

# GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

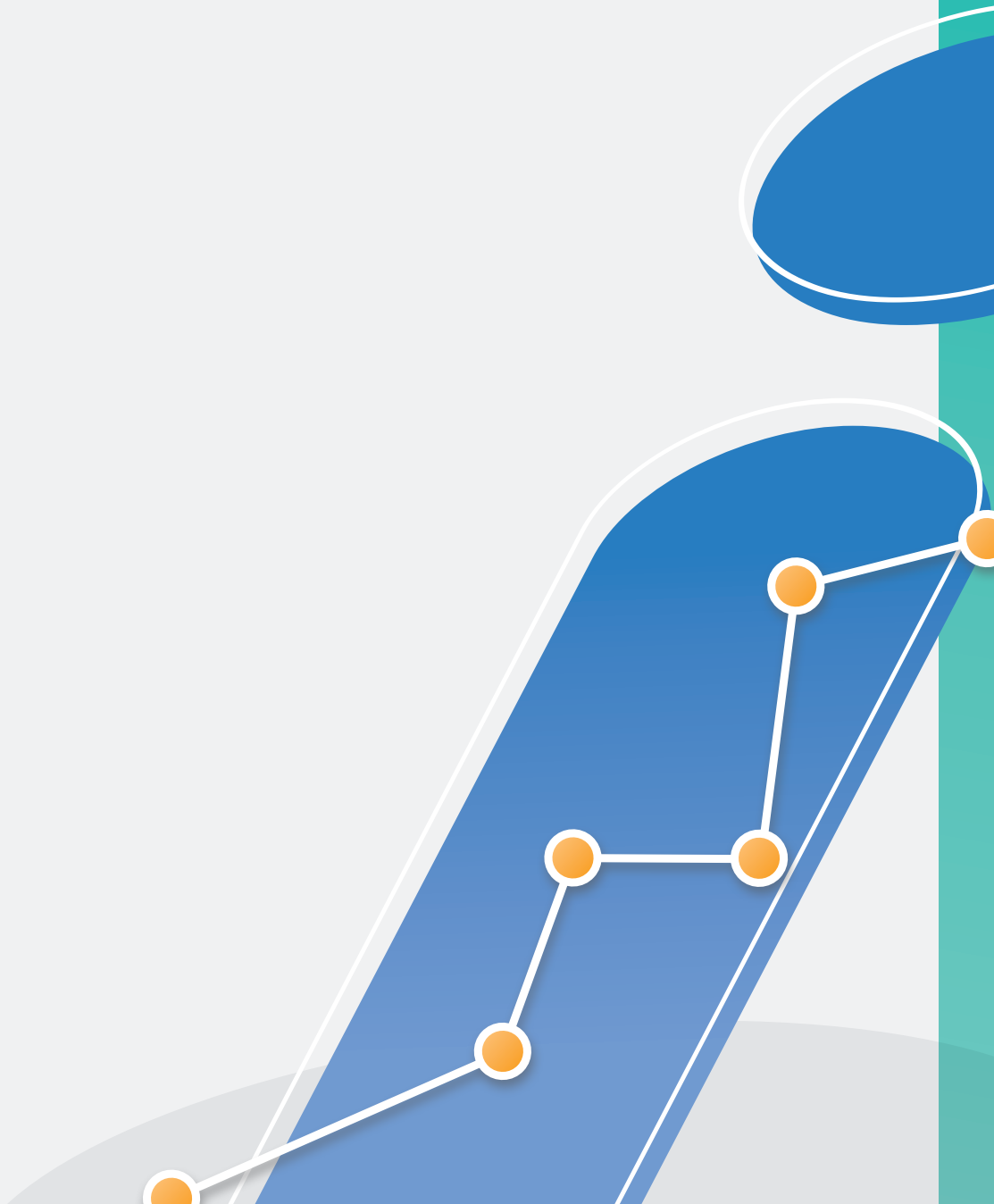
Insight report:  
2019 results at a glance

