AS AND A-LEVEL
English Literature A and B

English Hub School networks, Autumn 2017

Lessons from the first series

Published: October 2017

Contents

Contents

Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all AS and A-level English Literature specifications from all exam boards.

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure to the extent to which students have achieved the AOs.

For more, visit aqa.org.uk/7712

AO5
Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

AO4
Explore connections across literary texts.

AO3
Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

AO2
Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

AO1
Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

English Literature A

Session slides

English Hub School networks
AS and A-level English Literature

Autumn 2017

Structure of the day

- English Literature A: lessons from the first series
- The GCSE to A-level transition
- English Literature B: lessons from the first series

A-level English Literature A
Lessons from the first series (June 2017)

Autumn 2017

Agenda: English Literature A

- Introductions and NEA reflections
- Answering the question
- Using extracts effectively
- Focus on AO4 and AO5

Talking points and NEA reflections

Introductions

Are you teaching AS?

Why have you chosen to teach Literature A? What is the philosophy for choosing this specification?

Which option have you chosen for Paper 2? How did you decide?

Which texts have you chosen for study? How and why did you select those texts for teaching?

Would you change any of your approaches over the next year?

Reflections on NEA

How did you approach NEA?

How are you ensuring that the NEA element is independent?

How do your students choose the texts they will study?

What are your top tips?

Would you approach the NEA differently based on your experience of the last year?

AQA

Reflections on NEA

See the *NEA: prohibited texts* appendix. Share with students so that they can check their text choices.

Our advisers are on hand to support you with any NEA issues or questions you may have. They can:

- explain the new NEA requirements
- share teaching ideas
- demonstrate approaches to the tasks
- assist with text choices and task setting.

If you've not received your NEA adviser details by email, email us at English-GCE@aqa.org.uk

AQA

What ‘answer the question’ means

What ‘answer the question’ means

This is our mantra throughout, but what does it mean?

- Respond directly to the main command word/s.
- Identify the required constituent tasks and carry them out.
- Credit the shared context.

What ‘answer the question’ means

So, take a question such as A-level Paper 1 Section A Question 1 from this summer:

‘As lovers, Othello and Desdemona either worship or despise one another. There is no middle ground.’

In the light of this view , discuss how Shakespeare presents Othello’s and Desdemona’s attitudes towards one another in this extract and elsewhere in the play.

Six steps to ‘answering the question’

1. The main task is to **discuss** Othello’s and Desdemona’s attitudes towards one another.
2. The main source is the **extract**…
3. …but the question asks for relevant cross reference to **elsewhere in the play**.

Six steps to 'answering the question'

4. The discussion must be in **the light of the critical view.**

5. The key words of the view need attention: 'worship', 'despise', 'middle ground'.

6. The **shared context of love through the ages** also needs attention. It's signalled by 'As lovers…'

AQA

A note on 'significance'

- This is the invitation to debate: 'significance' is a key word in some of our A-level questions.
- 'Significance' is not the same as importance; it is about what is signified, what meanings arise in terms of values and ideas and how these meanings are produced by what writers do and the methods they use.
- 'Significance' invites students to think about what messages are given out by the text. Are particular characters and ideas given preferential treatment? Are other characters and ideas neglected or sidelined?
- 'Significance' involves the kind of ideology that is embedded or endorsed by the text.
- 'Significance' can also be addressed in terms of the narrative of the text or of its dramatic direction and construction.
- 'Significance' incorporates cultural, social and moral contexts that emerge from the text.
- One way meanings arise is the way the text works within generic conventions – or against them. Genres evolve and mutate and texts can be significant in the way they contribute to the evolution of genre.

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Using extracts effectively

Using extracts effectively

At both AS and A-level, these questions reproduce an extract or complete texts (in the case of poetry) for the purpose of **supporting** the question.

This means that the extract is essential for responding to the critical view, and therefore essential for answering the question.

Questions based on extracts: AS

All AS extract-based questions use the command word '**Examine**'.

This encourages students to answer the questions by looking closely at the extract and engaging with the debate.

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Questions based on extracts: AS

Other prompts include:

- 'How'
- '…in this passage' (Paper 1 Section A)
- 'Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response' (Paper 2 Section A).

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Understanding the extract

Demonstrating an understanding of the extract is fundamental for answering the question.

Two of the three AS extracts are taught texts.

Only one of A-level's three extract-based questions is on a taught text.

Teaching **content** supports working with taught text/s.
Teaching **skills** supports working with unseen texts.

AQA

Understanding the extract

Demonstrating an understanding of the extract is fundamental for answering the question.

Students need to select relevant points for the taught texts so that they can support closely-read examples.

The same applies for unseen text/s, but it's vital that time is set aside to:

- read and establish a narrative/structural overview
- understand details.

AQA

Talking point 1: poetry extract questions

Read *Response 1* to Qu 5 from the summer 2017 AS series. How well is the question is answered? Think about:

- how the student covers key words/phrases such as 'rural life/town', 'wholly inferior' and 'life of love and leisure'
- the student's understanding of the poem in overview and detail
- the student's appreciation of this text as a poem.

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Talking point 2: poetry extract questions

Read *Response 2* to Qu 6 from the summer 2017 AS series. How well is the question is answered? Think about:

- how the student covers key words/phrases such as 'more interested in himself', 'female victim' and 'forbidden love'
- the student's understanding of the poem in overview and detail
- the student's appreciation of this text as a poem.

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Focus on AO4 and AO5

AO4
Explore connections across literary texts.

AO5
Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

AO4 and AO5

These two assessment objectives work together in the sense that:

- questions are mostly framed around AO5
- a thorough answer depends on understanding of relevant links to the shared context.

The hierarchy of AOs in reverse:

- AOs 5 and 4 set up the question
- Answer exploration relies on AOs 3 and 2
- the whole is underpinned by ability to use AO1.

AO4

"Do students need to make explicit links to other texts to cover AO4?"

No. The question concerns 'single text' questions, ie AS Paper 1 Sections A and B, Paper 2 Section A and A-level Paper 1 Section A, Paper 2 Section A and the first part of Section B.

Students can negotiate explicit links in these questions but they may risk irrelevance, or timing problems.

AQA

Talking point 3: AO4

Look again at student responses 1 and 2. Note that neither response makes explicit reference to other texts:

- do they answer the question?
- where and how do they cover AO4?

AQA

AO5

It's important students identify the key words that enable interpretations to be addressed and explored. For example, in the two AS questions:

5) **'wholly inferior'** is crucial and students could also consider the appropriateness of *'life of love and leisure'* as a description of how Melia's life is presented.

6) **'more interested in himself'** is crucial, and students could also explore "the female victim of forbidden love" as a description of the bog body.

AQA

AO5

It is worth thinking about whose critical interpretations are relevant. There is:

- **the given view in the question**: this must be addressed to answer the question
- **the student's own reading**: this will always feature in an authentic response.

AQA

AO5

It is worth thinking about whose critical interpretations are relevant. There is:

- **critical perspectives** as represented by such as Marxist, feminist and psychodynamic critics: caution is needed here because sometimes these can be 'worked through' mechanistically and in a way that is not directly relevant to the question
- **a named critic**: examiners this summer reported that such references were often used effectively to help shape responses.

Talking point 4: AO5

Read the two brief quotes from answers demonstrating how critical interpretations might be used.

Discuss:

- how you encourage engagement with critical interpretation
- what is appropriate for your students
- the way you approach the course.

June 2017 Feedback courses: exams

A-level English Literature A: Feedback on the examinations

Manchester	4 October
Online	10 October
London	7 November
Online	14 November
Birmingham	23 November
Online	28 November

Visit: aqa.org.uk/cpd

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June 2017 Feedback courses: NEA

A-level English Literature A: Feedback on NEA

Online	31 October
Online	9 November
Online	22 November

Visit: aqa.org.uk/cpd

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Any questions?

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E: english-gce@aqa.org.uk

Presentations and resources from previous English hub school networks are found at:

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Thank you

Using extracts effectively

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June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 5

0 5 **AQA Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages Pre-1900**

Examine the view that in 'The Ruined Maid' Hardy presents rural life as wholly inferior to the life of love and leisure that 'Melia now leads in town.

[25 marks]

The Ruined Maid

'O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?' –
'O didn't you know I'd been ruined?' said she.

– 'You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!' –
'Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined,' said she.

– 'At home in the barton you said "thee" and "thou",
And "thik oon", and "theäs oon", and "t'other"; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!' –
'Some polish is gained with one's ruin,' said she.

– 'Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!' –
'We never do work when we're ruined,' said she.

– 'You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!' –
'True. One's pretty lively when ruined,' said she.

– 'I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!' –
'My dear – a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined,' said she.

Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928)

June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 5

Student response 1

Question 5 'The Ruined Maid'

In 'The Ruined Maid', whilst Hardy presents 'Melia's life in town as having many superior elements to the life led by her old friend in the country, such as materialistic benefits, it cannot be said that he views rural life as wholly inferior. This is mainly due to the poem's highly satirical nature, which draws many of the implications made into question.

Yet, at first glance, Hardy seems to present Melia's life as superior to her friend's. The most evident technique he uses to do this is the inclusion of many references to materialism. Through the voice of the country girl, Hardy presents 'Melia's situation as enviable- she has 'fair garments', 'gay bracelets' and 'bright feathers'. The adjectives used here give the reader an insight into the subjective view of the country girl. 'Fair', 'gay' and 'bright' are all extremely positive and imply that 'Melia is now blissfully happy and carefree. Hardy contrasts this starkly with the country girl's comment of how Amelia left them 'in tatters, without shoes or socks'. The word 'tatters' has connotations of poverty and hardship, and by placing these contrasting in features in close proximity it would appear that Hardy seems to be presenting town life as far more desirable. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the view is expressed entirely from the perspective of the country girl, who is unlikely to have much experience of town life and so would idealise 'Melia's situation. At the time Hardy was writing agricultural communities were feeling financial pressures and so the presentation of 'prosper-ity' as something wistfully desirable is not surprising, an idea which is continued in the final line of the country girl's lines when she declares 'I wish'. In this way, although the reader might initially interpret these aspects of materialism as positives of town life, in reality Hardy presents 'Melia's situation as idealised by the country girl. As the majority of the poem is from her perspective, this emerges as the dominating viewpoint. Therefore it cannot be said that Hardy presents rural life as wholly inferior.

