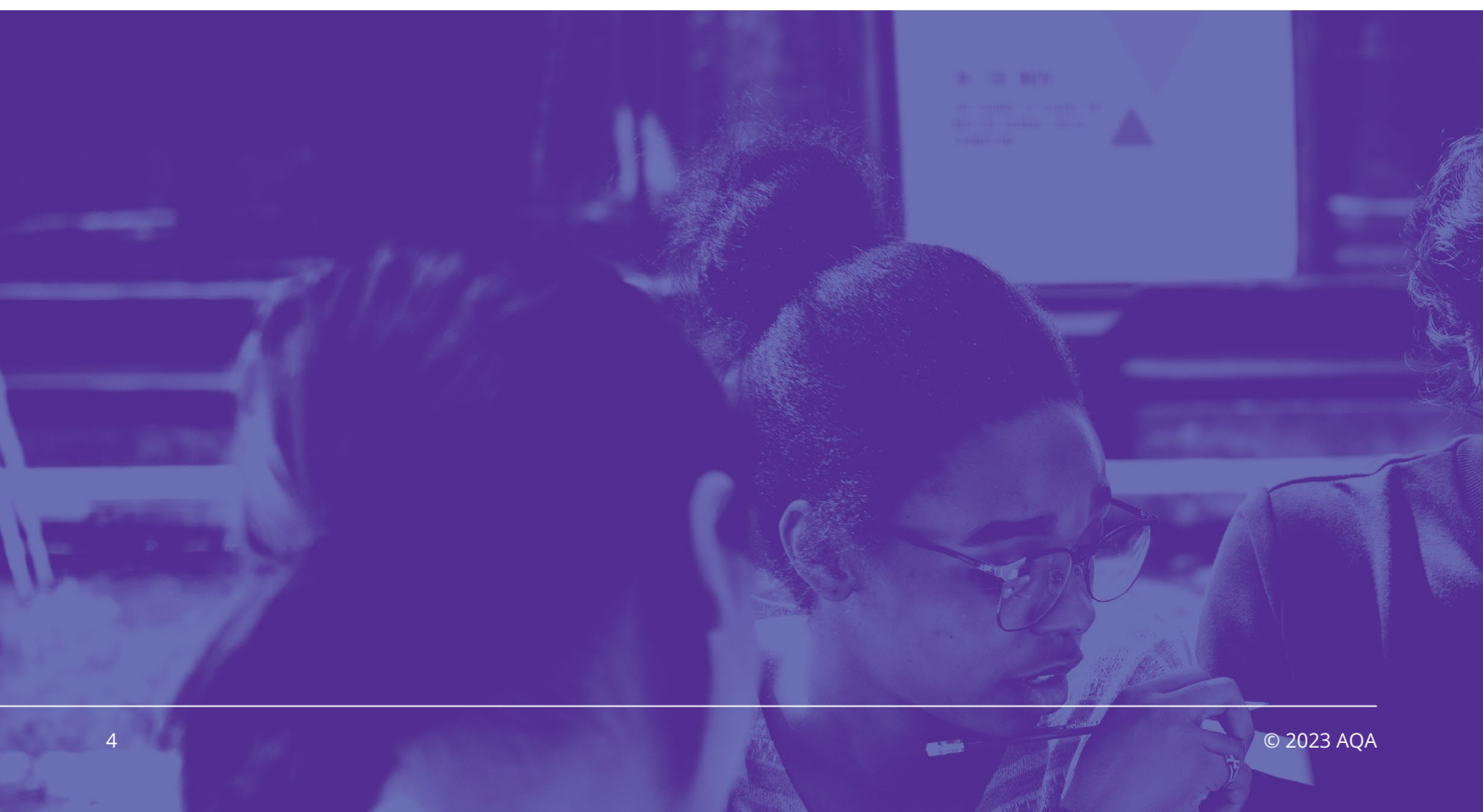
**Paper 2
Q4**

Spotlight on GCSE English shines a light on exactly what examiners are looking for.

We've worked with Jonny Kay, post-16 English expert and author, to create a pack of resources to provide your students with best practice, guidance and top tips to improve their performance in GCSE English Language.

