

English@AQA

Issue 9

Welcome to the May edition of our English newsletter.

Within the ever-more-squeezed curriculum, it sometimes seems difficult to find opportunities for encouraging pupils' creativity. In this edition, two articles provide practical suggestions for doing just that while, at the same time, making sure that pupils are well prepared for their different assessments:

- GCSE Principal Examiner, Jo Heathcote, tells us how to develop students' descriptive writing as well as their understanding of those all important language techniques



- A-level English Language Principal Examiner Felicity Titjen offers practical exercises to prepare students for their creative writing coursework. She also suggests ways to ensure that students do their best.

Continuing the theme of creative writing, National Theatre Education Manager, Mark Londesborough, explains how students across the country can get involved in an exciting, new playwriting programme.

Peter Thomas, GCSE English Literature Principal Moderator, describes how to help students take a more creative approach to Literature in his article about multi-modal approaches to controlled assessment.

We have had many queries about how schools and colleges should give feedback to students (and senior managers) about predicted grades, when the new GCSE mark schemes only give numerical marks. This is obviously a complex area, but we hopefully shed some light on it with an article by a member of our Research Department.

AS level English Language and Literature celebrates the release of a new anthology, this time on the topical theme of food. Chief Examiner John Shuttleworth writes about its contents and what students might be expected to do with it.

Finally, we have an article about the Entry Level Certificate in English. Teacher David Hiam writes about his experiences of the ELC and how it can support a range of skills and provide a valuable qualification for a variety of pupils.

This is the second edition of our newsletter to include articles of interest to A-level and GCSE teachers. We hope that all colleagues find the contents useful. Please get in touch if you have any feedback or, indeed, suggestions for future editions.



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Food, glorious food

John Shuttleworth, Chief Examiner for A-Level English Language and Literature, specification B, introduces the new anthology for Unit 1.



Jamie Oliver is everywhere. You can't escape the cheeky cockney – if he's not bashin' a bit of garlic or drizzlin' some olive oil into some poor unsuspectin' dish, he's now tellin' us 'ow to teach disaffected kidz. 'Wot next, Jamie? Reformin' the NHS?' Well, AQA has decided to muscle in on Jamie's territory.

Food, Glorious Food is the title of the new anthology. It will be the basis of study for Unit 1 of AS English Language and Literature, specification B, from September 2011 to 2014. The aim of this thematic anthology, like its predecessor on *Travel, Transport and Locomotion*, is to engage students with a range of some 30 texts, providing an interesting and enjoyable introduction to the post-GCSE study of English. The rich diversity of texts is intended to break down the traditional and sometimes artificial barrier between the 'literary' and the 'non-literary' – a distinction that seems to consign the majority of texts written and spoken today to a subservient position. Texts are texts!

So what will students be critically reading and commenting on from this menu of texts? Well, of course, there will be examples of the familiar and canonical – the famous extract from *Oliver Twist* where Oliver (not Jamie, this time) asks for 'more'. This, however, will have as a companion piece, a

'dietary' (or weekly menu) from a real Victorian workhouse. There will be Samuel Beckett's in-depth instructions for making toast from *More Pricks than Kicks*. Should this recipe feel too simple for any budding Masterchefs, however, they can have a try at one of Nigella's or one that Alexander Pope sent to his friend Jonathan Swift. There'll be crisp packets sitting alongside scathing restaurant reviews, poetry by John Agard and Jackie Kay sitting alongside the stomach-turning pie from Titus Andronicus. There will even be a paean to the delicious delicacy of tripe. Something to suit all tastes!





And what are students asked to do with this mix of texts when they become candidates? Both questions on the exam paper focus on comparison.

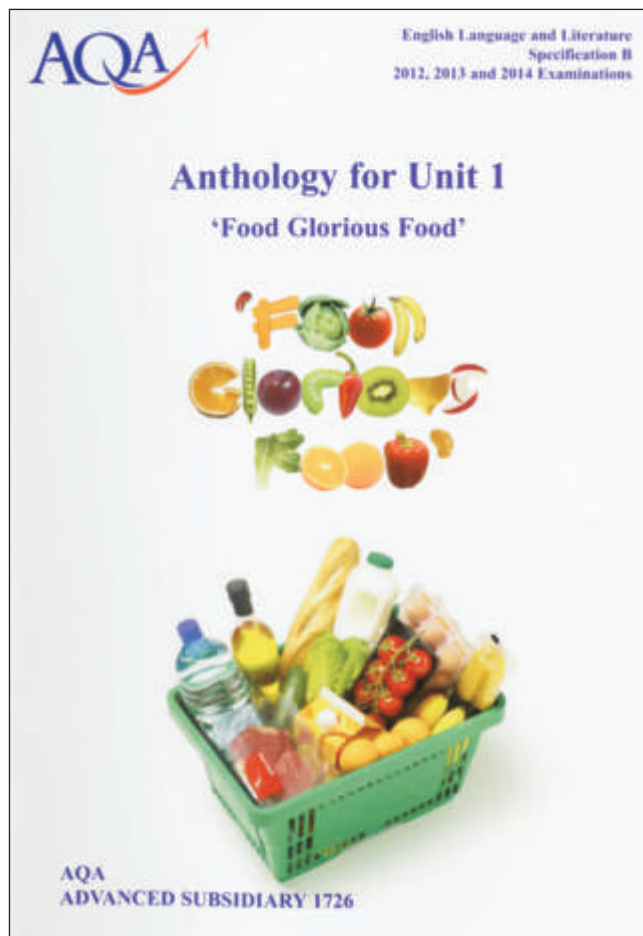
- In one, candidates choose two anthology texts in response to a focused question.
- In the other, they have to write about two short, unseen food-related texts.

