



A-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

7707/C NEA: MAKING CONNECTIONS
Report on the Examination

7707
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Introduction

This summer saw the first formal submission of non-exam assessed work following two years of disruption due to the pandemic.

Moderators were pleased to report that, despite this hiatus, students had continued to respond very positively to this component, producing work of a very high standard that demonstrated their clear engagement with the demands of the task.

The following marks are available 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.

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

AO3 (10 marks) – Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.

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

The AO1 mark focuses in particular on students' ability to provide a clear account of the literary and non-literary material under study, to reflect on the aims of the study, and consider how the selected extract(s) relate to the aims of the investigation. It also rewards the selection of suitable methods and secondary reading to inform the study.

The AO2 mark focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the investigation focus, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped in the selected literary and non-literary texts.

The AO3 mark focuses on students' ability to consider how different aspects of context influence the negotiation and shaping of meaning.

The AO4 mark focuses on students' ability to make links between the literary and non-literary texts to explore similarities and differences in light of the investigation focus and aims.

NEA: Making Connections – The task

The NEA task requires an independent study of literary and non-literary texts which have been selected by students in light of their investigation aims and focus.

Moderators were pleased to report that the vast majority of centres had clearly encouraged their students to select their own texts, and this really allowed them to work to the best of their ability, exploring topics and themes that were of genuine interest to them.

Very few centres had opted to focus on a few texts that all students focused on. This marks a positive move forward from previous series' submissions where some centres had prioritised a set literary text for all students to work from. Students generally achieve more highly when working with texts of their own choosing rather than those provided for them.

The NEA task requires students to make active connections between a literary text and some non-literary material. These connections may be based on a chosen theme or on particular linguistic strategies and features that may appear in the texts. This series, the majority of students opted to focus on a linked theme or representation across the two text choices, maintaining a linguistic focus to explore these connections. Moderators were impressed with the high levels of linguistic analyses that allowed for insightful comments about textual meanings with some carefully drawn connections between diverse texts.

Approaches to the task

In selecting a literary text, students must work with prose fiction, a poetry collection or a drama text. The most successful investigations saw students drawing on issues they were genuinely interested in as a stimulus for their investigation, such as exploring texts linked to the Black Lives Matter or MeToo movements, or exploring mental health concerns, particularly in light of issues arising as a consequence of the pandemic. It was pleasing to see how students were able to explore their own interests in a meaningful and considered way in production of their investigations.

This series, the vast majority of students opted to study a novel, with some students selecting a short story collection. *Little Women* proved a very popular choice this year, perhaps inspired by the film adaptation. *Lolita*, *The Help* and *Fahrenheit 451* were also extremely popular. There were some very thoughtfully selected text choices, notably Madeline Miller's *Circe*, Atwood's *Alias Grace*, Carty-Williams' *Queenie* and *Shuggie Bain*, all of which elicited genuinely interesting and insightful studies.

There were some examples of investigations based on poetry collections, for example on poetry of the Great War or Armitage's *The Not Dead*, and some drama texts, such as *The Crucible* or various Shakespeare plays, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Henry V*. However, these were isolated examples, with the main focus on prose fiction.

Non-literary texts were extremely wide ranging and had often been carefully chosen. It was pleasing to see that many students had thought as carefully about their non-literary text choices as they did their literary text, although in some cases it was still evident that the non-literary material was selected more for convenience than for usefulness.

This year saw focus on graphic texts, TedTalks, speeches, song lyrics, articles and biographies. It was also pleasing to see some chat forums, blogs and formal essays and lectures, eg Michael Morpurgo's *Power of Stories* lecture.

This year also saw attention given to television or film screenplays. These were handled with mixed success. Some students approached these texts fairly successfully, making considered comments about the interplay of language with ideas about performance, drawing on ideas from Dramatic Encounters to explore linguistic features in detail. However, many students did not address the contexts of reception or genre and mode fully, making it difficult to see why these screenplays had been selected for study. There was also a tendency to offer highly descriptive accounts of these texts as students attempted to describe on-screen details. Some students chose to focus on screenplays for the novel that they had selected as their literary text. As these investigations were based on connections of theme and representation, this text pairing did not allow for thoughtful comparisons and connections, often producing discussions that were repetitive and lacking interpretation of how meanings were shaped.