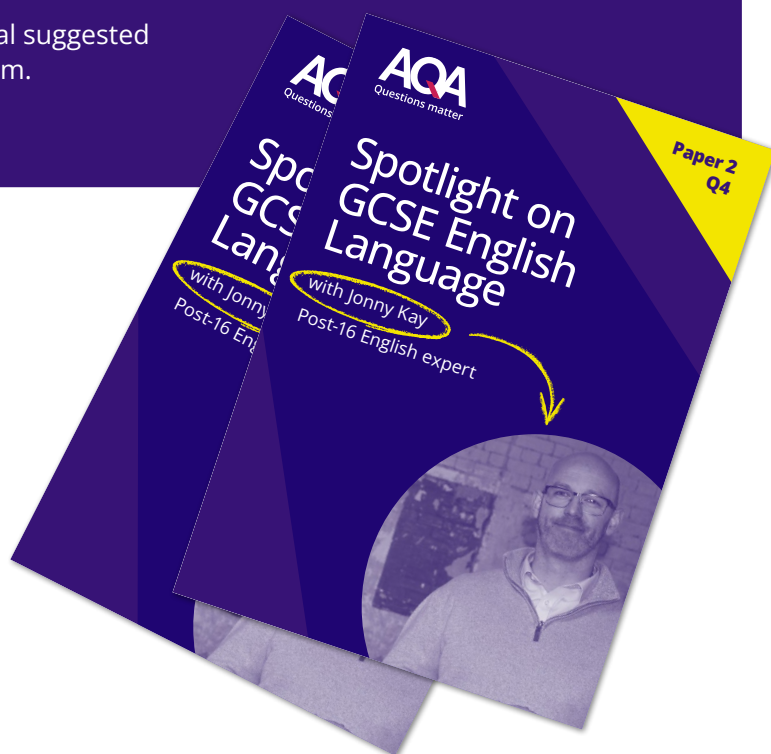
Focusing on Questions 4 and 5 on both papers, the Spotlight packs will support your students' progress and focus their development on the areas that will make the most difference to their performance in the exam.

These resources support our new [Spotlight videos](#)



Each pack contains:

- A [video for students](#) breaking down the question and what they need to do to succeed.
- This teacher guidance booklet, including a question from a past paper and an example student response to pinpoint exactly what examiners are looking for.
- An editable PPT presentation to help you deliver the content to your students.
- Differentiated tasks and some additional suggested resources for you to use in the classroom.
- Jonny Kay's suggested lesson plan.



What does the question look like?

Question 4 is always 16 marks and assesses AO3. As a guide it's advised that students spend around 20 minutes on this question (eg approximately 4 minutes planning and 16 minutes writing).

For this question students need to refer to the whole of Source A, together with the whole of Source B.

This question requires students to engage with what the writer is thinking/feeling/imagining/ experiencing and the methods they use to present those views/ thoughts/feelings. Essentially, the question invites students to stand 'inside' the text and look out – to step into the writer's head and talk about the writer's intention(s).

Two key things to remember are:

- the students' selection of textual reference is key to their success
- more successful responses will explicitly specify the perspective of the writers from the outset.

AO3:

Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts

The scope of the question will always ask students to consider in their comparison how the writers use form, structure and language – (the latter is referenced in the bullet point as 'methods').

What do we mean by 'methods'?

Any of the ways the writers convey their ideas and perspectives, including tone, narrator's voice, bias, descriptive writing, direct address and humour are all perfectly valid, and so is the use of language.

Example sources - June 2019

Source A

In 2005, Ben Fogle and James Cracknell set off together in a seven week race across the Atlantic Ocean in a rowing boat called 'Spirit'. In their book *The Crossing*, Ben describes what happened one night as he rowed and James slept.

BEN:

- 1 It was still dark. We had at least three hours of darkness to go before daybreak and, as
always, I had the sunrise shift. The ocean had continued to build, with an ever-increasing
wind that was gusting at 40 knots. The swell had grown and conditions were becoming
increasingly frenzied. I began to feel vulnerable again. If we can just make it to daybreak, I
5 thought, it will be easier to read the waves and prepare for the breakers.