Through using rural dialect, again through the direct speech of the country girl, Hardy appears to show town life as superior. 'Melia's description of her old friend as just 'a raw country girl' is appropriate; Hardy uses the speech styles of both characters to contrast their styles of living. Predominantly 'Melia is presented as the more refined character. Her use of 'one', for example, gives her the 'polish' that makes her fit 'for high compa-ny'. In comparison the country girl uses 'thee' and 'thou'. These forms appear archaic and associated with country bumpkins, as they were known. This ties in with the rural stereotype of 'Hodge' where all agricultural workers are viewed the same and separated from refined society by their ignorance. These character types are familiar features of Hardy's novels. Through this contrast in language Hardy uses social class stereotypes to stress the differences between the two speakers. One view is that 'Melia appears superior in her use of language, more refined and even educated. Another view is that Hardy is in fact idealising rural rather than town life in this way. Many of Hardy's readers would have been middle class women perhaps fascinated by the references to old dialects and the mystery of rural life in the 'barton'. They may also have been attracted to Hardy's deep commitment to the Dorset countryside and the implication that the country girl's life is morally innocent. So, despite his

realism about rural life, he is perhaps also adding to the idea of the pastoral idyll which was still a popular idea for urban readers. It is possible, therefore, that he is presenting some positive aspects of rural life thus not presenting it as wholly inferior to town life.
Whatever implications the poem gives these must always be questioned given the highly satirical nature of the poem. Whilst it is arguable that Hardy's main purpose was to amuse the reader (which he succeeds in doing through the comic character of the naïve country girl and the ironic responses she receives from 'Melia), it is also possible that he intended to draw attention to the issue of 'fallen women'. Features such as the repetition of 'ruined' or 'ruin' and the comic refrain of 'said she' at the end of each stanza underline a more serious theme. In Victorian society pre-marital sex technically broke the social code for both genders, but sexual double standards made the consequences much more severe for women. Some estimates have suggested that, due to financial problems, as many as 20% of teenage girls were driven to prostitution. Whilst it is not clear whether 'Melia is a prostitute or the mistress of a wealthy man, Hardy still criticises the attitudes of society through his presentation of her. He does not present her as simply living a life of 'love and leisure'.

In conclusion, whilst on first reading Hardy seems to present town life as superior (mainly through the materialistic benefits expressed through the voice of the country girl), behind the façade lies a bitingly satirical message challenging Victorian attitudes to sexual morality (a feature typical of Hardy's work). Therefore, whilst many elements of town life are presented as superior, ultimately rural life is not presented as wholly inferior.

Notes

Talking point 1

How well does the response on the previous pages answer question 5?

Think about:

- how the student covers key words/phrases such as ‘rural life/town’, ‘wholly inferior’ and ‘life of love and leisure’
- the student’s understanding of the poem in overview and detail
- the student’s appreciation of this text as a poem.

June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 6

0 6 **AQA Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages Post-1900**

Examine the view that in 'Punishment' the speaker is more interested in himself than in the female victim of forbidden love.

[25 marks]

Punishment

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her neck, the wind
on her naked front.

It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.

I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.

Under which at first
she was a barked sapling
that is dug up
oak-bone, brain-firkin:

her shaved head
like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

to store
the memories of love.
Little adulteress,
before they punished you
you were flaxen-haired,
undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat,
I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.
I am the artful voyeur
of your brain's exposed
and darkened combs,
your muscles' webbing
and all your numbered bones:
I who have stood dumb
when your betraying sisters,
cauled in tar,
wept by the railings,
who would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.

Seamus Heaney (1939 – 2013)

June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 6

Student response 2

Question 6 'Punishment'

Upon analysis of Heaney's poem 'Punishment' it becomes abundantly apparent that the speaker focuses on the guilt and shame of his actions as a voyeur rather than the brutality and cruelty of what has happened to Windeby 1 (she is the Iron Age woman who was executed for her infidelity). The merging of the historic and contemporary society of Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles' not only reveals the atavistic need for tribes to protect themselves from those who threaten them, but presents the silence of those, like Heaney's narrator, in the midst of injustice. Therefore it is valid to say that Heaney is more interested in his role as bystander than the punishment of the victim of forbidden love.

Convincingly, towards the end of the poem, Heaney focuses on himself and articulates poignant emotions of guilt and shame as he observes the punishment of 'tarring and feathering'. Through using a Biblical allusion, "but would have cast, I know, the stones of silence", Heaney adds gravitas to his lack of action. He effectively elevates the severity of being a bystander to the level of those who exact the horrific punishments. Here the tone is confessional and melancholy which is further accentuated in the subtle sibilance of "stones of silence", perhaps reflecting his own silence as this technique creates a hushed and gentle sound. Behind the bold line "I am the artful voyeur" is a defiance and assertiveness which affirms that the speaker is almost embarrassed but accepting of his role.

Repeatedly Heaney reflects and analyses his own duty adding weight to the fact that this poem is a focus on the speaker's shame. He often begins stanzas with focus on himself. For example, "I who have stood dumb, which is significant as it further reminds the reader of his perhaps his lack of compassion towards those being punished. He acknowledges that the other "betraying sisters", referring to the Catholic women in Northern Ireland who approve of the tarring and feathering who have also betrayed society by their lack of female solidarity. However, he ultimately exhibits his understanding of the punishers' need to exact their detrimental, horrific , painful actions, "yet understand the exact and tribal intimate revenge". The last line of the poem resonates disturbingly to portray that the speaker identifies with this malevolence; this implies that this coldness and hostility in society is a flaw in human nature. The phrase "civilised outrage" is almost oxymoronic as the connotations of 'civilised' suggest law-abiding, dutiful and reverent behaviour. Contrastingly, the noun 'outrage' has implications of savagery and barbarism. Therefore Heaney reveals that society is still fuelled by cruelty and a need to vanquish all threats, despite the fact that we may view ourselves as civilised.

Lending itself to the statement that the speaker is more interested in himself, is the structure of the poem. Although it begins to describe Windeby 1 and merges her experience with the imagery of Ireland, there is a prominent change in tone when the speaker says "I almost love you". In this way

he focuses on himself and the tone becomes personal, confiding and confessional, putting the stress on the speaker as voyeur and his shame.

Alternatively, it is not judicious to dismiss the compassion the speaker shows towards the victim of forbidden love. What is indeed palpable is the admiration for this executed woman as the poem becomes a piece of literature in homage to her life. Although the speaker express disquiet and produces discomfort in his voyeuristic exploration of Windeby 1, there is a growing sense of love and a kind of respect. In effectively using blazon, the speaker emerges the erotic with death which resonates disturbingly. Commenting on her body, “It blows her nipples to amber beads”, Heaney exposes the lascivious and lustful nature of the speaker as he sexually objectifies Windeby 1; the amorous, sensual language is apparently incongruent with the fact that the subject is dead. The reader can see a clear transition to sympathy in the description of the amber beads which are linked with preservation and courage in the Middle East. Though this is subtle, there is a building of emotional attachment and pity; the imagery of ‘the body in the bog’ is prominent as Heaney conveys an appreciation of the presentation of Irish culture but he also presents an appreciation of the courage of Windeby 1. Though the image is linked with a bleak setting it still reflects Windeby as an honourable victim. Furthermore, the speaker continues to use natural imagery, “she was barked sapling”. Again, his language is peppered with elements of reverence as he acknowledges the loss of a youthful life. The reference to sapling implies the vulnerability, fragility and child-like nature of Windeby 1. Therefore it can be argued that the speaker’s pity is being illustrated. Moreover, the tone becomes increasingly poignant and there is arguably a sense of of pathis as in the last stanza the speaker names Windeby 1 as a “little adulteress”. Paradoxically, ‘little’ implies innocence whereas the label ‘adulteress’ is laced with shame and promiscuity. The speaker reveals a tenderness and an understanding that love is at the centre of the punishment in the imagery of the ring, which is an emblem of faithfulness.

However, there is a strong argument that Windeby 1 is indeed a metaphor for Ireland, the poet’s home. The simile “like a stubble of black corn” could be a reference to the fact that Ireland, in the midst of conflict, becomes grotesque. The poem then could be argued to be an homage to Ireland and a polemic against its demise in violence. What rings emotively is the line “I almost love you” strengthening the argument that the writer is more concerned about their individual pain. The speaker creates a barrier to feeling a complete adulation and tenderness towards the victim, hence it is true that the speaker is more concerned with the shame he carries. The reflection on himself echoes the tone of other poets like Larkin who ultimately convey selfishness. Instead of maintaining the compassion for the victim, Heaney’s speaker falls back on selfish concerns.

Notes

Talking point 2

How well does the response on the previous pages answer question 6? Think about:

- how the student covers key words/phrases such as ‘rural life/town’, ‘wholly inferior’ and ‘life of love and leisure’
- the student’s understanding of the poem in overview and detail
- the student’s appreciation of this text as a poem.

Focus on AO4 and AO5

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Notes

Talking point 3

Look again at student responses 1 and 2 reproduced on pages 27 and 31. Note that neither response makes explicit reference to other texts:

- do they answer the question?
- where and how do they cover AO4?