Some students selected a series of texts as their non-literary material. This is an unhelpful approach and invariably this led to a superficial analysis as students struggled to manage the sheer amount of content for all of the texts under study.

The word count of 2,500-3,000 words was frequently exceeded, sometimes more than double the recommended limit. Whilst there is no penalty for exceeding the word limit, it is important to encourage students to adhere to the word limit as closely as possible. Invariably, overly-lengthy folders were descriptive, repetitive and lacked focus. It was felt that these folders would have probably achieved higher marks had there been more thoughtfulness with the sections that were included in the final report and with more careful editing of the final work. It seemed very much as though some students felt that 'more was better' when invariably this was not the case. For future submissions, centres should guide their students to adhering closely to the recommended word limit, offering judicious selection of methods and extracts to allow for tightly focused analyses.

More successful investigations:

- formulated a clear title and investigation focus, providing clear scope for the study
- showed careful selection of both the literary and non-literary texts, considering how these would best meet their aims and investigation focus
- stated clear aims for the investigation, identifying explicitly which extracts had been selected for close analysis
- made reference to a range of secondary sources that had been thoughtfully and purposefully selected to aid their study. Secondary sources were wide ranging, spanning literary criticism, critical reviews, linguistic research, socio/historic readings, feminist, Marxist readings or psychoanalytical readings, etc.
- showed genuine engagement with their chosen texts, offering clear and well-developed interpretations in light of their investigation focus
- explored layers of textual meanings in both texts, adopting an open-minded and thoughtful approach throughout
- selected linguistic methods purposefully in light of the investigation focus and aims, remaining focused on exploration of textual meanings when applying accurate and precise terminology
- remained consistently analytical
- made considered reference to a range of contextual factors, socio/historic as well as addressing relevant aspects of mode and genre, engaging clearly with contexts of production

and reception. Contextual factors were utilised productively to aid understanding and interpretation of textual meanings

- offered meaningful and insightful connections at all stages of the investigation that genuinely illuminated the study, reflecting on how themes, genres, secondary sources and linguistic features could be used similarly or differently to shape textual meanings
- provided clear references, presented accurately.

Less successful investigations:

- constructed vague or overly complicated investigation titles, making the main aims and scope of the focus unclear
- made limited or no reference to extracts selected for close study, sometimes focusing on isolated quotes from the whole novel and the entirety of the non-literary material
- showed some care with the selection of the literary text, but less certainty with selection of non-literary material. For example, selecting texts that offered limited scope for detailed analysis, eg. a single song lyric, or selecting a wide range of non-literary texts, thus becoming rather overwhelmed with the scale of the material
- showed quite generalised understanding of the texts under study, sometimes misunderstanding or over-simplifying central themes and characters
- made limited reference to secondary sources, or selected sources that only provided some general information about the literary text, the writer and/or the theme under study. Whilst relevant, these readings did not always provide useful or purposeful insights into the study and thus were sometimes seen as an 'add-on', a section of the report that had been completed but added little to the overall investigation. Some students offered definitions of linguistic terms, often sourced from general webpages or dictionaries. When focusing on linguistic ideas, concepts and methods, students should be encouraged to reference authoritative sources
- selected linguistic methods without considering how they helped to create and shape meanings, instead adopting a feature-spotting approach, merely identifying occurrence within the texts
- selected linguistic methods that did not allow for developed or insightful exploration of the texts under study. For example, pronouns were frequently selected, but were often discussed with little more than very general comment about direct address. Pronouns were more successfully explored when tied to discussion of power strategies. Similarly, reference to sentence mood/type proved limiting, with little meaningful comment about use of declaratives and interrogatives other than to note that they were used within the texts. Word classes were handled with mixed success, sometimes explored in some detail to consider patterns of usage across the text, but were also often simply listed without further discussion
- produced descriptive accounts of the texts, with limited analysis
- produced uneven analyses, focusing primarily on the literary text with scant reference to the non-literary material
- showed very general awareness of the importance of context, often limited to broad socio-historic comments and with minimal reference to genre or mode factors, or contexts of reception
- made very brief or limited connections between texts, sometimes adopting a text-by-text approach to the analysis
- provided a bibliography rather than references, with either an extensive list of texts that were not cited in the investigation, or provided a very general and unclear list of sources.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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