

# GCSE English Literature

English Hub School networks, Autumn 2017

Lessons from the first series

Published: October 2017





These free networking sessions feature extracts of scripts and student responses.

Access a greater number of full-length student responses with depth commentaries in our *Mark scheme support* resources.

[aqa.org.uk/log-in](https://www.aqa.org.uk/log-in)

---

# Contents

Contents	Page
Session slides	4
Poetry: unseen and comparison	22
Focus on AO3: context	34
Text choices	40

---

# Session slides

---

GCSE English Literature  
**Lessons from the first series (June 2017)**

---

Autumn 2017

## Agenda

---

- Introductions
- Poetry: unseen and comparison
- Focus on AO3: context
- Text choices

## Poetry: unseen and comparison

---

## What makes a good unseen response?

---

The best responses are:

- genuinely personal
- engaged with the poem's ideas on some level
- supported by an awareness of how and why the poet's techniques have an effect on the reader.

## Question 27.1

---

Question 27.1 has essentially two elements:

- the writer's methods – AO1 (ie understanding/ explaining/exploring the poem's ideas
- the treatment of ideas/theme – AO2 (how...?).

## Question 27.1

---

AO1 and AO2 should not be thought of as separate, but rather students should aim to integrate them.

### **Talking point**

Identify the single biggest difficulty for students in integrating these elements.

What are your preferred teaching methods for this question?

## Question 27.1

---

Always link writing about **technique** to writing about **effect**.

### Talking point

Look at the poem 'Autumn' from this year's paper. With the person next to you, find and discuss three elements of the poem that could be useful in this regard.

## Question 27.1

---

Technique and method are perhaps better seen as tools for students to use which can support their own thinking about the poem.

Students **must** try to engage with the poet and his/her ideas.



## Planning for Question 27.1

---

Your teaching of anthology poetry is an obvious place to start when it comes to preparing for the Unseen section of the paper.

## Planning for Question 27.1 (contd.)

---

If you give students a simple framework and ask them to write down examples and then comment on their effects, you are empowering students straight away to make decisions and trust their own judgement.

## Planning for Question 27.1 (contd.)

---

### **Talking point**

Which poems would you choose from your cluster as these starter-poems and why?

## Thinking about Question 27.2

---

This is a different type of task.

### **Talking point**

In your handout, highlight what you think are the key words in this mark scheme.

## Responding to 27.2

---

See the mark scheme extract.

Students are being judged solely on their comparison of the writers' use of language and the effects of those methods on the reader.

## Responding to 27.2

---

See the question wording.

'What are the similarities and/or differences **between the ways the poets present these attitudes?**'

**The words in bold above are the focus for this question.**

## Teaching ways of responding to 27.2

---

This question is also 'only' worth a maximum 8 marks, but this can still make a huge difference to both an individual student's, and your centre's, results.

**So...**

## Teaching ways of responding to 27.2

---

The ideal is for students to have a very efficient way of answering this question so they must know **exactly** what is required of them.

### **Talking point**

How else you could help students prepare for this task?

## Focus on A03: context

---

## What is 'context'?

---

What do you understand by the term 'context' in terms of this exam?

## What is 'context'?

---

Discuss what you understand by the term 'context' in terms of this exam.

## What is 'context'?

---

We can say that there are two main ways in which students can deal with context in the exam.

**The best answers integrate both.**

## What is 'context'?

---

Two main ways students can deal with context:

1) Specific knowledge which students have acquired throughout their course, usually taught by/explored with teachers. Example would be eg the class system and the conflict between capitalism and socialism in the first half of the C20 for 'An Inspector Calls'.

2) Students' direct response to the context implicit in the question they are answering eg 'How far does Priestley present Mrs Birling as an **unlikeable character?**'

## Some examples

---

See the three short examples in your handout.

### **Talking point**

Discuss what levels you would give to these three responses.