September 2019

2019

[aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

insights



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# How to use this report

This report provides a snapshot of this summer's results. It contains information on grade boundaries and performance by paper. This report is part of our full results insight series. For extra information on results:

- Join your Head of Curriculum for a [video breakdown](#).
- Access our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool. We've created [two-minute tutorials](#) to show you how.
- Navigate to [e-AQA](#) to download the full report on the exam for a detailed breakdown.
- [Book on](#) to one of our Live lessons webinars. The Head of Curriculum for your subject will take you through this year's results and answer your questions.
- [Book on](#) to a Feedback event. See examples from real scripts from the summer to highlight common areas where students did well and where there's room for improvement.

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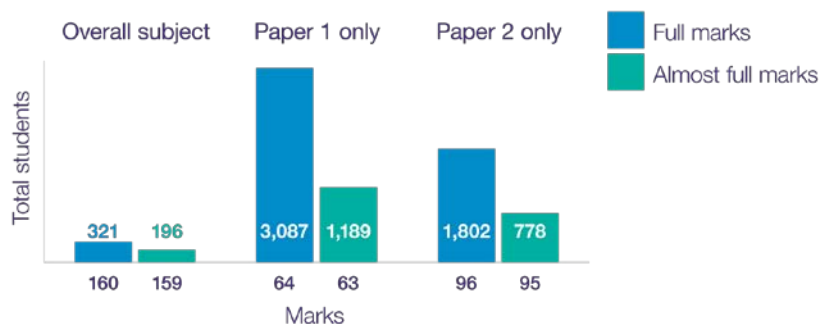
# Qualification summary

Reflecting on the 2019 series, our examining team noted that there is a strong sense that teachers are becoming increasingly clear in appreciating what the specification is seeking to achieve and how the mark scheme is applied.

The majority of students were well prepared and able to explore the texts they have studied with fluency and assurance. Furthermore, students are managing their time well and spending an appropriate amount on each question, meaning most students responded to every question on each paper.

This is an un-tiered exam and therefore the following comments will give feedback and suggestions that could inform progress at different levels of attainment.

## Students achieving full marks cf. dropped just one

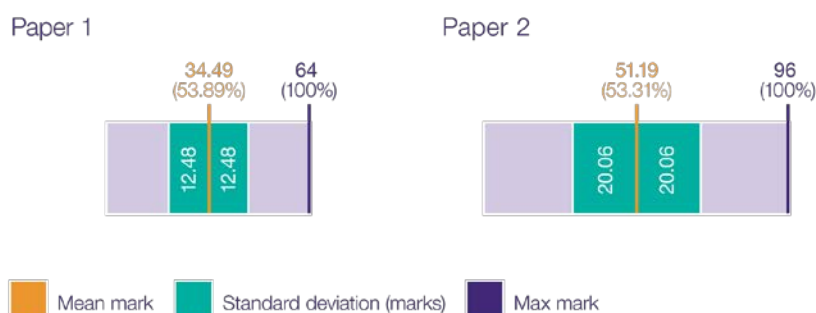


This shows how many students achieved full marks and how many dropped just one.

Our examiners look to reward students where possible and use the full range of marks available. We feel it is important to mark positively and we aren't afraid to give full marks when it's deserved.

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## Mean and standard deviation by paper



The mean mark on each paper is close to 50% of the overall mark and the standard deviation is close to 20% of the overall mark.

The mean mark and standard deviation indicate the mark scheme is being applied appropriately and fairly, and that the full range of marks are being awarded across the cohort.