June 2017 A-level Paper 1, Section A: Question 1

0 1 ***Othello* – William Shakespeare**

‘As lovers, Othello and Desdemona either worship or despise one another. There is no middle ground.’

In the light of this view, discuss how Shakespeare presents Othello’s and Desdemona’s attitudes towards one another in this extract and elsewhere in the play.

[25 marks]

OTHELLO Why, what art thou?
DESDEMONA
Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife.
OTHELLO
Come, swear it; damn thyself;
Lest being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double-damned:
Swear thou art honest.
DESDEMONA Heaven doth truly know it.
OTHELLO
Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.
DESDEMONA
To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I false?
OTHELLO
Ah, Desdemon! Away, away, away!
DESDEMONA
Alas, the heavy day! Why do you weep?
Am I the motive of these tears my lord?
If haply you my father do suspect
An instrument of this your calling back,
Lay not your blame on me. If you have lost him,
I have lost him too.
OTHELLO Had it pleased heaven
To try me with affliction, had they rained
All kind of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience. But alas, to make me
A fixèd figure for the time of scorn
To point his slow unmoving finger at!
Yet could I bear that too, well, very well:
But there where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up – to be discarded thence

Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,
Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin,
Ay, there look grim as hell!

DESDEMONA

I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.

OTHELLO

O, ay! As summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing, O, thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair, and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er
been born!

DESDEMONA

Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

OTHELLO

Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write 'whore' upon? What committed!
Committed? O, thou public commoner!
I should make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks;
The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets,
Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth
And will not hear it. What committed?
Impudent strumpet!

DESDEMONA By heaven, you do me wrong.

OTHELLO

Are you not a strumpet?

DESDEMONA No, as I am a Christian.
If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any other foul unlawful touch,
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.

OTHELLO

What! Not a whore?

DESDEMONA No, as I shall be saved.

OTHELLO

Is't possible?

DESDEMONA

O, heaven forgive us!

OTHELLO I cry you mercy then:
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello.

(Act 4, Scene 2)

June 2017 A-level Paper 1, Section A: Question 1

Student response 3

Question 1 ‘Othello’

Quote i:

Desdemona’s consistency is evident throughout the play. In Act Three she promises “whatever you be, I am obedient”, and after Othello strangles her she absolves him of responsibility to Emelia, “Nobody, I myself”. This is particularly problematic from a feminist perspective but can be defended as being in keeping with Desdemona’s loyal character.

Quote ii:

In contrast, F.R.Leavis suggests that Othello’s readiness to respond to Iago is part of his “noble egotism” and his lack of self-awareness makes him a highly changeable character. There is certainly a lack of middle ground in his attitudes and this includes towards Desdemona.

Notes

Talking point 4

On the previous page are two brief quotes from answers demonstrating how critical interpretations might be used.

Discuss:

- how you encourage engagement with critical interpretation
- what is appropriate for your students
- the way you approach the course.

From the Chief Examiner

The Chief Examiner gives a brief view on the conversation points on this resource.

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Comments on tasks

Talking point 1

(June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 5)

This is a top Band 5 response. The key words and phrases of the question are given relevant attention from the outset. The focus of superior/inferior is picked up in the introduction and this focus is sustained throughout. There is also relevant and insightful attention given to 'life of love and leisure'. The student clearly understands the ways in which comedy, satire and irony infuse the poem. They acknowledge and explore the conversational dynamic within the poem showing that they understand the poem's social comedy surface as well as the darker implications of Hardy's observations. There is also a clear willingness to analyse the details of the poem and there is much attention to methods that the marker could credit. There is close attention to the ways in which the speakers' use language and how the conversation is crafted to utilise poetic form and structure.

Talking point 2

(June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 6)

Again, this is a top Band 5 response. Throughout there is very careful attention to the shifts in focus between the speaker's interest in himself on the one hand and, on the other, his sympathy for the female victim on the other. 'Forbidden love' is given due relevant and insightful attention. The student clearly understands the ways in which Heaney exploits the dual time frame and the effects achieved. They confidently grasp the significance of the references to the Troubles. At the same time there is close relevant and assured attention paid to the details of the poem. This response impressively unpacks the construct of the speaker and the ways in which Windeby 1 and the other periphery agents such the 'betraying sisters' are presented.

Talking point 3

(June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 5)
(June 2017 AS Paper 1, Section B: Question 6)

Both responses answer the appropriate question without explicit reference to other texts. The first response covers AO4 well in the sections where comedy, satire and irony are discussed. The response also gives relevant consideration to representations of rural life in literature and to Hardy's other work. The second response also makes several comments relevant to AO4. In particular the student considers the use of Biblical style and reference as well as the influence of blazon style.

Talking point 4

(June 2017 A-level Paper 1, Section A: Question 1)

We have not provided the full response here but both these examples (from the same essay) demonstrate how specific critical interpretations are cited to begin discussions that bring clarity and insight to the debate and enable the student to contextualise their own interpretation.

Appendix – NEA: prohibited texts

NEA: prohibited texts

A-level English Literature A

Students need to study two texts for NEA. These must be written by two different authors, and one of these texts must have been written pre-1900. For support with the NEA, including choosing texts and writing tasks, see aqa.org.uk/7712nea.

Set texts for the A-level exam components (Love Through the Ages, WW1 and its Aftermath, and Modern Times) cannot be used for non-exam assessment, even if the texts will not be used in the exam or the component will not be studied.

Below is the alphabetised list.

A

Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale
Austen, Jane	Persuasion

B

Barker, Pat	Regeneration
Barker, Pat	Life Class
Barry, Sebastian	A Long, Long Way
Blake, William	The Garden of Love
Brontë, Charlotte	Jane Eyre
Brontë, Emily	Wuthering Heights
Burns, Robert	Song (Ae fond kiss)
Byron, Lord	She Walks in Beauty

C

Chopin, Kate	The Awakening
Churchill, Caryl	Top Girls
Cope, Wendy	After the Lunch
Curtis, Richard and Elton, Ben	Blackadder Goes Forth

D

Donne, John	The Flea
Douglas, Keith	Vergissmeinnict
Dowson, Ernest	Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae
Du Maurier, Daphne	Rebecca
Duffy, Carol Ann	The Love Poem
Duffy, Carol Ann	Feminine Gospels

E

Elton, Ben	The First Casualty

F

Faulks, Sebastian	Birdsong
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	The Great Gatsby
Forster, E.M.	A Room with a View
Frayn, Michael	Spies
Friel, Brian	Translations
Frost, Robert	Love and a Question

G

Gardner, Brian ed.	Up the Line to Death
Graves, Robert	Goodbye to All That

H

Haig, David	My Boy Jack
Hardy, Thomas	The Ruined Maid
Hardy, Thomas	At an Inn
Hardy, Thomas	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Harrison, Tony	Timer
Harrison, Tony	Selected Poems (2013 Edition)
Hartley, L.P.	The Go-Between
Heaney, Seamus	Punishment
Heaney, Seamus	New Selected Poems (1966-1987)
Hemingway, Ernest	A Farewell to Arms
Hill, Susan	Strange Meeting
Hughes, Ted	Birthday Letters

J

Jennings, Elizabeth	One Flesh

K

Keats, John	La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad
Kesey, Ken	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

L

Larkin, Philip	Wild Oats
Larkin, Philip	Talking in Bed
Littlewood, Joan	Oh! What a Lovely War
Lovelace, Richard	The Scrutiny

M

MacNeice, Louis	Meeting Point
Marvell, Andrew	To His Coy Mistress
McEwan, Ian	Atonement
Mew, Charlotte	A quoi bon dire
Millay, Edna St. Vincent	I, being born a woman and distressed
Miller, Arthur	All My Sons
Muldoon, Paul	Long Finish

P

Plath, Sylvia	Ariel

R

Reilly, ed. Catherine	Scars Upon My Heart
Remarque, Erich Maria	All Quiet on the Western Front
Roberts, Michael Symmons	To John Donne
Rossetti, Christina	Remember
Roy, Arundhati	The God of Small Things

S

Sexton, Anne	For My Lover, Returning to His Wife
Shakespeare, William	Othello
Shakespeare, William	The Taming of the Shrew
Shakespeare, William	Measure for Measure
Shakespeare, William	The Winter's Tale
Shakespeare, William	Sonnet 116
Sheers, Owen	Skirrid Hill
Sherriff, R.C.	Journey's End
Stallworthy, ed. Jon	The Oxford Book of War Poetry
Stallworthy, ed. Jon	The War Poems of Wilfred Owen
Stockett, Kathryn	The Help
Swift, Graham	Waterland

W

Walker, Alice	The Color Purple
Walter, ed. George	The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry
Wertenbaker, Timberlake	Our Country's Good
West, Rebecca	The Return of the Soldier
Whelan, Peter	The Accrington Pals
Williams, Tennessee	A Streetcar Named Desire
Williams, Tennessee	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Wilmot, John Earl of Rochester	A Song (Absent from thee)
Winterson, Jeanette	Oranges are not the Only Fruit
Wyatt, Sir Thomas	Who so list to hount I knowe where is an hynde

Y

Yates, Richard	Revolutionary Road

The GCSE to A-level transition

Session slides

The GCSE to A-level transition

Autumn 2017

A-level introductions

- How do you introduce new students to A-level?
- How do you approach the first few weeks of the AS/A-level course?
- Are there elements that you will always teach first?
- Have you ever tried something that didn't work?
- How are you finding the September 2017 cohort? Do they differ from previous cohorts?

Legacy and reformed GCSE English Literature

Significant changes include:

- no longer controlled assessment
- compulsory 19th century texts
- 100% closed book assessment
- 'extract to whole' style questions
- comparison of unseen poetry
- … what else?