Our boat was brand spanking new and bought straight from the race organisers. It had coped with the seas we had experienced thus far incredibly well. I rowed on, worried by the deteriorating weather, and I thought of
10 my wife, back at home. I longed to be with her and away from this intimidating ocean. As I rowed, a barely perceptible blue hue appeared on the skyline.

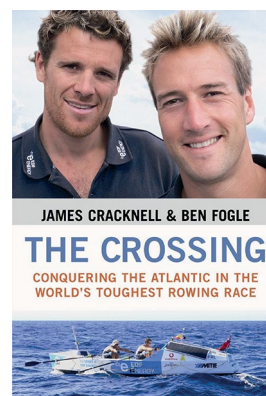
The swell was gathering, and the breaking waves were becoming more frequent. 'Come on, sun,' I thought, willing the day to break. Something wasn't right.

- 16 I watched as a vast wave gathered behind the boat, soaring above the cabin, a wall of white water towering over our tiny boat. Once again I dug the oars in to propel us forward, but the wave was too big. For a moment it felt like we were moving backwards as we were sucked into the belly of the wave, the horizon disappearing as the churning surf enveloped the stern
20 of the boat. I felt it lift, as a torrent of water crashed over the boat and I felt myself falling backwards. I was aware of the boat collapsing on top of me. I struggled to pull my feet from the stirrups to no avail. The world went black. I felt a weight on top of me and then a rush of cold water as my body was brutally submerged into the bottomless Atlantic Ocean. My feet were sucked from my shoes as I clung on to the oars for dear life, but then they too were
25 dragged from my clasp. My mind went blank as I tumbled through the surf, spun around
26 roughly like clothes in a washing machine.

I was somewhere underwater, but which way was up? Everything was midnight black. I panicked as I grabbed the water, desperate for something to clutch on to. There was nothing. No boat, just inky cold water.

- 30 I had been underwater for a seeming eternity and had started to panic. It felt as though my lungs were collapsing and I struggled to find which way to swim. I felt my hand break the surface as my body burst from the depths of the ocean. 'Paaaaaaah,' I gasped as my body screamed for air.

- 35 'James!' I cried. There was no sign of him, nor the boat. I was in the middle of the ocean without a life jacket, being tossed around in the surf like a rag doll. I spun around in the water, gripped by panic.



There was the boat, a black upturned hull. 'James!' I screamed again. Nothing. Nothing in life had prepared me for this. No amount of planning could have readied me. What the hell now? Who would ever find me out here, hundreds of miles from the nearest boat, let alone land? I had to get back on to that boat.

My mind was numb with shock, but somehow I made it back to the upturned hull, and clung on. There was still no sign of James. Why wasn't the *Spirit* righting herself? I fretted as I hauled myself up on to her keel.

I could feel the boat listing. Slowly but surely the boat began to turn on top of me. I clutched on to the grab line as I collapsed back into the water, the boat springing upright. I clung on, silent and in shock.

'Ben!' I heard James's cry. He was alive. Thank god.

'I'm here, I'm here!' I squeaked, still clutching the grab line.

All around us the ocean was strewn with debris, loose equipment from the deck. After five weeks at sea we had become complacent and had long stopped lashing things down; we could only watch as all our worldly possessions drifted away into the rolling ocean.

The Crossing by James Cracknell and Ben Fogle, Atlantic Books Limited © 2006. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

Source B

In 1893, William Hudson travelled by sea to Patagonia, a remote area in South America, to study birds. In his book *Idle Days in Patagonia*, he describes the journey to get there.

1 The wind had blown a gale all night, and I had been hourly expecting that the tumbling storm-shaken old steamship, in which I had taken passage to Patagonia, would turn over once and for all and settle down beneath the tremendous tumult of waters. For the groaning sound of its straining timbers, and the engine throbbing like an over-worked human heart, had made the ship seem like a living thing to me; and it was tired of the struggle, and under the tumult was peace. But at about three o'clock in the morning the wind began to drop and, taking off coat and boots, I threw myself in to my bunk for a little sleep.

