

A-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

7707/1 Paper 1 Telling Stories
Report on the Examination

7707
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General Comments

Students were well-prepared for the examination and examiners noted that students coped well with the timings and that most finished all three sections. Students appear to approach the paper in different ways, some choosing to answer sections B and C before section A. Although the suggested timings for the exam might suggest a linear approach, and the marks for each section descend, students are not penalised for approaching the exam in whichever way they choose. It should be noted, however, that some students who chose to answer section B and C first did appear to struggle to reach the higher levels when they got to section A at the end of a long exam paper. It is worth ensuring that students who wish to approach the exam in a non-linear order are well-prepared for this so that they are able to sustain their responses across all three sections. The vast majority of students:

- answered all three sections with developed responses to their chosen questions;
- understood the need to answer section A with a comparative approach;
- included mostly relevant ideas, showing knowledge of their set texts and poetry;
- met the rubric expectations for all three questions.

Section A: Remembered Places

There are three marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

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

AO3 (15 marks) – Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.

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

This section is focused on the ways in which speakers and writers present places, societies, people and events with the key concepts of:

- representation
- point of view
- genre, mode and the influence of contextual factors.

In general, most students found the texts accessible and were able to comment in interesting ways about the multi-modal text (*Dem Bones*) and the written text (*Around The World in 80 Dates*), usually finding some connections between them. Many students were able to discuss representation in thoughtful and perceptive ways, and used these to focus their analysis and comparisons. A number of students were able to explore how language is used to create these representations, and could make effective comparisons of how the writers in both texts conveyed their viewpoints, with a clear understanding of how genre and mode affect their choices, and how contextual factors influence their representations.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- selected a range of relevant language levels to make precise points about representation;
- discussed relevant concepts such as schema and embodied knowledge to offer a more widely-considered evaluation of the extract;
- were able to evaluate patterns in language use and representation;

- used terminology precisely to aid their analysis and evaluation;
- were able to develop analysis and evaluation with a clear focus on representation;
- used a clear academic register to discuss their ideas;
- understood the precise contexts of the two extracts (and the fact that they were from a longer texts rather than texts in their own right) and discussed relevant factors with an understanding of their influence on language use and representation;
- were able to discuss features of genre and mode in specific relation to how these were used in the given texts;
- made thoughtful connections focused on representation and language use as well as genre, mode and context;
- offered some thoughtful ideas about how the writers represented the places where the dead are buried, the people who visit these places and (where relevant) themselves.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- selected language levels which did not help them to analyse ideas about representation and led to vague comments about the effect of a textual example;
- identified features without linking these to representation;
- used more general or less precise terminology, did not discuss textual examples with a linguistic focus, or identified a feature without exemplification from the text;
- struggled to organise their ideas or develop them with clarity;
- did not go beyond identifying the genre and mode of the two extracts or identified these inaccurately;
- did not understand the texts were sections from texts and discussed them as texts in their own right, leading to inaccurate observations about audience in particular;
- were not precise about audience or purpose, making generalised comments;
- struggled to make valid connections between the texts or made generalised connections based on mode or genre;
- were unable to focus on representations and focused only on AO3 points;
- made very basic points about representation, based on whether it was positive or negative and failed to understand the more subtle representations, particularly representation of the visitors to the cemetery in text B.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas

This question was generally answered with at least some knowledge and understanding, and students seemed to cope well with the two extracts, with most being able to make at least some valid points about each. There were very few Level 1 marks awarded as most students were at least able to make some valid selection and use at least some general terminology. Examiners noted that there was, on the whole, students engaged with language levels and that many demonstrated some skill in appreciating and exploring patterns – in language use, in attitudes, in representations. Particularly pleasing was seeing some students focus on concepts and methods, not just on specific language feature analysis, as this often enabled them to link features used

across the text to discuss patterns. This is a key focus of this question and successful students were able to apply ideas about schema and embodied knowledge, as well as the concept of the ‘double journey’ and travel narrative theories which benefitted their responses. In AO1 (across all sections of the paper), it is useful to think about the distinction between a concept (an idea), a method (a tool for analysis) and a feature (a specific example) when assessing AO1. So, a student could be exploring characterisation (concept), using speech and thought presentation (method) and identifying different kinds of speech verbs (feature). Students can therefore address AO1 in different ways mindful of the fact that good answers will offer precise descriptions using established terminology.