AQA

Card sort

Which cards are elements of GCSE English Literature?
Which cards are elements of A-level English Literature A?
Which cards are elements of A-level English Literature B?

What are the similarities and differences between the GCSE elements and the A-level elements?

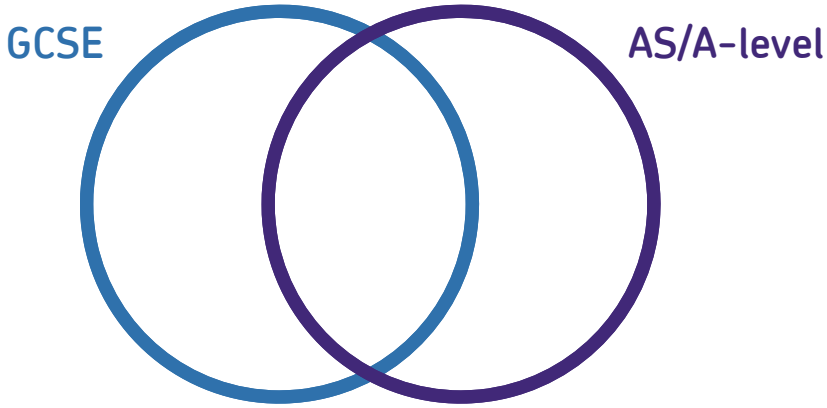
How does A-level develop and progress students learning from GCSE?

Note ideas onto the Venn diagram.

AQA

Card sort

Note ideas on a Venn diagram.



AQA

Skills and experiences

The students starting AS/A-level in September 2017 will be the first students to have completed the reformed GCSE English Literature.

What are the skills and experiences that these students be joining you with, that you might not have experienced before?

AQA

Surprises

The students starting AS/A-level in September 2017 will be the first students to have completed the reformed GCSE English Literature.

What are the experiences that you would have previously anticipated students to be joining you with, but these students may not have had?

AQA

Change of approach?

The students starting AS/A-level in September 2017 will be the first students to have completed the reformed GCSE English Literature.

Reflecting on your planning and delivery of AS and A-level, do you need to alter your approaches to the teaching of specific skills or topics?

AQA

Will you approach NEA differently?

The students starting AS/A-level in September 2017 will be the first students to have completed the reformed GCSE English Literature.

Would you approach NEA differently?

AQA

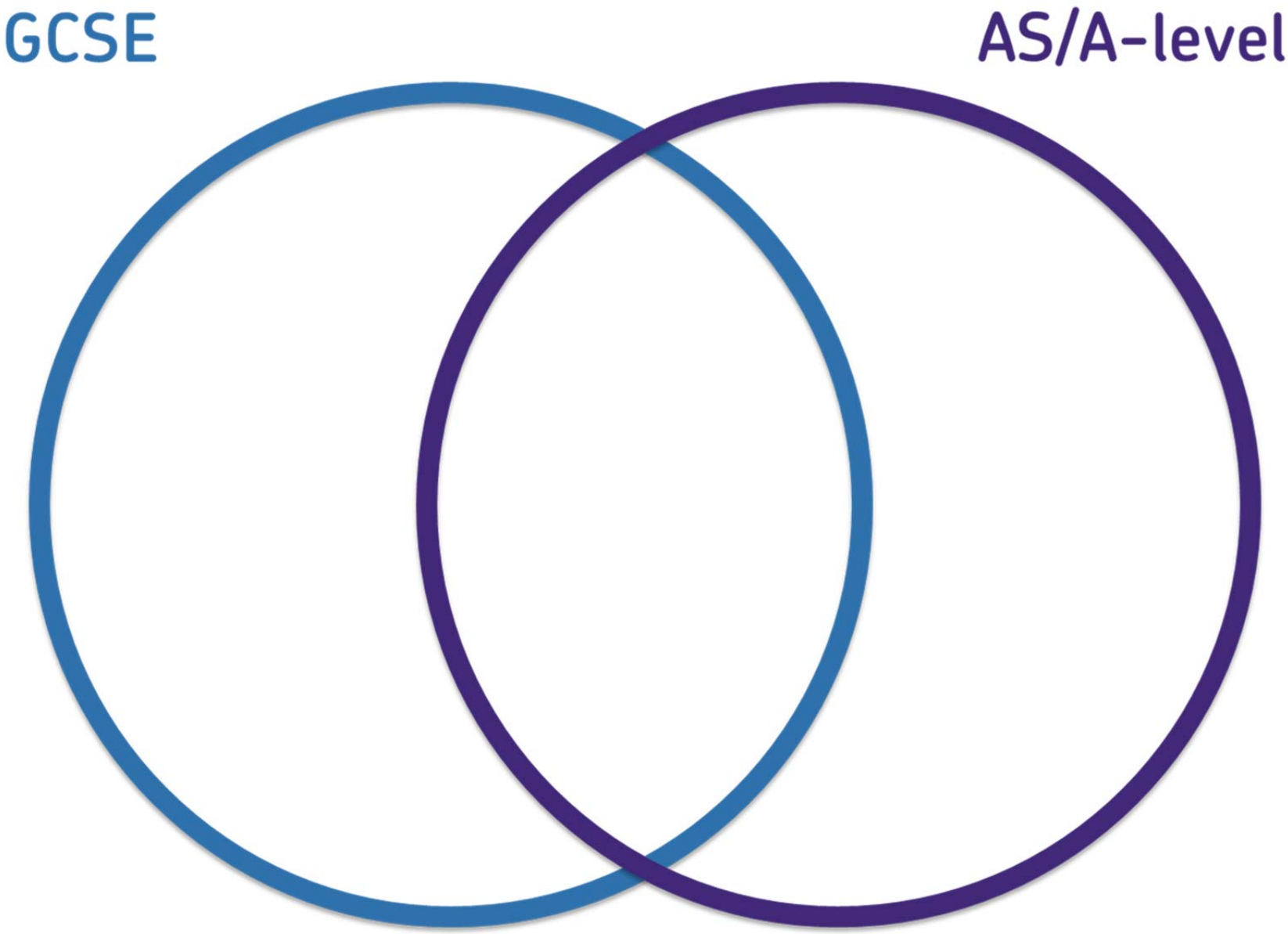
Order of teaching?

The students starting AS/A-level in September 2017 will be the first students to have completed the reformed GCSE English Literature.

Would you alter your long term planning so that concepts or texts are introduced in a different order?

AQA

Thank you


GCSE
AS/A-level

English Literature B

Session slides

A-level English Literature B
Lessons from the first series (June 2017)

Autumn 2017

Agenda: English Literature B

- Reflection on NEA
- Answering the question
- Using extracts effectively
- Lessons around blank verse and prose
- Working with contexts in relation to texts and questions

AQA

Talking points and NEA reflections

AQA

Introductions

Are you teaching AS?

Why have you chosen to teach Literature B? What is the philosophy for choosing this specification?

Which option have you chosen for Paper 1 and Paper 2? How and why did you make this decision?

Which texts have you chosen for study? How and why did you select those texts for teaching?

Would you change any of your approaches over the next year?

AQA

Reflections on NEA

How did you approach NEA?

How are you ensuring that the NEA element is independent?

How do your students choose the texts they will study?

What are your top tips?

Would you approach the NEA differently based on your experience of the last year?

AQA

Reflections on NEA

See the *NEA: prohibited texts* appendix. Share with students so that they can check their text choices.

- Our advisers are on hand to support you with any NEA issues or questions you may have. They can:
- explain the new NEA requirements
- share teaching ideas
- demonstrate approaches to the tasks
- assist with text choices and task setting.

- If you've not received your NEA adviser details by email, email us at English-GCE@aqa.org.uk

AQA

Answering the question

AQA

What ‘answer the question’ means

This is our mantra throughout– but what does it mean? Students really must answer the question in all its details and requirements.

- If students answer the questions they will be hitting the AOs and will be rewarded.
- The AOs as fluid and interactive.
- All AOs are tested in all questions and all questions are marked holistically out of 25.

AQA

Talking point 1: ‘answer the question’

1. What exactly does ‘answering the question’ mean?
2. What knowledge and skills are needed to enable students to do this?

AQA

A note on 'significance'

- This is the invitation to debate: 'significance' is a key word in several of our questions.
- 'Significance' is not the same as importance; it is about what is signified, what meanings arise in terms of values and ideas and how these meanings are produced by what writers do and the methods they use.
- 'Significance' invites students to think about what messages are given out by the text. Are particular characters and ideas given preferential treatment? Are other characters and ideas neglected or sidelined?
- 'Significance' involves the kind of ideology that is embedded or endorsed by the text.
- 'Significance' can also be addressed in terms of the narrative of the text or of its dramatic direction and construction.
- 'Significance' incorporates cultural, social and moral contexts that emerge from the text.
- One way meanings arise is the way the text works within generic conventions – or against them. Genres evolve and mutate and texts can be significant in the way they contribute to the evolution of genre.

AQA

Talking point 1: 'answer the question'

0 2 ***Twelfth Night*** **– William Shakespeare**

Read the extract below and then answer the question.

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the comedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

[25 marks]

AQA

Talking point 1: Answer the question

0 5 ***Atonement*** **– Ian McEwan**

'Briony is just as much a victim of her own crime as Robbie Turner is.'

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of McEwan's authorial methods

[25 marks]

AQA

Talking point 2

Read Response 1 to Paper 2A, Section B Question 4 from the June 2017 AS exam.

Consider how well the question is answered and the student's focus on the task.

What are the merits of this response?

AQA

Talking point 2

0 4 The Great Gatsby – Scott F Fitzgerald

Nick Carraway says of Gatsby 'there was something gorgeous about him'.