Ours was a very curious boat, ancient and much damaged; long and narrow in shape, with the passengers' cabins ranged like a row of small wooden cottages on the deck; it was as ugly to look at as it was unsafe to voyage in. To make matters worse our Captain, a man over eighty years of age, was lying in his cabin sick; our one Mate was asleep, leaving only the men to navigate the steamship on that perilous coast, and in the darkest hour of a tempestuous night.



I was just dropping into a doze when a succession of bumps, accompanied by strange grating and grinding noises, and shuddering motions of the ship, caused me to start up again and rush

20 to the cabin door. The night was still black and starless, with wind and rain, but for acres round
us the sea was whiter than milk. I did not step out, as close to me, where our only lifeboat was
fastened, three of the sailors were standing together talking in low tones. 'We are lost,' I heard
one say; and another answer, 'Ay, lost forever!' Just then the Mate, roused from sleep, came
25 running to them. 'What have you done?' he exclaimed sharply; then dropping his voice, he
added, 'Lower the lifeboat – quick!'

I crept out and stood unseen by them in the dark. Not a thought of the wicked act they were
about to engage in entered my mind at the time – for it was their intention to save themselves
and leave us to our fate in that awful white surf. My only thought was that at the last moment, I
would spring with them into the boat and save myself. But one other person, more experienced
30 than myself, and whose courage took a better form, was also near and listening. He was the
First Engineer. Seeing the men making for the lifeboat, he slipped out of the engine room,
revolver in hand, and secretly followed them; and when the Mate gave the order to board, he
stepped forward with the weapon raised and said in a quiet but determined voice that he would
shoot the first man who should attempt to obey it. The men slunk away and disappeared in the
35 gloom.

In a few moments more the passengers began streaming out on to the deck in a great state of
alarm. Last of all, the old Captain, white and hollow-eyed, appeared like a ghost among us. We
had not been standing there long when, by some freak chance, the steamship got off the rocks
and plunged on through the seething, milky surf; then very suddenly passed out of it into black
40 and comparatively calm water. For ten minutes she sped rapidly and smoothly on, then it was
said that we were stuck fast in the sand of the shore, although no shore was visible in the
darkness.

There was no longer any wind, but through the fast-breaking clouds ahead of us appeared the
first welcome signs of dawn. It was true enough that we were stuck fast in the sand; but
45 although this was a safer bed for the steamship than the jagged rocks; our position was still a
perilous one and I at once determined to land.

END OF SOURCES

Example question - June 2019

Question 4

0 4

For this question, you need to refer to the **whole of Source A**, together with the **whole of Source B**.

Compare how the writers convey their different perspectives and feelings about their experiences at sea.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different perspectives and feelings
- compare the methods the writers use to convey their different perspectives and feelings
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

What is the question asking students to do?

As with many of the questions in the reading section, students need to make sure they use evidence to back up their ideas. Much like Paper 1 Question 4, students will need to identify the methods the writers have used in the text.

To answer this question successfully, there are three elements to complete:

- What are the main attitudes and ideas in both texts?
- What methods are used to show those attitudes and ideas?
- Analyse why the methods are used.

The quality of the evaluation of both ideas and methods is the most important part of this question. However, the skills descriptors are obviously linked, and students can fulfil them in any order.

The quality of evidence selected is one of the key parts of the question that students will be assessed on as it helps to show they understand the text and can identify and discuss the methods the writer uses.

In this question, students will be asked to look at the whole of both texts and compare how the writers show their ideas and perspectives on a particular topic. The exam paper could also ask students to compare similar perspectives and feelings, even though the examples in the texts are different perspectives.

Just because the question asks students to talk about the whole of both of the texts, it doesn't mean that they need to quote or talk about every part of both texts; the important point is comparing the key ideas and attitudes, not every part of each text.

What skills are being looked for in the mark scheme?

The section of the mark scheme below shows the four skills descriptors and what is required at each level of the mark scheme. These remain the same for every Paper 2 Question 4.