Examiners noted:

- Some students applied Grice’s maxims to these multi-modal/ written texts. It is worth ensuring that students know when and where these concepts/theories can be effectively applied.
- Many students talked about modality but, as with previous years, this was not always applied correctly. There was some confusion about epistemic, deontic and boulomaic modality but it was pleasing to see many more students applying this to their responses. The following link includes some discussion of modality in Lesson 2, and may be helpful in helping students understand the different types of modality:
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-7706-7707-TI-IW-POV-CTT.PDF>
- Some students selected just one language level - usually lexis and semantics – and were therefore fairly limited in their analysis of the texts.
- Many students selected the language level of ‘graphology’ to discuss text A but were unable to discuss specific features of graphology such as use of specific fonts, use of iconic and symbolic images, use of colour symbolism.
- Some students were confused by the use of ellipsis in text B to reduce the text and discussed this as a language feature used by the writer.
- There is still confusion around deixis, with any word or phrase loosely connected to time, space or person being labelled as deixis. Students would benefit from understanding how deictic language is context-bound and this would help them identify and discuss it with increased accuracy. The following link is included to help teachers and students understand deixis: <https://thedefinitearticle.aqa.org.uk/tag/deixis/>
- There is still some imprecision in students’ use of semantic field - a term sometimes used very loosely for any kind of collection of words, rather than being grouped by meaning relations. Again, some students identified a ‘semantic field of nouns’ or a ‘semantic field of pronouns’.
- General terms like ‘high- or low- frequency lexis were again not helpful and led to some students using valuable time making points about this which added little to their understanding of how language was being used to represent ideas, people or place.

AO3: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

For Section A

1. Factors associated with mode
2. Generic conventions including different ways of storytelling afforded by different genres
3. The influence of contextual factors (production and reception) on the negotiation and shaping of meaning

Examiners felt that, in general, successful students were able to discuss all three strands this year and were able to integrate analysis of these factors into their discussion of language levels/features successfully, in addition/or instead of to offering an overview in the introduction. The most successful students were able to analyse/evaluate how language and representation was influenced by the writer's contexts of production and reception, choice of genre and mode, leading to better integration of the AOs for this question and often affecting AO1 and 4 positively. Many students included a plan (not assessed) which showed they had a methodical way of considering mode, genre and context. There is no set way that students should approach the discussion of AO3 factors, but students who were able to link it to the discussion of AO1 or representation did seem to be able to make more precise comments on the specific influence.

Examiners noted:

- Whilst many students were able to identify genre, mode, audience and purpose, a number were unable to go beyond this. Some students made very generalised comments on audience, particularly for text A, commenting that the text was for children, and repeated this point throughout the response without developing this more precisely or discussing how this influenced the writer's choices of both language and representation. Some students struggled to identify the audience of text B without resorting to sexist or ageist stereotypes. Students would benefit from clarity in terms of audience of the texts in the anthology, particularly where texts are sections from a wider text.
- Whilst many students were able to discuss the mode of text A with some confidence, they were not able to develop ideas about mode when discussing text B beyond commenting that it was written mode. Responses which were able to discuss text B as planned written mode with consideration of concepts such as literariness were able to address this strand of AO3 more effectively.
- Some students made AO3 the main focus of their response to the detriment of other AOs, with very brief comments on language use linked only to an AO3 factor, and very little consideration of representation.
- Some students identified the genres of the texts in the introduction and said nothing further about this strand of AO3. Students would benefit from understanding how genre conventions influence speakers/writers and manifest themselves in texts.
- This year, fewer students talked about audience in terms of aspirers, explorers, mainstreamers and reformers but it was still seen; this psychometric audience profiling borrowed from media did not help students to address specific audiences for the two extracts. Students would better benefit from discussing intended audience/text receiver more specifically.

AO4: This AO assesses students' abilities to explore connections between texts and highlight similarities and differences – in the context of discussing the representation focus of the question. It is only assessed in Question 1.

Students seemed able to take a comparative approach and cover extracts evenly. Very few students made no connections or were marked as Level 1 for this AO.

Examiners noted:

- Some students seemed more confident in making connections based on AO3 factors rather than linking the extracts in terms of representation which limits the level they can achieve for this AO. Whilst it is not a rubric limitation, for Level 4 and above, students need to analyse/evaluate how writers/speakers represent place, societies and people, and this is difficult to do where the main focus of the comparison is on AO3 factors.
- There are still some students discussing text A, using a connecting discourse marker, and then discussing text B, leading to fewer precise connections.
- Fewer students offered the most basic observations of the writers being negative or positive about places the dead are buried. Most were able to go beyond this in their discussion of representation.
- Students were able to discuss representations of Parisians, the dead themselves and visitors to places where the dead are buried fairly effectively in text B, offering more perceptive ideas about mockery and exaggeration to entertain and the biased nature of a travel memoir, but were often unable to go beyond the Catacombs being spooky and filled with bones in text A.
- Some students seemed to struggle to compare a written and multi-modal text rather than written vs spoken. They would benefit from practising the comparison of texts from all modes to prepare for the examination.