## Context

---

What were the strengths and weaknesses of each?

How would you advise the students who produced each of these responses on how to improve?

## Context

---

What did you do to prepare students? How and what might you change for this year?



## Text choices

---

## Your text choices

---

What were the reasons you chose the texts you did?  
For many it will simply be what was in the store cupboard.

The most frequently-chosen texts were:

- *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*
- *A Christmas Carol* and *Dr Jekyll* for Paper 1
- *An Inspector Calls*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm* for Paper 2.

## Your text choices

---

In an ideal world would you like to do a different text from the ones you did? If so, why?

How many of you are allowed to make individual decisions about these issues?

## Where did you find your resources?

---

### **Talking point:**

Quality or availability of teaching and learning resources can impact text choices.

You can use the relevant notes page in your handout to note down new resources or communities to investigate.

## Any questions?

---

## June 2017 Feedback courses

---

GCSE English Literature: Feedback on the examinations

Location	Date
Manchester	16 October 2017
Birmingham	18 October 2017
London	18 October 2017
York	19 October 2017
Online	20 October 2017
Online	31 October 2017
Online	03 November 2017
Bristol	13 November 2017
Southampton	14 November 2017
London	20 November 2017

## June 2017 Feedback courses

---

### GCSE English Literature: Feedback on the examinations

Location	Date
Newcastle Upon tyne	20 November 2017
Manchester	21 November 2017
Guildford	22 November 2017
Online	22 November 2017
Birmingham	24 November 2017
Oxford	24 November 2017
Liverpool	30 November 2017
Online	04 December 2017
London	08 December 2017
Manchester	08 December 2017

## June 2017 Feedback courses

---

### GCSE English Language: Feedback on the examinations

Location	Date
York	16 October 2017
Manchester	18 October 2017
Birmingham	20 October 2017
Online	23 October 2017
Online	31 October 2017
Birmingham	20 November 2017
Manchester	21 November 2017
Liverpool	22 November 2017
London	22 November 2017
Online	22 November 2017

## June 2017 Feedback courses

---

### GCSE English Language: Feedback on the examinations

Location	Date
Southampton	23 November 2017
Oxford	27 November 2017
Guildford	29 November 2017
Newcastle upon Tyne	29 November 2017
Bristol	30 November 2017
Online	30 November 2017
Manchester	06 December 2017
Online	08 December 2017
London	11 December 2017



Thank you

---

---

# Poetry: unseen and comparison

---

## What makes a good unseen response?

The best responses are:

- genuinely personal
- engaged on some level with the poem's ideas
- supported by an awareness of how and why the poet's techniques have an effect on the reader.

If you are disappointed with the marks some of your students received for this section, it may be worth getting a few scripts back across a range of marks to look at them as a department. Your school examinations officer will help you with this, and tell you the fees.

Visit: [aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/post-results](https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/post-results)

---

## Question 27.1

### In brief

Question 27.1 has essentially two elements:

- the writer's methods
  - AO1: eg understanding/explaining/exploring the poem's ideas.
- the treatment of ideas/theme
  - AO2: how?

These two elements should not be thought of as separate, but rather students should aim to integrate them.

### Tips for students

It is probably better to work from the text outwards, in other words, **don't** decide what the poem is about and try to make the words 'fit' this interpretation.

Instead, look at the poet's word choices and using knowledge of poetic methods, and see what these suggest to you.

### Talking point 1

Identify the single biggest difficulty for students in integrating AO1 and AO2.

Discuss your preferred teaching methods for this question.

Always link writing about **technique** to writing about **effect**.

For example:

*'The writer uses enjambment all the way through the poem'*

The above is level 1-2, but the below is towards level 3-4.

*'The writer uses enjambment throughout the poem, for example, 'covering his tracks/With a deep multitude...', to suggest the confusion caused by Autumn'.*



---

## Notes

## Question 27.1 cont.

This example is reproduced from June 2017's Paper 2. Find full past papers and support materials in our secure logged in area. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and navigate to Secure Key Materials (SKM).