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## Enhanced results analysis

Conduct your own analysis using data relevant to you. Watch short [tutorials](#) on using Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) for school, subject, group or student performance; or log straight in through [aqa.org.uk/log-in](https://www.aqa.org.uk/log-in)

# Grade boundaries

Subject or paper	Max mark	Summer 2019 grade boundaries (raw mark)								
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
English Literature 8702	160	141	127	113	98	83	68	50	33	16

## How to interpret grade boundaries

Grade boundaries are set using a mix of statistics and expert judgement

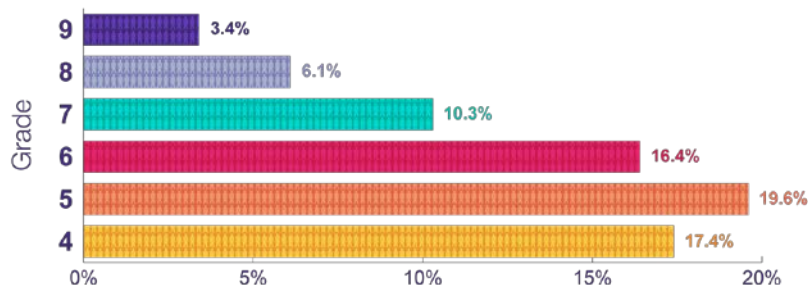
Our research team uses a range of statistics to make predictions that suggest the most appropriate grade boundaries. The statistical evidence considers the prior attainment of the given cohort as well as the distribution of marks. Senior examiners then review a script sample to confirm the statistically recommended marks are sensible for the grade.

Boundary setting is overseen by Ofqual. To find more grade boundaries and learn how they are set, visit [aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums](http://aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums)

Or hear from Dale Bassett and Ben Jones in our meet the team [video series](#)

## 2019 grade boundaries

### Grade summary



Total achieving (3-U = 26.8%).

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This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.

Watch our two-minute team stories to find out more about how we set grade boundaries and ensure fairness. Visit [aqa.org.uk/team-stories](http://aqa.org.uk/team-stories)

# Paper 1 insights

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](https://www.aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > English > English Literature (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

## Most popular texts on Paper 1 Section A



1. *Macbeth* 2. *Romeo and Juliet* 3. *Much Ado about nothing*

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## Most popular texts on Paper 1, Section A

1. *Macbeth*
2. *Romeo and Juliet*
3. *Much Ado About Nothing*

## Most popular texts on Paper 1 Section B



1. *A Christmas Carol* – Charles Dickens  
2. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – Robert Louis Stevenson  
3. *The Sign of Four* – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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## Most popular texts on Paper 1, Section B

1. *A Christmas Carol* – Charles Dickens
2. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – Robert Louis Stevenson
3. *The Sign of Four* – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

## Highlights from summer 2019

Aspects where students did best	Aspects where students did less well
Students are constructing more effective answers in which they establish their own interpretation or line of enquiry for their answer, providing a clear structure for their thoughtful or conceptualised response.	Whilst helpful for some, pre-prepared essay structures and sentence starters can sometimes hinder students' confident self-expression of their views.
Many students used quotation and reference to the text impressively. Virtually all students were equipped to make reference to the text and many students had an impressive store of quotations which they drew upon judiciously.	We saw a number of students misreading the extract, eg ascribing the characteristics of MacDonald to Macbeth.
Students who reach the top level of the mark scheme write with great clarity and precision. Rather than overuse obscure technical terminology, they tend to use a strong and confident general vocabulary to illustrate their own thinking about the texts.	Overuse, misuse and inappropriate use of subject terminology continues to be an issue. It seldom helps students to express their ideas and frequently turns into an advanced form of technique spotting.
Students are bringing flexibility to their understanding of methods and how writers create meanings. We've seen an increased focus on characterisation and the structure of texts as a means of conveying ideas and meaning.  We saw huge amounts of fruitful and thoughtful language analysis, with many students using the extract to support their analysis.	Some students are relying too much on word level analysis rather than approaching 'methods' as anything the writer has done on purpose.
The growing appreciation that context means exploring the ideas of the text in relation to the question being asked has improved the fluency and assurance of responses.	Some students are including unnecessary biographical information and historical detail, hindering their progress up the levels in the mark scheme.  Some students are citing theories, such as Marxist and feminist. This can be self-penalising if the citation doesn't link to the task and further the student's interpretation.