The variety of texts they study will, it is hoped, enable them to deal with whatever examiners set before them for their delight and delectation!

Anthology texts have been carefully selected to suit the comparative nature of the questions. Students can compare, for example:

- genres – recipes, poems, advertisements
- modes – spoken, written, multi-modal
- purposes – persuasion, legal enforcement
- audiences – children, experienced cooks
- eras – contemporary to Augustan.

A tasty mélange for every palate, we hope. Even Jamie's!



New approaches to GCSE controlled assessment

Peter Thomas, Principal Moderator for GCSE English Literature, writes about developing a multi-modal approach to the new GCSE specifications.

All three of the new GCSE specifications refer to multi-modal aspects of study, but with different emphasis and in different detail. Performance-based study is a valuable part of teaching and learning in all three specifications. It has a strong justification in terms of 'interpretation' as a key reading skill in each of them. However, it is in Literature that the scope is greatest because the mark scheme explicitly addresses it: 'Band 5 **Multi-modal submissions** demonstrate sophisticated interpretations e.g. through imaginative visual or audio responses which illuminate the text.' It is worth stating though that 'visual or audio responses' should be part of a complete response, most of which will be written.

This article aims to illustrate two approaches to multi-modal study across the English specifications:

- using texts in performance as part of the preparation for a written response for controlled assessment
- preparing for multi-modal submissions in Literature controlled assessment.

Using performance in the classroom

Just as in the outgoing specification, students' classroom study of their Shakespeare (or Literary Heritage) Literature text may be supported by viewing a stage or screen performance of the text. The new specifications encourage the study of text in performance. This does, however, mean more than watching the video to get a grasp of what happens. We are not talking 'Run the Luhrmann for last lesson Friday' here.



This is because Shakespeare is drama and drama has its most meaningful context in public performance, on stage or on screen. This means exploring interpretations by engaging with the purpose and effect of editing, directing, acting and producing for particular contexts. These contexts may be a matter of performance genre, audience type or cultural influences of time or place. In essence, both the printed text **and** the viewed performance will be the source for what is written in the controlled assessment.

With so many high quality adaptations of novels for the screen, the same focus of study for interpretation and performance is apt and valid for Literary Heritage novels. These may be linked with the Shakespeare text, so long as the adaptation is studied as an interpretation of the written text, which is the main focus of the study.

Such a study focus is not new. It is, simply, more explicitly prompted by the new specification's criteria and task type. It is also very well suited to study resulting in tasks from the Characterisation and Voice task bank.

What is new, is the possibility that some of the performative outcomes may be candidates' own performances, recorded or not. Controlled assessment responses may refer explicitly to editing, directing, acting and producing – this may be linked to professional performance or in place of it. Candidates may be explaining, justifying or speculating upon ways of realising the playscript as a valid display of their powers of analysis, appreciation and engagement. It is unlikely that such work can be managed as part of the controlled assessment time, so it will be part of the preparation. It is also likely that it will be the result of collaborative work in small groups.

As all controlled assessment submissions must be the certified sole work of the candidate, collaborative work will not be suitable for individual assessment. Individual submissions, however, may be based on the printed text and on audio-visual material created by the candidate and others in preparation for the task. These submissions should be assessed as individual written work, based on commonly studied print and non-print sources. The recorded performance will be as valid a source of analysis and evaluation as a professional performance or a printed



text. Assessment of such work will be based on the extent to which the individual written task deals with both print and media sources.

Examples of multi-modal study approaches

English Language

Characterisation and voice: How are Macbeth's different moods and attitudes presented in Shakespeare's text and in any stage or screen performances you have studied?

English Literature

Presentation of a hero/central character: Bob Hoskins as Iago and Ian McKellen as Iago linked with Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*.

Conflict: Comparison of stage performance with screen performance of Shakespeare, linked with WW1 poetry.

Conflict: Comparison of class performances – *Henry V* Act 4 Sc 1 Bates and Williams before the battle linked with Sherriff's *Journey's End*.

Multi-modal submissions

Some submissions may be a mixture of:

- written responses
- plus
- graphic, audio or audio-visual responses

both produced under controlled conditions. Such tasks will require more of the possible four hours than the previous kind of task, as well as controlled access to technical equipment.

In these approaches, there may be collaborative and teacher supported preparation. All submitted individual work, however, must be done under controlled conditions. The result of the collaborative preparation will be an additional source for study, along with the text interpreted.