Explore the view that Fitzgerald presents Gatsby as an admirable tragic hero.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Fitzgerald's authorial methods.

[25 marks]

AQA

Using extracts effectively

AQA

Using extracts effectively

0	1

Explore the significance of elements of political and social protest writing in this extract.

Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways the author has shaped meanings.

[25 marks]

AQA

Talking point 3

Discuss your experiences of preparing students for passage based questions.

Are there any methods you would recommend (or avoid)?

What advice do you give your students?

AQA

Talking point 4

Look at Question 1 from Paper 1A – *Othello*.

a) Read the extract and produce an overview showing the trajectory of the mini dramatic narrative.

b) What aspects of tragedy would it be most useful to write about in 45 minutes?

c) If the aspects chosen were: 'Othello's tragic decline, Desdemona as tragic victim, and the villainy of Iago', what dramatic methods would help students support their comments?

AQA

Lessons around blank verse and prose

AQA

Blank verse and prose

Many students struggled to identify blank verse and prose.

Extracts from Shakespeare plays were described as prose, particularly in *Othello* and *King Lear*

Most errors were spotted in the responses to:

- tragedy
- Section A of question papers.

Talking point 5

a) Imagine you are answering the previous *Othello* passage based question. Write something meaningful about blank verse or prose that is linked to an aspect of tragedy you have selected.

b) How helpful is it to write about blank verse (iambic pentameter) and/or prose in responses to dramatic method in the Shakespeare questions?

Working with contexts in relation to texts and questions

Focus on AO3

Given that this specification is based on genre study, the most obvious contexts are literary and cultural.

Spec B does not prioritise historical and biographical contexts. However, these contexts and others can be used so long as they are made relevant to the question.

Focus on AO3

From the specification:

AO3 relates to the many possible contexts which arise out of the text, the specific task and the genre being studied.

Note the importance of:

- 'arise out of the text'
- 'the specific task'
- 'the genre being studied'.

AQA

Talking point 6

Look at the student response extracts in the handout.

a) For each of the extracts think about how well each of them manages context in relation to the text and task.

b) Does the students' writing forward the argument?

c) Is the text central to the argument?

AQA

Focus on AO3

Contexts need to emerge from the text itself.

They should not be bolted on from outside sources.

Talking point 7

We've reproduced poetry extracts from Paper 2 texts in your handout.

Pick one. What contexts emerge naturally from the poem?

Remember in an exam, it would still only be relevant to write about these contexts if:

- the task invited them
- the student chose to use them as a relevant part of the argument.

Students who performed well

Students who performed well addressed the tasks in all their details. The question is everything.

The weakest responses were seen by students who:

- overlooked the question or the specific aspect of tragedy, comedy, crime or political and social protest writing
- misread part or all of the question
- tried to warp the question
- only wrote about a bit of the question
- didn't place the text at the heart of their answer.

AQA

June 2017 feedback courses: exams

A-level English Literature B: Feedback on the exam

Online	16 October
Manchester	19 October
Online	6 November
London	13 November
Birmingham	16 November
Online	21 November

AQA

June 2017 feedback courses: NEA

A-level English Literature B: Feedback on NEA

Online	9 October
Online	2 November
Online	30 November

AQA

Any questions?

Presentations and resources from previous English hub school networks are found at:

aqa.org.uk/englishhub-schools

AQA

Thank you

Answering the question

Access a greater number of full-length student responses with depth commentaries. Book your place on a paid *Feedback on the examinations* course.

Face-to-face feedback

Available until Thursday 16th November 2017 at aqa.org.uk/7717-feedback

Online feedback

Available until Tuesday 21st November 2017 at aqa.org.uk/web-7717-feedback

June 2017 A-level Paper 1B, Section A: Question 2

0 2 ***Twelfth Night* – William Shakespeare**

Read the extract below and then answer the question.

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the comedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

[25 marks]

OLIVIA Sir, I bade them take away you.
FESTE Misprision in the highest degree! Lady, *cucullus non facit monachum*; that's as much to say as I wear not motley in my brain. Good madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool.
OLIVIA Can you do it?
FESTE Dexteriously, good madonna.
OLIVIA Make your proof.
FESTE I must catechize you for it, madonna. Good my mouse of virtue, answer me.
OLIVIA Well, sir, for want of other idleness, I'll bide your proof.
FESTE Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?
OLIVIA Good fool, for my brother's death.
FESTE I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
OLIVIA I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
FESTE The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven. Take away the fool, gentlemen.
OLIVIA What think you of this fool, Malvolio? Doth he not mend?
MALVOLIO Yes, and shall do, till the pangs of death shake him. Infirmity, that decays the wise, doth ever make the better fool.
FESTE God send you, sir, a speedy infirmity for the better increasing your folly. Sir Toby will be sworn that I am no fox, but he will not pass his word for twopence that you are no fool.
OLIVIA How say you to that, Malvolio?
MALVOLIO I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal. I saw him put down the other day with an ordinary fool that has no more brain than a stone. Look you now, he's out of his guard already; unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he is gagged. I protest I take these wise men, that crow so at these set kind of fools, no better than the fools' zanies.
OLIVIA O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless,

and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

FESTE Now Mercury endue thee with leasing, for thou speak'st well of fools.

Enter Maria

MARIA Madam, there is at the gate a young gentleman much desires to speak with you.

OLIVIA From the Count Orsino, is it?

MARIA I know not, madam. 'Tis a fair young man, and well attended.

OLIVIA Who of my people hold him in delay?

MARIA Sir Toby, madam, your kinsman.

OLIVIA Fetch him off, I pray you, he speaks nothing but madman. Fie on him! Go you, Malvolio. If it be a suit from the Count, I am sick, or not at home – what you will, to dismiss it. *Exit Malvolio*

(Act 1, Scene 5)

June 2017 A-level Paper 2A, Section B: Question 5

0 5 ***Atonement* – Ian McEwan**

'Briony is just as much a victim of her own crime as Robbie Turner is.'

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of McEwan's authorial methods

[25 marks]

Notes

Talking point 1

What exactly does ‘answering the question’ mean?

What knowledge and skills are needed to enable students to do this?

June 2017 AS Paper 2A, Section B: Question 4

0 4 **The Great Gatsby – Scott F Fitzgerald**

Nick Carraway says of Gatsby 'there was something gorgeous about him'.

Explore the view that Fitzgerald presents Gatsby as an admirable tragic hero.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Fitzgerald's authorial methods.

[25 marks]

Student response 1

In F Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, everything is filtered through the eyes of Nick, an unreliable narrator, who is in awe of Gatsby. At one point he says of Gatsby: 'there was something gorgeous about him'. In this essay I will explore whether or not Gatsby is portrayed as an admirable tragic hero.

F Scott Fitzgerald's manipulation of the narrative means that it takes a while to figure out how exactly to interpret the characters and how to negotiate Nick's own bias which distorts Gatsby's behaviour and perhaps influences our perceptions. To Nick, Gatsby is this admirable tragic hero - his praise of Gatsby's smile is one comment meant to place us firmly on Gatsby's side. Apparently Gatsby's smile is 'one of those rare smiles with a quality of reassurance in it'.

Despite Nick's highly favourable impression of Gatsby, and the sort of man he is, Fitzgerald, however, still leaves the reader guessing about Gatsby's past throughout most of the book - he's an Oxford man (or is he?), he's a war hero (or is he?), he's killed a man (or has he?). This past, shrouded in secrecy, isn't difficult to equate to suave secret type heroes like James Bond. Fitzgerald leaves the readers guessing for the majority of the book, by which time we've met Gatsby's shady business partner Wolfshiem, whose human molar cufflinks indicate that his wealth comes from the criminal underworld, thereby casting doubt on Gatsby's status as a hero (with Gatsby's later reuniting and pursuit of Daisy, a married woman - casting doubt on his status as admirable).

When Fitzgerald finally informs us of James Gatz's backstory with Daisy (at the start of Chapter 8), it is again Nick re-telling to us what Gatsby has told him (and is told much later than when Gatsby tells of his rise from poverty which might allow him to be regarded as heroic). It is not like Jordan's small section of narrative where she explains directly to the reader about her and Daisy's life in Louisiana, and where she saw Gatsby for the first time though even here the story has been passed along second hand - and whilst it is told as the truth, Nick's own judgements and bias are sprinkled throughout further complicating the narrative. James Gatz could have fitted into the mould of a tragic hero, but instead - in his reported narrative - he becomes a victim - a victim of his own ambitions of wealth, a victim of his love for the illusion of Daisy. It is almost pathetic, how his

infatuation began simply because ‘she was the first nice girl he had ever known’. This, the reader asks, this? This is what Gatsby, the Great Gatsby, was brought down by? A dream of a girl who was just an extension of his ambitions for wealth and status?

How you ask yourself, is that heroic? Chasing after a married woman who you barely know in order to reach a status symbol. That isn’t heroic - that isn’t Jay Gatsby, von Hindenburg’s nephew … is it? The way Fitzgerald leads to this reveal of what exactly drives Gatsby - what makes him become a bootlegger, what makes him throw large parties, what makes him try to break apart a marriage - is a masterful reveal. In the space of three pages Gatsby’s desire for Daisy transforms from heroic to pathetic.

He doesn’t want to rescue her from Tom, or be a father to her daughter. All he wants is to transform her into another signal of wealth that James Gatz had dreamed of in his younger days. We already know that Gatsby is divided from ‘old money’ by his own ‘new money’. He doesn’t know the customs, the scripts, what to wear, how to speak. When Nick , from an old money family first meets Gatsby, he thinks his ‘elaborate formality of speech’ just ‘missed being absurd’. Gatsby goes to follow Tom, Sloane and a woman in his car, even when Nick knows the offer is not genuine. Tom even says ‘My God, I believe that man’s coming’, as if it was obvious (as it was to Nick) that Gatsby wasn’t really invited. It is these differences, great and small, that keep Gatsby from truly achieving the American Dream. So he needs his old money, nice girl Daisy to lift him up - but in trying to win her from Tom, he ends up losing everything that he’d strived for. His parties stop, his house is a wreck and after all that ‘Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice’.

