

AS
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE**

7706/1: Views and Voices
Report on the Examination

7706
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General

In this fourth series of the AS specification, students responded with engagement and imagination to the prose and poetry texts. It was encouraging to see the skills and knowledge they had acquired through their AS study applied productively. The majority of answers were clear and organised and there was widespread evidence of students selecting the language levels appropriately as they analysed the writers' craft. Across both sections, students demonstrated secure knowledge of key concepts and seemed successfully engaged with their chosen texts.

Very few scripts fell into level 1 and the vast majority covered the different sections of the paper in an appropriate and balanced way. It was quite rare to find a response that did not achieve to use linguistic terminology in its analysis of the extracts.

With many responses, the appropriate and discriminating selection of terminology from the different language levels allowed students to analyse and evaluate the literary extracts precisely and skilfully. What is not so helpful is an over-reliance on one area of language only (eg word classes) or the application of irrelevant knowledge (contextual or linguistic) which the student has prepared in advance.

Having said this, many responses were selecting terminology from the different levels of language and using this in a focused and purposeful way to unpack the themes and issues of the text, speculate as to the writer's intentions and explore the impact on the reader. It is always productive to engage with significant patterns in the language choices of the texts, and many students did this effectively, looking at narrative viewpoint, modality, figurative language and register, amongst many other areas.

On this specification there are key concepts for each section that are helpful to use as guidance for teaching. For Section A these are *narrator, storyworld, characterisation, point of view, genre and speech and thought presentation*. For Section B these are *identity, poetic voice, genre and register*.

It should also be noted that there were occasions when students drew on different ideas about classifying language. Students may therefore have used some terms in different ways but it is in the spirit of this specification that we accept a range of ideas and approaches as long as they are grounded in precise descriptive linguistic analysis.

Section A: Imagined Worlds

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (20 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply and discuss linguistic concepts and methods to analyse prose fiction, using appropriate terminology in order to explore narrative techniques. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the extract.

Overall, this section focuses on how language choices help to shape the representations of different worlds and perspectives in prose fiction. The most successful answers integrated consideration of narrative concepts (such as point of view, genre, characterisation, as well as speech and thought representation) with detailed application of language levels. The details that establish the fictional storyworld, and the nature and significance of the narrative voice are clearly key elements to this section. At the top levels, students were developing and evaluating interpretations by examining patterns of language use, or clusters of related features.

As a general overview, successful responses:

- offered perceptive interpretations based on significant patterns of language use within the extract
- structured responses around interpretation rather than a chronological or 'feature-spotting' approach
- integrated comments on narrative perspective with relevant interpretations of details
- organised ideas into clear, coherent paragraphs
- responded to the extract in an engaged and open-minded manner
- explored several different ideas and consistently developed these.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- employed language labels that were vague or too general (such as 'imagery' and 'word')
- discussed wider contextual information, rather than answering the question
- wrote descriptively about the extract, rather than developing analysis
- used too few examples from the text
- identified features of language use without commenting on their purpose.

Question 1: *Frankenstein*

This question was concerned with the presentation of Victor's thoughts as he reflects on his current work – the creation of a female partner for the creature. Students were mainly focused and relevant with their comments about the central character here.

Successful responses:

- discussed the ways in which Victor's thoughts connected to key elements of the gothic fantasy genre
- considered the ways in which Victor's point of view affects his representation of the situation
- engaged with subtle and perceptive ideas, such as the significance of Victor's choice of nomenclature for the creature
- explored the changing and contradictory nature of Victor's thoughts
- focused on patterns of language use, for example in the choice of metaphor, phonological devices or adjectives
- considered varying reader responses to the narrative perspective of Victor.

Less successful responses:

- simply described what was happening in the passage
- identified isolated features, particularly word classes, without meaningful discussion of their role in the text
- employed terminology (such as pathetic fallacy or personification) vaguely or inaccurately
- made repetitive points.

Question 2: *Dracula*

This question was concerned with how the killing of the Lucy vampire is presented in an extract from the journal of Dr Seward. There were some instances of misunderstanding here, with some students believing that the vampire in the extract was Dracula.

Successful responses:

- commented thoughtfully on the influence of the narrative perspective (considering how Seward's relationships with the others affect his representations)
- closely analysed the possible symbolism of the descriptions
- explored the changing dynamic of the extract, and how this was created with specific language choices
- offered interesting and relevant interpretations of the characterisations, particularly in relation to gender themes.

Less successful responses:

- used labels with little sense of purpose within the analysis
- misunderstood the narrative point of view and the identity of the vampire
- included wider contextual information which led to a lack of focus on the question.

Question 3: *The Handmaid's Tale*

This question was concerned with the presentation of the interaction between Offred and the Commander during a secret meeting in his study. As in previous years, this was by far the most popular text choice, with a wide variety of responses.

Successful responses:

- discussed the significance of the Commander's dialogue alongside an analysis of Offred's internal thoughts
- explored perceptive ideas about the choice of figurative language, such as patterns relating to children or animals later in the extract
- commented intelligently on the possible symbolism of the body language and physical interaction
- understood the limited and conflicted nature of Offred's narration
- developed valid ideas in relation to the key elements of this dystopian fantasy world, including patriarchy, objectification and manipulation.

Less successful responses:

- approached the passage chronologically and therefore sometimes limited their ability to engage with significant moments later in the extract
- neglected to mention the nature and situation of the narrative voice, or focused solely on one of the two characters
- identified isolated and somewhat random word classes in selected quotations
- digressed into extended discussions of wider contextual issues.

Question 4: *The Lovely Bones*

This question was concerned with the presentation of Mr Harvey in the immediate aftermath of Susie's murder.