### Section C: Unseen poetry

Answer **both** questions in this section

#### Autumn

Autumn arrives  
Like an experienced robber  
Grabbing the green stuff  
Then cunningly covering his tracks  
5 With a deep multitude  
Of colourful distractions.  
And the wind,  
The wind is his accomplice  
Putting an air of chaos  
10 Into the careful diversions  
So branches shake  
And dead leaves are suddenly blown  
In the faces of inquisitive strangers.  
The theft chills the world,  
15 Changes the temper of the earth  
Till the normally placid sky  
Glows red with a quiet rage.

Alan Bold

27 . 1

In 'Autumn', how does the poet present the effects of the season of autumn?

**[24 marks]**

### Talking point 2

With the person next to you, find and discuss three elements of the poem that could be useful in this regard.

---

## Notes

---

## Question 27.1 cont.

Some students are obviously given a checklist of techniques and methods to look for.

Examples include (but aren't limited to):

- imagery
- alliteration
- verse/ form and length
- rhyme

... etc, maybe with a mnemonic thrown in.

This is not necessarily a bad idea in itself, but it can be very limiting and actually unhelpful if students start with this 'list' and see the poem as essentially a technique-spotting exercise.

Such responses tend to be mechanistic – often determined to make things fit a pattern when they don't – and limited in the range and quality of interpretation. Technique and method are perhaps better seen as tools for students to use which can support their own thinking about the poem. Students **must** try to engage with the poet and his/her ideas.

### Using the anthology

Your teaching of anthology poetry is an obvious place to start when it comes to preparing for the 'unseen' section of the paper. The nature of the two clusters means that it is easy to find two poems which share a common theme, but differ widely in their forms and approaches.

It can give students great confidence to start your Anthology teaching by presenting them with, for example, *Follower* or *War Photographer* and simply asking them what they think about it.

### The more experience students have of:

- a wide range of poems
- making their own judgements
- supporting judgements with evidence

...the better they will perform.

If you then give them a simple framework (eg interesting word choices, figurative language, form, another technique) and ask them to write down examples and then comment on their effects. By doing this you will be empowering students straight away to make decisions and trust their own judgement.

It's also very revealing if you then ask students to read some or all of the other poems in the collection just once and ask them to pick one which looks like it might be a good comparison. They often make startlingly sensible and interesting choices.

### Talking point 3

Which poems would you choose from your cluster as these starter-poems and why?

---

## *Past and Present poetry anthology*

Poems from *Past and Present poetry anthology* are listed below.

Schools are supplied with anthologies, but electronic copies are also available on the English e-Library. See [aqa.org.uk/elibrary](http://aqa.org.uk/elibrary)

### **Love and relationships**

Armitage, Simon	Mother, any distance
Barrett Browning, Elizabeth	Sonnet 29 - 'I think of thee!'
Browning, Robert	Porphyria's Lover
Byron, Lord	When We Two Parted
Causley, Charles	Eden Rock
Day Lewis, C	Walking Away
Dooley, Maura	Letters From Yorkshire
Duffy, Carol Ann	Before You Were Mine
Hardy, Thomas	Neutral Tones
Heaney, Seamus	Follower
Mew, Charlotte	The Farmer's Bride
Nagra, Daljit	Singh Song!
Sheers, Owen	Winter Swans
Shelley, Percy Bysshe	Love's Philosophy
Waterhouse, Andrew	Climbing My Grandfather

### **Power and conflict**

Agard, John	Checking Out Me History
Armitage, Simon	Remains
Blake, William	London
Browning, Robert	My Last Duchess
Bysshe Shelley, Percy	Ozymandias
Dharker, Imtiaz	Tissue
Duffy, Carol Ann	War Photographer
Garland, Beatrice	Kamikaze
Heaney, Seamus	Storm on the Island
Hughes, Ted	Bayonet Charge
Owen, Wilfred	Exposure
Rumens, Carol	The émigree
Tennyson, Alfred Lord	The Charge of the Light Brigade
Weir, Jane	Poppies
Wordsworth, William	The Prelude: stealing the boat

---

# Notes

## Question 27.2

These extracts are from the June 2017 series. Visit [aga.org.uk/log-in](http://aga.org.uk/log-in) to access.