It’s tragic in the end - he’s tried so hard to fit in, to become something he isn’t, that he loses all he was in the first place. James Gatz, who ‘knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them’ would meet his downfall by a woman. For all Nick, ever the biased narrator, does to try to set up Gatsby as an admirable hero, Fitzgerald still manages to show Gatsby as he really is: a tragic victim of his own ambitious nature.

Notes

Talking point 2

Consider how well the Gatsby question on the previous page is answered, and comment on the student's focus on the task.

What are the merits of the response on the previous pages?

Using extracts effectively

June 2017 A-level Paper 2B, Section B: Question 1

0 1 Explore the significance of elements of political and social protest writing in this extract.

Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways the author has shaped meanings.

[25 marks]

The novel Fahrenheit 451 was written by Ray Bradbury in 1953. The title refers to the approximate temperature at which book-paper burns. Set in the twenty-fourth century the novel presents a world in which ownership of books is banned by the repressive state. 'Firemen' are responsible for burning any books which are discovered. The story follows the experience of Guy Montag, a fireman who wonders why books must be destroyed. His friend Clarisse McClellan, who prompts him to question the power of the state, has mysteriously disappeared. Montag has been hiding books in his home in an attempt to discover why they are banned, but has not told anyone he is doing this. In the extract, Montag has reported for duty at the fire station and is discussing the role of firemen with his superior officer, Captain Beatty, in the presence of his colleagues.

A radio hummed somewhere. '. . . war may be declared any hour. This country stands ready to defend its –'

The firehouse trembled as a great flight of jet planes whistled a single note across the black morning sky.

Montag blinked. Beatty was looking at him as if he were a museum statue. At any moment, Beatty might rise and walk about him, touching, exploring his guilt and self-consciousness. Guilt? What guilt was that?

'Your play, Montag.'

Montag looked at these men whose faces were sunburnt by a thousand real and ten thousand imaginary fires, whose work flushed their cheeks and fevered their eyes. These men who looked steadily into their platinum igniter flames as they lit their eternally burning black pipes. They and their charcoal hair and soot-coloured brows and bluish-ash-smeared cheeks where they had shaven close; but their heritage showed. Montag started up, his mouth opened. Had he ever seen a fireman that didn't have black hair, black brows, a fiery face, and a blue-steel shaved but unshaved look? These men were all mirror-images of himself! Were all firemen picked then for their looks as well as their proclivities? The colour of cinders and ash about them, and the continual smell of burning from their pipes. Captain Beatty was there, rising in the thunderheads of tobacco smoke. Beatty opening a fresh tobacco packet, crumpling the cellophane into a sound of fire.

Montag looked at the cards in his own hands. 'I – I've been thinking. About the fire last week. About the man whose library we fixed. What happened to him?'

'They took him screaming off to the asylum.'

'He wasn't insane.'

Beatty arranged the cards quietly. 'Any man's insane who thinks he can fool the

Government and us.'

'I've tried to imagine,' said Montag, 'just how it would feel. I mean to have firemen burn our houses and our books.'

'We haven't any books.'

'But if we did have some.'

'You got some?'

Beatty blinked slowly.

'No.' Montag gazed beyond them to the wall with the typed lists of a million forbidden books. Their names leapt in fire, burning down the years under his axe and his hose which sprayed not water but kerosene. 'No.' But in his mind, a cool wind started up and blew out of the ventilator grille at home, softly, softly, chilling his face. And, again, he saw himself in a green park talking to an old man, a very old man, and the wind from the park was cold too.

Montag hesitated, 'Was – was it always like this? The firehouse, our work? I mean, well, once upon a time . . .'

'Once upon a time!' Beatty said. 'What kind of talk is that?'

Fool, thought Montag to himself, you'll give it away. At the last fire, a book of fairy tales, he'd glanced at a single line. 'I mean,' he said, 'in the old days, before homes were completely fireproofed – ' Suddenly it seemed a much younger voice was speaking for him. He opened his mouth and it was Clarisse McClellan saying, 'Didn't firemen prevent fires rather than stoke them up and get them going?'

'That's rich!' Stoneman and Black drew forth their rule-books, which also contained brief histories of the Firemen of America, and laid them out where Montag, though long familiar with them, might read:

'Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies.
First Fireman: Benjamin Franklin.'

RULE
1. Answer the alarm swiftly.
2. Start the fire swiftly.
3. Burn everything.
4. Report back to the firehouse immediately.
5. Stand alert for other alarms.

Everyone watched Montag. He did not move.

The alarm sounded.

The bell in the ceiling kicked itself two hundred times. Suddenly there were four empty chairs. The cards fell in a flurry of snow. The brass pole shivered. The men were gone.

Montag slid down the pole like a man in a dream.

The Mechanical Hound leapt up in its kennel, its eyes all green flame.

'Montag, you forgot your helmet!'

He seized it off the wall behind him, ran, leapt, and they were off, the night wind hammering about their siren scream and their mighty metal thunder!

Notes

Talking point 3

Discuss your experiences of preparing students for passage-based questions.

Are there any methods you would recommend (or avoid)?

What advice do you give your students?

June 2017 A-level Paper 1A, Section A: Question 1

Either

0 1 ***Othello* – William Shakespeare**

Read the extract below and then answer the question.

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

[25 marks]

OTHELLO
Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
DESDEMONA
It yet has felt no age, nor known no sorrow.
OTHELLO
This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.
Hot, hot and moist. This hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For there's a young and sweating devil here
That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
A frank one.
DESDEMONA You may, indeed, say so:
For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart.
OTHELLO
A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands;
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.
DESDEMONA
I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.
OTHELLO
What promise, chuck?
DESDEMONA
I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.
OTHELLO
I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me:
Lend me thy handkerchief.
DESDEMONA Here, my lord.
OTHELLO
That which I gave you.
DESDEMONA I have it not about me.
OTHELLO
Not?

DESDEMONA No, faith, my lord.
OTHELLO That is a fault.
That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give:
She was a charmer and could almost read
The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,
'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
Entirely to her love; but, if she lost it
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathèd, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,
To give it her. I did so; and take heed on't:
Make it a darling, like your precious eye.
To lose or give't away were such perdition
As nothing else could match.
DESDEMONA Is't possible?
OTHELLO
'Tis true: there's magic in the web of it.
A sibyl, that had numbered in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sewed the work:
The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,
And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful
Conserved of maidens' hearts.
DESDEMONA Indeed! Is't true?
OTHELLO
Most veritable; therefore look to't well.
DESDEMONA
Then would to God that I had never seen it!

(Act 3, Scene 4)

Notes

Talking point 4

Look at the Othello extract on the previous pages and produce an overview showing the trajectory of the mini dramatic narrative.

What aspects of tragedy would it be most useful to write about in 45 minutes?

If the aspects chosen were: ‘Othello’s tragic decline, Desdemona as tragic victim, and the villainy of Iago’, what dramatic methods would help students support their comments?

Blank verse and prose

Definitions: blank verse and prose

Blank verse

Blank verse is a literary term defined as unrhyming lines of iambic pentameter. In English poetry and drama, it is a versatile verse form which, while imitating the rhythms of natural speech, can also be used for rhetorical flourishes and elevated sentiment. In the Elizabethan period it became the standard metre for drama and was widely used in narratives and reflective poetry. It has a consistent metre with 10 syllables in each line (pentameter), where, unstressed syllables are followed by stressed ones, five of which are stressed but do not rhyme. This gives the form a distinctive sound and rhythm. In Shakespeare's plays it is the standard form of writing and was consistent with the conventions of the time. It has a distinct appearance on the page, being written in narrow blocks with a neatly aligned left hand margin and a more erratic and jagged right hand margin. All words on the left hand margin begin with a capital letter. Writers who use the form often include variations deviating from the base pattern for particular purposes, perhaps to change direction in action, thought or speaker, perhaps to intensify emotion or to give characters depth and complexity. It is also true that the form is not fixed and where words are stressed could depend on actors or directors choices.

Prose

Prose is the form of written language that is not organised in a formal pattern and in this respect is unlike verse. It can still be rhythmic and often is – just as real speech can be and often is. However, prose is not like speech in that it is generally written in sentences. On the page it looks different from blank verse, running continuously from margin to margin; it is determined by the width of the page and not by what is being said. Prose is also a flexible form and can be used for many purposes.

Shakespeare uses the two forms in imaginative ways, often incorporating rhyme and song too. Although in his early plays there was a fairly clear division between characters who used prose and those who used verse (prose often for comedic characters and blank verse for the nobles), such a simple division is far too simplistic. It is also too simplistic to say that Shakespeare always uses prose to indicate madness or for conversations between unimportant characters or for intimacy or conspiratorial exchanges. Shakespeare uses the different forms and the interplay between them to suit his dramatic purposes at particular times in his plays. In this way he can create multi-dimensional characters that are unpredictable.

Therefore readers need to think very carefully about what is going on dramatically at any particular time before they make comments about the form Shakespeare uses. General comments about the use of verse or prose cannot be superimposed on any scene.

Notes

Talking point 5

Imagine you are answering the *Othello* extract-based question reproduced on the previous pages. Write something meaningful about blank verse or prose that's linked to an aspect of tragedy you have selected.

How helpful is it to write about blank verse (iambic pentameter) and/or prose in responses to dramatic method in the Shakespeare questions?