**Reports on the exam are written by senior examiners who see more responses than anyone else. Access full reports via [aqa.org.uk/log-in](https://www.aqa.org.uk/log-in)**



# Paper 2 insights

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > English > English Literature (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

## Most popular texts on Paper 2 Section A



1. *An Inspector Calls* – J B Priestley  
2. *Blood Brothers* – Willy Russell  
3. *Lord of the Flies* – William Golding  
4. *Animal Farm* – George Orwell  
5. *DNA* – Dennis Kelly

## Most popular texts on Paper 2, Section A

1. *An Inspector Calls* – J B Priestley
2. *Blood Brothers* – Willy Russell
3. *Lord of the Flies* – William Golding
4. *Animal Farm* – George Orwell
5. *DNA* – Dennis Kelly

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## Highlights from summer 2019

Aspects where students did best	Aspects where students did less well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students displayed clear engagement with the question being asked and structured their responses in a much more dynamic and purposeful way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students are following a very tight structure to their answer and these don't always benefit the student as they aren't able to build on their response and develop their ideas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a welcome move away from paragraphs centred around a single quotation and towards the central idea in the task, leading to far more in-depth analysis.</li> <li>• We saw a variety of ways to reference the text with less emphasis on the insertion of 'by rote' decontextualised quotations.</li> <li>• Students are becoming increasingly confident in choosing judicious and relevant references that further their response to the task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach of 'zooming in' on a particular word was sometimes used inappropriately, leading to an emphasis on the part of a quotation that did not offer the intended meaning that was suggested.</li> <li>• Some students include particular direct quotations that did not always fit with the points they are making.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are approaching method and craft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were examples of students feature</li> </ul>

<p>of the writer in the broader sense and moving away from the narrow focus on 'language, form and structure'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many students rooted their response in the writer's craft, positioning themselves to respond to the text as a conscious construct.</li> <li>• We saw far fewer instances of the grammatical naming of parts with no value/ purpose.</li> <li>• In Section B, successful responses tended to lead their analysis through ideas, using methods as a means of illustrating meaning, rather than methods driving the focus of the response.</li> </ul>	<p>spotting and then struggling to say anything meaningful about such terms, such as sibilance, alliteration, and enjambment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students still seem to believe there is inherent value in mentioning techniques at the expense of their relevance and efficacy. For example, including complex subject terminology without linking it to meaning.</li> <li>• Less successful responses to Section B were often driven by the methods which then got in the way of an engagement with the ideas and focus of the question. The rigid 'language/form/structure' essay style appeared more frequently here and often led to spurious comments.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' growing confidence in handling thematic concepts focused their attention on the key words relating to AO3 in the task. Students who focused on this gave themselves a strong foundation for their response.</li> <li>• The most effective responses in Section A focused on the universality of texts' thematic concerns and their relevance to a modern audience in conjunction with an appreciation of the author's original intentions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students still feel they have to squeeze in historical or biographical contextual details but this is usually not relevant to the question.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students often did their best work on Section C, provided that they had allowed enough time to fully engage with the task.</li> <li>• Students are considering the key connection between the two poems as suggested by the question itself.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-management remains a valuable skill. Students need to allow themselves the best opportunity to respond to Section C.</li> <li>• Some students focused on a narrative description of the unseen poems in Q27.2, limiting their response to Level 1. The task requires a focus on how the two poets communicate their ideas (methods).</li> </ul>

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## Next steps

### Access our full suite of insight resources:

- [Results insight video series](#)
- [Enhanced Results Analysis](#)
- [Reports on the exam](#)
- [Live lessons webinars](#)
- [Feedback events](#)
- [Visit Exampro for past papers, related mark schemes and examiner comments](#)

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