### Today

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,  
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze

that it made you want to throw  
open all the windows in the house

5 and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,  
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb\*,

a day when the cool brick paths  
and the garden bursting with peonies\*\*

10 seemed so etched in sunlight  
that you felt like taking

a hammer to the glass paperweight  
on the living room end table,

releasing the inhabitants  
from their snow-covered cottage

15 so they could walk out,  
holding hands and squinting

into this larger dome of blue and white,  
well, today is just that kind of day.

Billy Collins

\* jamb – the sides of a doorway or opening

\*\* peonies – flowers

2 | 7 | . | 2

In both 'Today' and 'Autumn' the speakers describe attitudes towards the seasons.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present these attitudes?

**[8 marks]**

## Question 27.2 cont.

### Talking point 4

What are the keywords in this mark scheme?

Mark	AO	Typical features of response
<b>Level 4</b> <b>7–8</b> <b>marks</b>	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploratory comparison of writers' use of language, structure and form with subject terminology used judiciously</li><li>• Convincing comparison of effects of writers' methods on reader</li></ul>
<b>Level 3</b> <b>5–6</b> <b>marks</b>	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thoughtful comparison of writers' use of language and/or structure and/or form with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods</li><li>• Comparative examination of effects of writers' methods on reader</li></ul>
<b>Level 2</b> <b>3–4</b> <b>marks</b>	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relevant comparison of writers' use of language and/or structure and/or form with some relevant use of subject terminology</li><li>• Some comparison of effects of writers' methods on reader</li></ul>
<b>Level 1</b> <b>1–2</b> <b>marks</b>	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some links between writers' use of language or structure or form</li><li>• Some links between effects of writers' methods on reader</li></ul>
<b>0 marks</b>	Nothing worthy of credit/nothing written	

The obvious thing to notice is that there is only one AO, and in every level there is a word which implies the need for students to compare. In no other part of the exam is this so explicit, so it is vital that students do it.

#### Writers' use of language

The other potential difficulty in this question is that students are being judged solely on their response to 'writers' use of language' and the effects of those methods on the reader.

Look at the question from this year's paper on the previous page.

*In both 'Today' and 'Autumn' the speakers describe attitudes towards the seasons.*

**What are the similarities and/or differences *between the ways the poets present these attitudes?***

The words in bold above are the focus of this question.

We found some students wrote about attitudes and not **methods** here, and so received very little, if any, credit for this.



---

## Question 27.2 cont.

By this point in the exam, students are generally quite tired and maybe not at their best.

This question is only worth a maximum 8 marks, but this can still make a huge difference to both an individual student's, and your centre's, results.

### Tips for students

Ideally, students:

- have a very efficient way of approaching this question to identify **exactly** what is required of them
- do not have to outline the ideas/attitudes in one or both poems (which is a waste of time).
- do not feel the need to write more than a side
- will find methods and effects from both poems and compare them
- have the annotation skills to find and organise useful things to say.

### Talking point 5

Discuss how else you could help students prepare for this task.

## Notes

---

# Focus on A03: context

---

## Focus on A03: context

What do you understand by 'context' in terms of this exam?

### The two main ways students approach context are:

- via specific knowledge acquired throughout the course, usually taught by and explored with teachers. For example, 'the class system and the conflict between capitalism and socialism in the first half of the C20' in *An Inspector Calls*.
- via direct response to the context implicit in the question. For example, 'How far does Priestley present Mrs Birling as an **unlikeable character**?'