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts	
Level	Skills descriptor
Level 4 Perceptive, detailed 13-16 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares ideas and perspectives in a perceptive way Analyses how writers' methods are used Selects a range of judicious supporting detail from both texts Shows a detailed understanding of the different ideas and perspectives in both texts
Level 3 Clear, relevant 9-12 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares ideas and perspectives in a clear and relevant way Explains clearly how writers' methods are used Selects relevant detail to support from both texts Shows a clear understanding of the different ideas and perspective in both texts
Level 2 Some, attempts 5-8 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to compare ideas and perspectives Makes some comment on how writers' methods are used Selects some appropriate textual detail/references, not always supporting from one or both texts Identifies some different ideas and perspectives
Level 1 Simple, limited 1-4 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes simple cross reference of ideas and perspectives Makes simple identification of writers' methods Makes simple references/textual details from one or both texts Shows simple awareness of ideas and/or perspectives
Level 0 No marks	No ideas offered about the differences. Nothing to reward

To answer this question successfully, there are three elements to complete:

- If the quality of the response is L1 but only deals with one text, the maximum mark is 2.
- If the quality of the response is L2 but only deals with one text, the maximum mark is 6.
- A student has to deal with both texts to achieve L3 or above.
- References to the writers' methods may be implicit without specific mention of the writer.

Example Level 3 response - June 2019

Response to the question on page 10



The writer of Source A states that before the storm they had 'become complacent' about the dangers they faced during the race and were not expecting the worst to happen. When the wave hits, the writer is in charge of the boat and is trying to keep it afloat by continuing to row, whereas the writer in Source B has no control over the boat and realises he can do nothing to stop it from sinking.

In the opening paragraph, the writer in Source B describes the boat as more like a person than an object and uses a simile to compare the engine to 'an over-worked human heart.' This creates the impression that the boat is struggling on but because of its age and physical state, it is unable to cope with the stormy conditions. The writer in Source B is 'expecting' a disaster from the start of the extract as he knows how unfit the boat is to transport him safely, but he seems to accept whatever happens without blaming the 'ancient' boat or the crew.

How do students perform on Paper 2 Question 4?

The task is designed for students to build on their inferential understanding and synthesis of ideas required by Question 2 (the 'what'), and the exploration of language methods required by Question 3 (the 'how').

The challenge is in addressing these two strands simultaneously. Some students don't address the 'how' in this question, and their marks are reduced as a result.

In summary, to do well in this question, students should focus on the key strategies below:

- Comment on and interpret the writers' ideas and perspectives in both texts.
- Compare the similarities and differences between the ideas and perspectives in both texts.
- Select appropriate supporting evidence from both texts.
- Comment on the methods used by both writers to convey ideas.
- Link the effect of the methods used by the writers to the ideas and perspectives they convey.

In the first instance:

Students will benefit from developing the skill in identifying 'like with like', as it's the key to success in Question 4.

To improve further:

Enable students to refer to writers' methods in an increasingly integrated way. The most successful students seamlessly move between perspectives and methods in their wide ranging analysis of the texts.

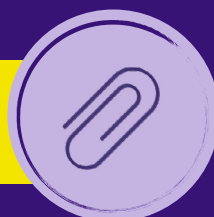
Students who frequently comment on the changes in the perspectives and feelings of the two writers and those who explore these shifts in depth, enhance the quality of their response.

Support for teaching the AO3 skills



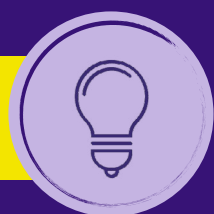
Use the suggested lesson plan, classroom resources and teaching presentation in this pack

Example student responses across the grades can be found on [Centre Services](#), and we've included one in this guidance



There's a range of material for each question on every paper in the [Examprom Highlights](#) package

[Spring 2019 GCSE hub network meeting materials](#)
(Slides 34–37, 39, Activity booklet pages 9–10, 24–25)



[2020 Stretching grade 3 to 4](#) (Activities booklet page 8)

[2020 Stretching grade 4 to 5](#) (Slides 37–45, booklet pages 12–



[2020 Reaching for grade 8 and 9](#) (Slides 37–45, booklet pages 12–14)

Contact us

Our team of subject experts are here to help and support you as you deliver our specifications.

We're here to provide advice and respond to queries you might have to make sure you feel confident about guiding your students to fulfil their potential.

We understand the trust you put in us to provide great assessments for your students and we are committed to delivering on this.

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