Successful responses:

- explored the contradictions within Sebald's representation of Mr Harvey – the freakish serial killer as mundane neighbour
- engaged with the unusual and unsettling narrative perspective
- structured answers around relevant interpretations, rather than isolated features, or a chronological approach
- developed thoughtful ideas about different aspects of the character, based on patterns of language choices.

Less successful responses:

- dwelt too long on the beginning of the extract and neglected significant details near the end
- made broad, repetitive comments about the character, without detailed textual support
- used terminology only sporadically – and without direct connection to the analysis.

Section B: Poetic Voices

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (15 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply and discuss linguistic concepts and methods to analyse poetry, using appropriate terminology in order to explore poetic technique, the construction of the poetic voice and the presentation of time, place, people and events. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the given poems.

AO4 (10 marks) – Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods.

This focuses on students' ability to make links between poems, explore similarities and differences and look at both poems evenly.

Overall, it was pleasing to see the majority of students responding to the poems in an engaged and imaginative way. The comparative requirement of the question seemed, this year, to give many students a clear way to structure and focus their answer. The poetry also seemed to prompt students to select from a wider range of language levels than they might have done for section A.

As in previous series, there were far more answers on Duffy than any other, with Heaney a clear second, followed by Browning and then Donne. However, all questions allowed students to demonstrate their learning and skills clearly, as measured against the Assessment Objectives.

There were many students who were able to explore thoughtful, conflicting and complex interpretations of the poems, using linguistic description to successfully analyse the writers' craft. The ability to select significant features of language, in relation to the question topic, always serves students well, rather than describing, say, the rhyme scheme and metre at length, to little purpose.

As a general overview, successful responses:

- covered a range of relevant and developed connections between the poems
- commented thoughtfully on the construction and effects of the poetic voices
- supported ideas by exploring patterns of language use in relevant quotations
- applied terminology accurately and precisely and explored in detail how meanings are shaped
- made considered and relevant use of various language levels, considering different aspects, as and when appropriate for the interpretations
- offered analysis that was perceptive and open-minded to different interpretations
- produced well expressed, clearly structured and evenly balanced answers.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- used very few quotations from the poems
- described isolated features from quotations with little focus on how these affected meaning
- used the phrasing of comparison without really making valid connections
- did not use precise terminology and/or made errors in its application
- dwelt at length on stanza structure or rhyme scheme with little of purpose to say.

Question 5: John Donne

This question was concerned with how Donne presents time in the two poems, from the casual contemplation of the excuses his lover might give to end their relationship in 'Woman's Constancy' to the more extended deliberations on the future and the past in 'The Relic'.

Successful responses:

- explored the ways in which the speakers' viewpoints shifted during the poems
- developed relevant interpretations of significant patterns of language choices in both poems

- demonstrated an understanding of subtleties of the poetic voice through concepts such as register
- were inventive and flexible in the ways they connected the poems.

Less successful responses:

- did not achieve to stay focused on the question topic
- quoted and / or paraphrased the poems without linguistic description
- described rhyme scheme, metre and stanza length without any clear relevance to the question.

Question 6: Robert Browning

This question was concerned with the two speakers' desires. Johannes Agricola desiring divine superiority, whilst the narrator of 'Home-Thoughts, from Abroad' yearns to return to the countryside of his homeland.

Successful responses:

- noticed and explored interesting and subtle connections
- stayed focused on the two poetic voices, and the language choices that made them distinctive and convincing
- analysed significant patterns across both poems, for example the symbolic use of nature, or epistemic modality.

Less successful responses:

- allowed contextual, background information to distract from their answer
- dealt with one poem at a time and ran out of time on the second text
- used terms such as 'exclamative' and 'oxymoron' in broad, imprecise ways
- included sections which did not apply terminology.

Question 7: Carol Ann Duffy

This question was concerned with how Duffy presents love in the two poems. The topic encouraged a lot of personal, engaged responses and, as stated before, it was easily the most popular question in this section of the exam.

Successful responses:

- explored successful analysis through connecting the start and finish of the poems
- noticed interesting and subtle details which connected the poems
- connected the poems purposefully through discussion of key elements such as viewpoint, figurative language and verb choices
- offered alternate readings, seeing that interpretations need not be fixed and using textual support well for these different suggestions
- were able to apply detailed and precise terminology successfully, eg anadiplosis, transferred epithet and spatial deixis
- remembered to consider the significance of relevant structural and phonological features in the poems
- explored different attitudes towards love as a clear way to structure the response.

Less successful responses:

- dwelt too long on one of the two poems
- labelled isolated word classes in quotations, with little reference to the purposeful crafting of language
- dealt with the poems one by one, rather than connecting them
- forgot to consider the poetic voices.

Question 8: Seamus Heaney

This question was concerned with the presentation of death in the two poems. Students often seemed confident in connecting these two texts and made some thoughtful comments about the narrative perspectives.

Successful responses:

- made use of some wider knowledge to develop interpretations but kept this well-tethered to language crafting within the text
- combined detailed discussion of language features with a clear focus on the essay question, such as the implications of the asyndetic listing in each poem in relation to death, or the different uses of deixis
- analysed the differing uses of nature in the two poems to present attitudes to death
- understood the subtly different narrative viewpoints of both poems
- employed phonoaesthetics with conviction and relevance (eg the impact of the plosive consonants at the start of the phrases in line 6 of 'Strange Fruit').

Less successful responses:

- dealt with one poem and then the other, at the expense of meaningful connections
- relied too much on biographical information in their interpretations of the poems
- sometimes slipped into narrative description of the poems.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.