Focus on AO3

June 2017 A-level Paper 1A, Section C: Question 7

In this section you must write about **two** texts. **One** text must be a drama text.
One text must be written pre-1900.

You can write about the following texts:

Richard II (pre-1900 drama)
Death of a Salesman (drama)
Tess of the D'Urbervilles (pre-1900)
The Great Gatsby
Keats Poetry Selection (pre-1900)
Poetry Anthology: Tragedy (at least **two** poems must be covered).

0 7 'The suffering experienced by tragic protagonists always evokes pity in readers and audiences.'

To what extent do you agree with this view in relation to two texts you have studied?

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on the ways the writers have shaped meanings.

[25 marks]

Student response extract 2

In a street leading to the Tower, after being dethroned by Bolingbroke, Shakespeare presents to us the Queen and Richard exchanging painful goodbyes before they're separated. Stage actions indicated in the text suggest they kiss multiple times throughout the scene, intensifying Richard's suffering, and audiences see a human and sensitive side to the protagonist evoking pity. We pity Richard as a husband as Bolingbroke forces the two to be 'divorc'd'. Shakespeare presents Richard's loving nature and protectiveness over his wife when he exclaims 'Hie thee to France' before the two part. The emotional language between the two elevates Richard as a tragic hero as the Queen refers to him as 'the lion', building his stature during his downfall. However, despite the audience's feeling pity for Richard's suffering as a husband, Shakespeare allows Richard's pride to re-emerge at the end of their goodbyes as he tells his wife to tell the 'good old folks'(that she will later sit with) 'the lamentable tale of me' which will 'send the hearers weeping to their beds' when they hear of 'the deposing of a rightful king'. In this scene where Richard's status has been stripped away by Bolingbroke he still acts in the self-centred way he did as king making it hard for audiences to unreservedly pity him.

June 2017 A-level Paper 1B, Section B: Question 4

0 4 '*The Taming of the Shrew* ends in a trio of happy marriages.'

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

[25 marks]

Student response extract 3

Firstly, it could be argued that the play does end in a 'trio of happy marriages' since essentially the piece is a comedy and must follow the comedic resolution: 'the happy ending'. This is supported by the fact that the play is being performed for Christopher Sly, the drunken tinker, and therefore the moral or polemic messages of the piece are reduced by this. In effect, Shakespeare uses the induction to break the fourth wall and inform his audience that it is mere artifice on stage and nothing more. As Lucentio concludes the play with the line 'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tam'd so' (referring to Katherina), it is arguably impossible to find a deeper meaning to the play. In essence the taming is complete, Sly has watched his 'pleasant play' and a trio of happy marriages have been created.

On the other hand, it is possible to suggest that a trio of happy marriages is not fulfilled, enforced by the fact that many productions choose to omit the induction so the play stands alone. For example, the comedic trickery, deception and hypocrisy of Bianca signify that Bianca and Lucentio's marriage will not be 'happy'. In her final moments Bianca states 'The more fool you for laying on my duty' which is starkly contrasted against her original comment where she says she knows her 'duty to [her] lord, [her] king, [her] governor', and thus unexpectedly mocks social conventions. The disguise of obedience that Bianca wears results in Lucentio losing the wager ('The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca, hath cost me one hundred crowns') and consequently indicates that their marriage will not be one of happiness, in this context fitting to the represented Elizabethan world, but translating to a modern audience as female subjugation and oppression, as women are expected to 'place their hand below their husband's foot'. In that respect all marriages are flawed and thus there is no trio of happy marriages.

Notes

Talking point 6

Look at student response extracts 2 and 3 on the previous pages. Think about how well each of them manages context in relation to the text and task.

Does the students' writing forward the argument?

Is the text central to the argument?

Notes

Talking point 7

Contexts need to emerge from the text itself. They should not be bolted on from outside sources. Using one of the extracts overleaf, identify contexts emerging naturally from the poem.

Remember in an exam, it would only be relevant to write about these contexts if:

- the task invited it
- the student chose to use them as a relevant part of the argument.

Poetry extracts

Peter Grimes – George Crabbe (1810)

Lines 1 – 31

OLD Peter Grimes made fishing his employ,
His wife he cabin'd with him and his boy,
And seem'd that life laborious to enjoy:
To town came quiet Peter with his fish,
And had of all a civil word and wish.
He left his trade upon the Sabbath-day,
And took young Peter in his hand to pray:
But soon the stubborn boy from care broke loose,
At first refused, then added his abuse:
His father's love he scorn'd, his power defied,
But being drunk, wept sorely when he died.
Yes! then he wept, and to his mind there came
Much of his conduct, and he felt the shame,—
How he had oft the good old man reviled,
And never paid the duty of a child;
How, when the father in his Bible read,
He in contempt and anger left the shed:
"It is the word of life," the parent cried;
—"This is the life itself," the boy replied.
And while old Peter in amazement stood,
Gave the hot spirits to his boiling blood:—
How he, with oath and furious speech, began
To prove his freedom and assert the man;
And when the parent check'd his impious rage,
How he had cursed the tyranny of age, —
Nay, once had dealt the sacrilegious blow
On his bare head, and laid his parent low;
The father groan'd—"If thou art old," said he,
"And hast a son—thou wilt remember me:
Thy mother left me in a happy time,
Thou kill'dst not her—heav'n spares the double-crime."

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner – S. T Coleridge (1834)

Lines 1 – 40

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

'The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye –
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon –
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The Little Black Boy from *Songs of Innocence* – William Blake (1757 – 1827)

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but oh! my soul is white.
White as an angel is the English child;
But I am black as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And pointing to the east began to say:

'Look on the rising sun! There God does live,
And gives his light and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

'And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

'For when our souls have learned the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,
Saying: "Come out from the grove my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice." '

Thus did my mother say and kissèd me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee,
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

Them & [uz] – Tony Harrison (b 1937)

I

αι,αĩ, ay, ay! … stutterer Demosthenes
gob full of pebbles outshouting seas –

4 words only of mi 'art aches and … 'Mine's broken,
you barbarian, T.W.!' He was nicely spoken.
'Can't have our glorious heritage done to death!'

I played the Drunken Porter in Macbeth.

'Poetry's the speech of kings. You're one of those
Shakespeare gives the comic bits to: prose!
All poetry (even Cockney Keats?) you see
's been dubbed by [ʌs] into RP,
Received Pronunciation, please believe [ʌs]
your speech is in the hands of the Receivers.'

'We say [ʌs] not [uz], T.W.!' That shut my trap.
I doffed my flat a's (as in 'flat cap')
my mouth all stuffed with glottals, great
lumps to hawk up and spit out … E-nun-ci-ate!

II

So right, yer buggers, then! We'll occupy
your lousy leasehold Poetry.

I chewed up Littererchewer and spat the bones
into the lap of dozing Daniel Jones,
dropped the initials I'd been harried as
and used my name and own voice: [uz] [uz] [uz],
ended sentences with by, with, from,
and spoke the language that I spoke at home.
RIP RP, RIP T.W.
I'm Tony Harrison no longer you!

You can tell the Receivers where to go
(and not aspirate it) once you know
Wordsworth's matter/water are full rhymes,
[uz] can be loving as well as funny.

My first mention in the Times
automatically made Tony Anthony!

From the Chief Examiner

The Chief Examiner gives a brief view on the conversation points on this resource. For more detailed insights, book on to a *Feedback on the examinations* course.

Face-to-face feedback

Available until Thursday 16th November 2017 at aqa.org.uk/7717-feedback

Online feedback

Available until Tuesday 21st November 2017 at aqa.org.uk/web-7717-feedback

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 1

See page 79

What exactly does 'answering the question' mean?

Students have to read and engage with all the words of the question, which should not be a quick activity.

They need to establish what the key terms are, what they understand by them and how they are going to argue. The argument is important as this will give their writing purpose and direction.

Students also need to know which parts of the text will best help them to clinch the points they make in furthering their argument. Good selections are essential. If there is a passage to address too, they need to read through the passage and see its narrative shape.

It is not a good idea to just launch in, dealing with bits of the question or extracts, half grasping what is set up or what is actually occurring.

What knowledge and skills are needed to enable students to do this?

Students clearly have to know their texts really well to understand the full implications of what's being asked in the questions. Knowing the texts well is also crucial to make good choices of which parts of the text they use to support their ideas.

Knowing the text means being secure about what happens (for example knowing that Cassio does not die at the end of Othello), and being secure about who says what to whom and when. It is about understanding characters, ideas the text raises, how genre works with the text or against it, seeing that the way the writer constructs the text is important in the shaping of meanings.

Students can't make things up – events that happen or quotations – but students also need to be given the confidence to make choices independently and not rely on notes given to them by their teachers.

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 2

See page 82

Consider how well the Gatsby question on the previous page is answered, and comment on the student's focus on the task.

The student here is fully engaged with the task, thinking very clearly about whether Fitzgerald presents Gatsby as an 'admirable' tragic hero. The student uses the first sentence about Nick Carraway's view and immediately addresses how Fitzgerald uses Nick as a narrator to establish Gatsby as admirable but also how Fitzgerald does something more as a writer, how he presents Gatsby in a rather different way to his narrator. The student interrogates 'admirable' and 'tragic hero', arguing coherently and then coming to a confident conclusion.

What are the merits of the response on the previous pages?

The student's tight focus on the task is clearly one of its strengths, but there is also excellent engagement with Fitzgerald's narrative methods. A really good distinction is made between author and narrator and without obsessing on the 'unreliable narrator' the student works well with the concept. There is also some excellent work on structure. This student knows the text well and makes some very perceptive choices. Comments on method are very well integrated into the student's argument. The contexts set up in the task are literary (the tragic genre) and moral (what it means to be admirable) and the student works very well with these in an unfussy way. As part of the argument, the student also incorporates relevant comments on societal values. What stands out here is the student's confidence, assuredness and the lively personal voice. This is a most engaging response, one where the student has a view, takes some risks and goes for it. It is not without fault but it is interesting.