Section B: Imagined Worlds

There are three marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO1 (10 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

AO2 (10 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

AO3 (15 marks) – Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.

This section focuses on how language choices help to shape the representations of different worlds and perspectives in prose fiction with the key concepts of:

- Narrator
- Storyworld
- Characterisation
- Point of view
- Genre
- Speech and thought representation.

Many students were able to discuss their set text with at least some knowledge and very few did not make selections beyond the extract, allowing access to above Level 2 for AO2. Examiners noted that students were generally effective in applying an integrated approach to their text and few responses were seen that lacked *any* linguistic analysis. The most common text was *The Handmaid's Tale* and most answered question was Q6 – the Commander, followed by Q7 (*The Handmaid's Tale* – religion), Q8 (*The Lovely Bones*– Abigail), Q2 (*Frankenstein* – Frankenstein's state of mind), Q3 (*Frankenstein* – parenting), Q9 (*The Lovely Bones* – the dead), Q5 (*Dracula* – fear) and Q4 (*Dracula* – Van Helsing). Students were mostly able to discuss their extract with knowledge and understanding, and make relevant selections from elsewhere which were linked to the focus of the question. Examiners noted that AO3 was addressed by the majority of students

this year by exploring the use of genre conventions and the influence of context to address and enhance the consideration of key concepts in relation to the question focus.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- focused closely on the question focus, evaluating *significance*
- discussed the construction of narrative point of view and how this shapes our understanding of how events/ideas/characters are represented
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant textual examples from both the extract and other points in the novel
- selected relevant language levels to best explore authorial craft and were able to evaluate patterns
- applied a range of terminology accurately and precisely
- explored in detail how meanings are shaped
- made considered and relevant use of different concepts and methods (e.g. types of narration, modality, representation of speech and thought)
- provided interpretations that were well supported by detailed evidence from the text and clearly linked to their selected example
- evaluated the conventions of fantasy, gothic, speculative or dystopian fiction linking these clearly to the specific question focus
- included relevant and thoughtful comments on the influence of contextual factors, and were able to consider interpretations of their text, again, linked to the specific question focus; some of the best responses integrated this discussion to explore the significance of writer's choices of language, characterisation etc
- were sustained and developed
- were well expressed and clearly structured.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- struggled to address the specific question focus
- made little or no comment on narrative point of view or other narrative techniques
- made general and vague references to different points in the novel, sometimes without any specific selection
- did not use precise terminology or made errors in the application of terminology
- used general labels (e.g. 'word', 'tone', 'imagery') rather than more precise linguistic terms
- made broad assertions, not supported by clear examples, or offered interpretations that could not be drawn from the selected quotation and were just assumptions
- did not link their discussion of textual examples to the language level/feature they had identified
- did not understand their extract fully, leading to generalisations rather than precise discussion
- did not contextualise quotations taken from different points in the novel
- did not consider generic conventions and/or contextual factors, or made general comments about these without linking them to the question focus
- were poorly expressed and lacked development.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas

Examiners felt that, although students generally found something to say about language, this was still the section where this was addressed less thoroughly and systematically than in sections A and C. Some students who were able to reach high level 4 or level 5 for AO1 in sections A and C dropped to level 3 or even lower for AO1 in this section.

Examiners noted:

- Successful students were often able to select a number of language levels to explore their extract and used these to develop understanding of the character/theme/concept where some students were overly reliant on the language level of lexis and semantics.
- There were still a number of students who included no linguistic description or focus in this section to aid their analysis when they had included it in sections A and C. The Imagined Worlds text needs to be approached with an integrated language and literature approach, as with all other texts in this course; examiners noted that they saw several ‘literature’ based responses in this section.
- Some students were able to develop their analysis with some shaping of the discussion of language levels to focus on the significance aspect of the question.
- Many students were able to talk about features such as metaphor, verb processes, syntactical parallelism which helped them to explore patterns.
- More students were discussing modality in a purposeful way but there was some confusion and inaccuracy, as in section A (see link given under AO1 in Section A).
- Students misunderstood temporal deixis and spatial deixis, labelling any adverbs of time as temporal deixis and any location as spatial deixis. Students would benefit from clarity of understanding of these terms (see link given under AO1 for Section A).
- There was some confusion over syndetic and asyndetic listing; some students were able to apply these accurately and effectively but many could not.
- Some students selected one language level/feature and then discussed an entirely different feature in their explanation/analysis, e.g. they might select a declarative and then discuss the meaning of an adjective in that declarative without any reference back to the use of the declarative. Students need to ensure that their analysis/evaluation of language features actually links to the language feature selected. It would be fine to discuss both the declarative and the adjective but we saw several students who mismatched their selected feature and their explanation/analysis.