The best answers integrate these two approaches.

### Student examples of context

*'The old generation eg Mr Birling and Mrs Birling do not care that Eva Smith died.'*

*'When Mr Birling congratulates Edna the maid on her cooking Mrs Birling reacts displeased. We see here Mrs Birling is a character who does not believe people of a lower class should be respected. She does not value their work.'*

*'Mrs Birling repeatedly shows no sympathy for Eva Smith. This echoes her social class because she as a higher class woman was not expected to feel sympathy for a lower class person. This however contrasts with the charity that Mrs Birling runs for women in need. Therefore the audience can think that Mrs Birling is not running the charity for the good of lower class women but to earn social respect and show off her status.'*

The above extracts are indicative of levels 1, 3 and 5 respectively. The summer 2017 series showed most centres had got to grips with 'context' for the purposes of the exam.

Would you prepare differently?

## Talking point 6

What levels **would** you have given to the three extracts above?

What strengths and weaknesses are shown and how would you advise students to improve?

Reproduced below are pages 9-11 from the June 2017 mark scheme for Paper 2. The full version can be found on the Secure Key Materials section of eAQA. Navigate to [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in)

Mark	AO	Typical features	How to arrive at a mark
Level 6  <i>Convincing, critical analysis and exploration</i>  <b>26–30 marks</b>	AO1	Critical, exploratory, conceptualised response to task and whole text  Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s)	<p><b>At the top of the level</b>, a candidate's response is likely to be a critical, exploratory, well-structured argument. It takes a conceptualised approach to the full task supported by a range of judicious references. There will be a fine-grained and insightful analysis of language and form and structure supported by judicious use of subject terminology. Convincing exploration of one or more ideas/ perspectives/ contextual factors/ interpretations.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level</b>, a candidate will have Level 5 and be starting to demonstrate elements of exploratory thought and/or analysis of writer's methods and /or contexts.</p>
	AO2	Analysis of writer's methods with subject terminology used judiciously  Exploration of effects of writer's methods on reader	
	AO3	Exploration of ideas/ perspectives/ contextual factors shown by specific, detailed links between context/ text/ task	
Level 5  <i>Thoughtful, developed consideration</i>  <b>21–25 marks</b>	AO1	Thoughtful, developed response to task and whole text  Apt references integrated into interpretation(s)	<p><b>At the top of the level</b>, a candidate's response is likely to be thoughtful, detailed and developed. It takes a considered approach to the full task with references integrated into interpretation; there will be a detailed examination of the effects of language and/or structure and/or form supported by apt use of subject terminology. Examination of ideas/ perspectives/ contextual factors, possibly including alternative interpretations/ deeper meanings.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level</b>, a candidate will have Level 4 and be starting to demonstrate elements of thoughtful consideration and/or examination of writer's methods and/or contexts.</p>
	AO2	Examination of writer's methods with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods  Examination of effects of writer's methods on reader	