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 3

See page 86

Five key things for students to do when handling passage-based questions

- Establish an overview of the passage.
- Briefly contextualise it in terms of the wider play in the Shakespeare question; in the unseen think about what the text is potentially setting up in terms of the wider unknown text.
- Write about the significance of some of the aspects of tragedy or comedy or elements of crime or political and social protest writing that are present and relate to the wider play in the Shakespeare question.
- Incorporate comments on the authorial methods and how they are used to reveal generic aspects or elements to open up meanings.
- Approach the task with a real sense of ownership; there are no numerical requirements about how much space is devoted to the passage, authorial method, or the wider play in Shakespeare, but there must be good coverage of the passage.

Six things for students to avoid when handling passage-based questions

- Spot tragic or comedic aspects or crime or political and social protest elements and write about them in a way detached from the extract.
- Produce a version of ‘lit crit’ ‘going through the passage line by line’.
- Write about small bits of language in a detached way – alliteration, consonance, etc.
- Write about the passage in a formulaic way.
- Write about punctuation.
- Write a commentary on the passage.

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 4

See page 89

Look at the *Othello* extract and produce an overview showing the trajectory of the mini dramatic narrative.

The extract was from *Othello*: Act 3 scene 4. The dramatized story is Othello's confrontation with Desdemona about her fidelity and lost handkerchief. The story, however, is not clear cut. Othello's accusations are indirect and his tale of the handkerchief's origin is threatening, bizarre, mystical and romantic. It's also extraordinary, evidenced by the accumulation of gothic detail (a handkerchief 'dyed in mummy' 'conserved of maidens' hearts, sewn in 'prophetic fury' by a 'two hundred' year old sibyl using silk bred from 'hallowed' worms).

No wonder Desdemona is fearful, wishing to God she had never seen it. (Very few students, incidentally, paid any attention to this tale missing the opportunity to grapple with something really interesting in relation to tragedy). The extract reveals Othello's terrible confusion — trying to hold on to the love he feels for his wife while dreading the 'truth' of what Iago has told him. Othello's taking Desdemona's hand at the start is an important dramatic action where he practises strange palm reading. It's not clear when he lets go of her hand and he could be holding it when he tells the story of his wedding gift. The extract comes directly after Desdemona's and Emilia's brief encounter with the clown and Desdemona's confession to Emilia that she has lost the handkerchief, unaware that Emilia has in fact stolen it. Emilia is on stage during the exchanges between the married couple (though this is not signalled in the extract). However, Emilia hears everything, and after Othello leaves she makes it clear to Desdemona that Othello is jealous.

What aspects of tragedy would it be most useful to write about in 45 minutes?

Students could write about the most obvious aspects like the change in Othello's character from the beginning of the play, how he has been poisoned by Iago and now exhibits destructive jealousy, how his pride leads him to behave cruelly to his wife in the telling of the handkerchief story, and how Desdemona's position as an innocent victim is intensified by her being an unwitting agent in her misery when she asks Othello to speak of Cassio.

If the aspects chosen were: 'Othello's tragic decline, Desdemona as tragic victim, and the villainy of Iago', what dramatic methods would help students support their comments?

The striking opportunity is for students to write about the stage action of Othello holding Desdemona's hand and reading its messages – the troubled dialogue between them, the use of irony and foreshadowing (especially in relation to the hands of both Othello and Desdemona), the use of the second handkerchief which Othello rejects, and the strange embedded lost handkerchief story. It would also be useful to write about Iago's stage absence and Emelia's presence (if students had remembered this) and that despite Iago's absence his poisonous magic is very much present.

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 5

See page 92

The point of this task is to show how difficult it is and how it is a burden that ought not to be placed on students. Of course teachers themselves can produce something really insightful (as did some students – for which they were credited) but most students struggled, and there are so many other methods that they could have easily and more productively engaged with, so feeling they ought to write about iambic pentameter should not be encouraged. When they do so, it usually results in their writing generalised comments that are just imposed on the extract which are often either empty or inaccurate.

It is important to note that it is possible for students to study a Shakespeare play in both papers and it is compulsory to answer 2 questions on Shakespeare in Paper 1 so if students think that they need to write about blank verse/prose they will be beleaguered a number of times.

Talking point 6

See page 96

Student 2

This student writes very well and is clearly engaged with the task in a direct and specific way. There is a good argument around Richard's suffering – which is clearly identified – and how this both does and does not evoke pity, thereby engaging very well with 'to what extent'. The contexts set up in the task are the literary context of genre and the context of the affections. In centring the argument on the scene in which Richard parts from his Queen, the student is automatically connecting with the social and cultural context of marriage and the discussion of Richard's deposition and Bolingbroke's ascendency connects easily with the context of power. In this extract there is also very good integrated comment on Shakespeare's dramatic method and everything is related to the task. It is an excellent paragraph.

Student 3

This student also writes in a beautifully clear way and the focus is tightly on the question and the argument. The question requires engagement with the social context of marriage and the literary context of dramatic comedy. Both are handled perceptively and with assurance. There is also some discussion of the performance context and this works well because it is securely welded to the argument. All ideas are rooted in the text and quotations are used judiciously. The references to Elizabethan and modern audiences are deftly handled by this student. No words are wasted and all comments are connected to the text. The student never loses sight of the argument which is driven forward at all times. The student has a clear personal voice and the argument is superb as is the integrated discussion on Shakespeare's dramatic method.

From the Chief Examiner

Talking point 7

See page 97

Peter Grimes

The contexts that naturally emerge here are religious, social, cultural and moral. They inform the text as Crabbe places the hero of his crime story in the work day world of fishermen and the domestic world of a family which is essentially devout and moralistic.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Coleridge's opening also has a clear social and cultural contextual basis. Readers' associations of weddings as joyful and harmonious are drawn upon as he places the mariner on the outside of the wedding with the intention of disrupting the celebrations – at least for the Wedding Guest. Coleridge also invokes the readers' contextual understanding of gender in the description of the bride, the Wedding Guest and the mariner. The context of travellers' tales is also incorporated in this opening section as the mariner accosts the Wedding Guest with his strange story.

The Little Black Boy

Blake's poem is centred on the cultural contexts of family and race. The poem gains meanings from its being grounded in pastoral and religious contexts.

Them and [uz]

Harrison's poem is dependent on cultural contexts to do with power, education and the literary world. There is also a clear linguistic context operating in this protest against the establishment.

Appendix

NEA: prohibited texts

A-level English Literature B

Students need to study two texts for NEA. These must be written by two different authors – one poetry, the other prose. Each text must be linked to a different section of the Critical Anthology.

For support with the NEA, including choosing texts and writing tasks, see aqa.org.uk/7717nea.

Set texts for the A-level exam components (Aspects of Tragedy, Aspects of Comedy, Elements of Crime Writing, and Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing) cannot be used for NEA, even if the texts will not be used in the exam or the component will not be studied.

Below is the alphabetised list.

A

Atkinson, Kate	When Will There Be Good News?
Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale
Auden, W.H.	Miss Gee
Austen, Jane	Emma

B

Betjeman, John	Death in Leamington
Blake, William	Songs of Innocence and of Experience
Browning, Robert	The Laboratory
Browning, Robert	My Last Duchess
Browning, Robert	Porphyria's Lover
Burns, Robert	Tam o' Shanter. A Tale

C

Chaucer, Geoffrey	Extracts from the Prologue of 'The Monk's Tale'
Chaucer, Geoffrey	The Monk's Tale
Chaucer, Geoffrey	'The Nun's Priest's Tale' inc. Prologue and Epilogue
Christie, Agatha	The Murder of Roger Ackroyd
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Crabbe, George	Peter Grimes
Crace, Jim	Harvest

D

Dickens, Charles	Oliver Twist
Dickens, Charles	Hard Times
Donne, John	The Flea
Duffy, Carol Ann	Mrs Sisyphus

F

Fanthorpe, U.A.	Not My Best Side
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	The Great Gatsby
Frost, Robert	Out, out -

G

Goldsmith, Oliver	She Stoops to Conquer
Greene, Graham	Brighton Rock

H

Hardy, Thomas	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Hardy, Thomas	The Convergence of the Twain
Harrison, Tony	V
Harrison, Tony	National Trust
Harrison, Tony	Them and [uz]
Harrison, Tony	Divisions
Harrison, Tony	Working
Harrison, Tony	Marked with D
Hosseini, Khaled	The Kite Runner

I

Ibsen, Henrik	A Doll's House

K

Keats, John	Lamia
Keats, John	Isabella or The Pot of Basil
Keats, John	La Belle Dame Sans Merci. A Ballad
Keats, John	The Eve of St. Agnes

L

Larkin, Philip	Sunny Prestatyn
Levy, Andrea	Small Island
Lochhead, Liz	My Rival's House

M

McEwan, Ian	Atonement
Miller, Arthur	Death of a Salesman
Milton, John	Extract from 'Paradise Lost'

R

Rossetti, Christina	Jessie Cameron

S

Shakespeare, William	Othello
Shakespeare, William	King Lear
Shakespeare, William	Richard II
Shakespeare, William	The Taming of the Shrew
Shakespeare, William	Twelfth Night
Shakespeare, William	Hamlet
Shakespeare, William	Henry IV Part I
Swift, Jonathan	A Satirical Elegy. On the Death of a Late Famous General

T

Tennyson, Alfred	Tithonus

W

Wilde, Oscar	The Importance of Being Earnest
Wilde, Oscar	The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Y

Yeats, W.B.	The Death of Cuchulain

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