AO2: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Maintaining a focus and selecting appropriate detail
2. An ability to interpret
3. Analysis of narrative techniques and authorial craft

The majority of students were able to select at least one other relevant part of their novel to comment on. There was not always selection and analysis of language levels for these selected passages/sections, and comments were often more generalised. Many students demonstrated at least some sound understanding of their chosen text and there was at least some understanding of aspects of writer’s craft.

Examiners noted:

- Some students struggled to select the most relevant other parts of their novel to answer the question; students should be encouraged to know their set text thoroughly to make this selection easier and more precise in examination conditions, and to understand their given extract within the context of their novel. That said, many were able to use other parts of the text to illuminate their evaluation of their extract and to develop their line of argument.
- Students still sometimes struggled with the *significance* aspect of the question. Some students used the word ‘significance’ in as many points as possible but, in some cases, were not actually explaining/evaluating the significance. It might be helpful to encourage students, after discussing the what, where and how, to consider *why* a writer has chosen to portray a character/theme/concept/location in this specific way which may help them to address the significance aspect of the question.
- Almost all students were able to respond to the specific question focus and there were fewer responses where students who discussed irrelevant ideas or textual examples.
- Examiners saw some generalisations about characters and relationships, particularly in Q6 where some students were not able to see the different layers of The Commander’s character or claimed that the relationship between Offred and The Commander was one based on love. Successful responses were able to appreciate how The Commander is also trapped in the regime.

AO3: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Features of the extract and the wider novel associated with the fantasy genre
2. Genre conventions
3. The influence of contextual factors (production and reception) on the negotiation and shaping of meaning.

Examiners were pleased to see that even more students integrated at least some discussion of genre conventions this year. Fewer students just labelled their novel as dystopian or Gothic and, instead, considered or evaluated the writer’s use of specific conventions in relation to the question focus. Students are credited whether they discuss these explicitly or implicitly, and some students were able to achieve a higher level on this AO than on AO1 and 2. Many students were also able to consider relevant contextual influences and the reception of their novel. These were addressed particularly well in responses to *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Dracula*.

Examiners noted:

- Students generally understood the conventions of dystopian, Gothic, Romantic and magic realism genres and the stronger responses integrated these into their discussion of specific textual examples rather than listing them in the introduction and not revisiting them.
- Students who answered a question on *The Lovely Bones* seemed better able to discuss contextual aspects such as: expectations of women during the 1970s; 1970s American suburbia; Sebald’s personal experiences and how these might have influenced her choices; critics’ reactions to the novel; and genre conventions associated with fantasy/magic realism and the use of supernatural elements, often quoting critical reviews of the text. It would benefit all students studying this text to consider these kinds of genre features and contextual factors.

- Although examiners saw relatively few *Frankenstein* responses, some students missed the opportunity to discuss genre conventions, particularly in Q3 (significance of parenting), focusing almost entirely on Shelley's own experiences of parenting as a contextual influence. Responses to Q2 (significance of Frankenstein's state of mind) seemed to integrate genre conventions more effectively.
- Some students still struggled to discuss genre conventions; there is no need to label every point on genre conventions with a signposting comment ('this is a common convention of...'), and some of the best responses weaved the discussion of conventions more implicitly into their analysis; however, for students who might struggle to do this, signposting the conventions may help them to ensure they are included.
- Some students focused their response almost entirely on a discussion of context and genre; while this often resulted in higher marks for AO3, this was sometimes at the expense of AO1 and 2; while it is pleasing to see more focus on this AO, students would benefit from practising the coverage of all three AOs to ensure they are able to access the higher levels across them all.
- Some students were able to discuss relevant contextual aspects but did not make any references to genre; it is worth noting that the first two bullet points of this AO are focused on genre features/conventions and, by limiting their discussion to context, they are limiting their mark for this AO in this section. Examiners also saw responses which only focused on genre conventions and no comment on context of production or reception. Students would benefit from being encouraged to consider and address all three strands of this AO.