	AO3	Thoughtful consideration of ideas/ perspectives/ contextual factors shown by examination of detailed links between context/text/task	
--	-----	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<p>Level 4</p> <p><i>Clear understanding</i></p> <p><b>16–20 marks</b></p>	AO1	<p>Clear, explained response to task and whole text</p> <p>Effective use of references to support explanation</p>	<p><b>At the top of the level,</b> a candidate's response is likely to be clear, sustained and consistent. It takes a focused response to the full task which demonstrates clear understanding. It uses a range of references effectively to illustrate and justify explanation; there will be clear explanation of the effects of a range of writer's methods supported by appropriate use of subject terminology. Clear understanding of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level,</b> a candidate will have Level 3 and be starting to demonstrate elements of understanding and/or explanation of writer's methods and/or contexts.</p>
	AO2	<p>Clear explanation of writer's methods with appropriate use of relevant subject terminology</p> <p>Understanding of effects of writer's methods on reader</p>	
	AO3	<p>Clear understanding of ideas/perspectives/ contextual factors shown by specific links between context/text/task</p>	
<p>Level 3</p> <p><i>Explained, structured comments</i></p> <p><b>11–15 marks</b></p>	AO1	<p>Some explained response to task and whole text</p> <p>References used to support a range of relevant comments</p>	<p><b>At the top of the level,</b> a candidate's response is likely to be explanatory in parts. It focuses on the full task with a range of points exemplified by relevant references from the text; there will be identification of effects of a range of writer's methods supported by some relevant terminology. Explanation of some relevant contextual factors.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level,</b> a candidate will have Level 2 and be starting to explain and/or make relevant comments on writer's methods and/or contexts.</p>
	AO2	<p>Explained/relevant comments on writer's methods with some relevant use of subject terminology</p> <p>Identification of effects of writer's methods on reader</p>	
	AO3	<p>Some understanding of implicit ideas/ perspectives/contextual factors shown by links between context/text/task</p>	

<p>Level 2</p> <p><i>Supported, relevant comments</i></p> <p><b>6–10 marks</b></p>	AO1	<p>Supported response to task and text</p> <p>Comments on references</p>	<p><b>At the top of the level</b>, a candidate's response is likely to be relevant and supported by some explanation. It will include some focus on the task with relevant comments and some supporting references from the text. There will be identification of effects of deliberate choices made by writer with some reference to subject terminology. Awareness of some contextual factors.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level</b>, a candidate's response will have Level 1 and be starting to focus on the task and/or starting to show awareness of the writer making choices and/or awareness of contexts.</p>
	AO2	<p>Identification of writers' methods</p> <p>Some reference to subject terminology</p>	
	AO3	<p>Some awareness of implicit ideas/contextual factors</p>	
<p>Level 1</p> <p><i>Simple, explicit comments</i></p> <p><b>1–5 marks</b></p>	AO1	<p>Simple comments relevant to task and text</p> <p>Reference to relevant details</p>	<p><b>At the top of the level</b>, a candidate's response is likely to be narrative and/or descriptive in approach. It may include awareness of the task and provide appropriate reference to text; there will be simple identification of method with possible reference to subject terminology. Simple comments/responses to context, usually explicit.</p> <p><b>At the bottom of the level</b>, a candidate's response will show some familiarity with the text.</p>
	AO2	<p>Awareness of writer making deliberate choices</p> <p>Possible reference to subject terminology</p>	
	AO3	<p>Simple comment on explicit ideas/contextual factors</p>	
<b>0 marks</b>	Nothing worthy of credit/nothing written		

---

## Notes

---

# Text choices



---

## Text choices

Why did you choose the texts you did? For many it will simply be what was in the store cupboard.

All texts were attempted in the summer 2017 series, but these were the most frequently-chosen ones.

Paper 1	Paper 2
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	<i>Animal Farm</i>
<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	

### Talking point 7

Some work in departments where text choices and decisions about content are made hierarchically with little discussion. There are strengths and weaknesses of this top-down approach; which approach do you believe to be most effective and why?

Are you allowed to make individual decisions about these issues?

### Talking point 8

Quality or availability of teaching and learning resources can impact text choices. Can you recommend a go-to source or a particular place for a specific text? Networking communities on the TES, Twitter (#TeamEnglish or #EngChat) or Mumsnet can be just as valuable.

Use the notes page overleaf to note down new resources or communities to investigate.

---

## Notes



---

## Contact us

T: 0161 953 7504

E: [english-gcse@aca.org.uk](mailto:english-gcse@aca.org.uk)

[aca.org.uk/english](http://aca.org.uk/english)

These free networking sessions feature extracts of scripts and student responses.

Access a greater number of full-length student responses with depth commentaries in our *Mark scheme support* resources.

[aca.org.uk/log-in](http://aca.org.uk/log-in)