Section C: Poetic Voices

There are two marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:
AO1 (15 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
AO2 (10 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

The majority responses for this section were on Duffy, followed by Browning, then Heaney, then Donne. The most popular Duffy question was 14, feelings about events from childhood; the most popular Browning question was 12, attitudes towards love; the split between the two Heaney questions was fairly even; the most popular Donne question was 10, speaker's attitude to his lover. Most students were able to make relevant selections from another poem and showed at least some knowledge and understanding of their poems. Many students seemed able to consider the construction of poetic voice in a sustained and productive way.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- focused on the specific question
- selected a range of language levels and offered detailed evaluation of specific features
- applied a range of accurate and precise terminology
- selected one other poem which was relevant to the question focus rather than as a comparative text
- did not compare their poems, analysing each in thorough detail
- maintained focus on the construction of poetic voice throughout discussion of both poems
- offered sustained analysis/evaluation of aspects of writer's craft

- when selecting features such as rhyme or metre, were precise about this and able to develop clear interpretations on how this contributed to how meanings are shaped
- discussed phonological features with perceptive ideas about the effects created
- made thoughtful and judicious selections of details to discuss in each poem
- offered thoughtful and developed interpretations of textual details
- sustained a clear and sophisticated academic style.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- did not sustain focus on the specific question, often going off on tangents which were not relevant to the question focus
- tended to describe each of their poems, narrating what happens throughout rather than analysing
- were unable to select many language levels, and discussed very few linguistic features
- made some selections from their poems but did not have a linguistic focus in their discussion of these
- compared their poems, hindering the development of analysis
- did not select a poem in addition to the named poem, or selected a poem which did not allow them to write clearly about the question focus
- did not focus on poetic voice or the construction of this
- did not discuss writer's craft, instead making broad comments on what quotations showed
- made assertions about rhyme or metre with no explanation of how they contribute to meaning
- labelled phonological features, e.g. alliteration, without discussion of their effect
- lacked coherence in expression, leading to muddled and imprecise development of ideas.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas

Generally, students were able to make selections of language levels and discuss features in this section more successfully than in other sections, often achieving a higher mark/level for this AO than in sections A and B. Students often used precise terminology to help them focus on specific linguistic details.

Examiners noted:

- On the whole, students' knowledge and understanding of language features was stronger in this section; students would benefit in applying this knowledge to sections A and B.
- Students were more confident in using linguistic terminology in this section but sometimes did so at the expense of discussing how meaning is created from the use of these features.
- A number of students commented on the assonance/consonance within a particular example when it was not clear that there was any obvious assonance present or the claims for its effects were over-stated.

- More students discussed phonoaesthetics this year and used this to make insightful points about meaning or the poetic voice.
- Plosives, fricative and sibilance were often correctly identified but did not always aid analysis. Sometimes students were spotting these kinds of phonological features at the expense of closer analysis of meaning.
- Some students used general terms such as *imagery* and *repetition* without being specific about the linguistic feature used.
- More students discussed the structure of their poems, commenting on rhyme and metre, volta, caesura and enjambment; however, students need to know how to quote these and practise developing their ideas about how these features contribute to meaning as we still saw some students simply labelling the rhyme scheme or metre, or saying that there was caesura or enjambment, and making little comment on how these contribute to the meanings created, or offering a general comment such as ‘it makes the speaker’s ideas flow’.

AO2: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Maintaining a focus and selecting appropriate detail
2. An ability to interpret
3. Analysis of construction of poetic voice and authorial craft

Most students selected another poem relevant to their question and were able to show understanding of how their chosen poet created meanings, at least in a straightforward way, and often with more thoughtful and developed interpretations. There were some impressive responses to all four poets and all eight questions, particularly where the second poem enabled students to offer open-minded and perceptive ideas about the question focus.

Examiners noted:

- Some students are still answering this question with a comparative approach. AO4 is not assessed on this section, and it often leads to weaker development of ideas and interpretations. It also hinders students’ selection of the most relevant points to discuss, as they are trying to make their selection fit into a comparison. It was noted that some students who take this approach are relying on a pre-prepared comparison of two poems, rather than selecting their second poem with a focus on the specific question.
- Some students are still offering biographical details, or giving an extended commentary of the social and historical context of the time the poems were written. This is not always helpful and AO3 is not assessed on this section. Sometimes, a comment on one of these aspects aids the analysis of a specific feature and can be developed as part of the evaluation, however, most of the time, this detracts from the close and focused analysis that students need to develop at the end of a long examination.
- Although this element was more secure than in previous years, some students were still unsure about poetic voice (particularly when responding to the Heaney questions) and would benefit from more focus on this in their consideration of poems in preparation for the examination, particularly the different layers of the poetic voice, to allow students to explore this more effectively.
- When responding to Q15 (Duffy – views about journeys), many students selected ‘Nostalgia’ as their second poem but struggled to identify or discuss poetic voice in this poem. It would benefit students studying Duffy to understand this.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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