Teachers should be aware that work submitted for moderation should include any source materials other than published texts. These should be available to moderators in a user-friendly format. Moving image materials should be on CD or DVD in PC and Mac-readable Quicktime or MP4 format. Powerpoints and visual material should be available as print-outs.

Examples of multi-modal submissions for Literature

Example 1 multi-modal submission: written work, visual support and video (own performance).

Choices: Produce the following materials for a screened version of *Much Ado about Nothing* presented as:

- an action-packed story about choices with villains and heroes
 - a comedy about choices.
- a) A billboard poster or the script of a one minute trailer.
 - b) Video of one speech by a main character performed seriously and comically.

Explain the choices you have made by close reference to details of the text.

Example 2 multi-modal submission: written work and video.

People in love: Produce a Powerpoint version of back-projections to be used for a stage or screen performance of Romeo and Juliet Act 1 Scene 5, with close reference to the textual details that make your choices appropriate.

Example 3 multi-modal submission: written work and soundtrack/sound effects.

Presentation of a central character: sound effects to accompany three soliloquies from Hamlet in a stage or screen performance, with close reference to the textual details that make your choices appropriate.

As this is new moderation and assessment territory, we realise you would appreciate exemplar materials, illustrating approaches and how they will be assessed. At this early stage, however, there is no bank of authentic work on which to draw. Consequently, we plan to include exemplification in next year's standardising material. If you are interested in developing multi-modal or text and performance controlled assessment assignments, please contact our GCSE English team. If you could then provide samples, our senior moderators can begin to create a package of support for all teachers in the coming year.

Creative writing in the A-level English Language classroom

by Felicity Titjen, English teacher and Principal Examiner for A-level English Language, specification B



One of the most cited reasons students give for choosing English Language A-level is the opportunity for creative writing and we should be encouraging them to enjoy this as much as possible. Often constrained in other subjects' coursework by focused essay questions, English Language offers the joys of original writing. So how should we, as teachers, foster this enthusiasm?

Getting started

Getting students to write regularly, even if only a short writing task, is both good discipline and allows them to find the type of writing they are good at. It's also a great lesson opener, or an opportunity to change the focus at the end of the lesson, when attention can be flagging. Writing stories with a limit of 50 to 100 words, similar to broadsheet newspaper competitions, provides a challenge as well as a restriction that means you can fix a short timescale.

Tasks can also be collaborative. I attended a fantastic workshop with my students where, at the end of it,

they'd produced a script for an episode of an imaginary soap opera. Such tasks don't have to involve much technology – it's the content of the writing rather than the appearance that matters. The number of groups determines the number of scenes. You can outline characters, setting and plot development if you choose, or leave it to them to agree before they start writing. Introducing them to the genre conventions associated with scripts also demonstrates that originality is great, but it's usually within an established framework. They also enjoy performing their script at the end of their writing, seeing the characters take shape and evolve from one scene to the next.

Finding out what interests them is often the catalyst to a successful piece of writing. Interviewing each other about personal interests, activities or hobbies they pursue outside the classroom and what sort of texts they like to read, can be very enlightening. As well as allowing the interviewer to act as a journalist, extracting information, this enables the interviewee to reflect on what topics they could write about. The outcome is likely to be original, avoiding the temptation to plagiarise information from websites and other sources. Using their own experiences, whether reviewing gigs and festivals they've attended or writing autobiographically, gives ownership and can



An introduction to the Entry Level Certificate (ELC)

For well over 10 years, many schools have used our ELC English as a way of providing an engaging and progressive course for some of our most vulnerable and least able students. In doing so, they have sought to help these students progress and accrue certification at Levels 1, 2 or 3 – loosely based on the equivalent National Curriculum levels.

Built on the NFER 'Small Steps' research, ELC English provides many skills-based units of work, each with a series of measurable outcomes, enabling students to make steady, incremental improvement. Units cover both literary and non-literary materials, allowing schools to devise a wide-ranging course, focusing on teaching basic skills that students can take with them into further education or, indeed, life in general. These units include Story Telling, Media, Work, Drama and Leisure. Pupils provide a portfolio of work comprising:

- a combination of coursework and externally-set tasks
- or
- just externally-set tasks.

This flexibility allows teachers to construct engaging courses, based on candidates' needs or interests.

They then send a sample of their best work for final assessment, ensuring they fulfil the criteria in section 2 of the specification. For last minute entries, the course can be adapted so that a truncated version can be used for assessment. This course can really be built around your students' interests and needs.



My experiences of the ELC

by David Hiam

I have been teaching and moderating AQA's Entry Level English right from its inception some 15 years ago. In my view, its great virtue is that it is an enabler. Its

versatile structure has enabled me, in my school, to use it in what may well be every possible permutation



and context. It enables students, often very vulnerable, to demonstrate their learning and have their achievement acknowledged. The fact that it is not just a literacy qualification enables teachers to teach and students to experience the more 'spiritual' side of English.

Versatility

I have taught ELC as a:

- discrete two year course in tandem with GCSE, dovetailing GCSE courseworks with ELC units
- rescue package for late arrivers, for students with English as an additional language, for poor attenders and students on extended work experience.

My own context is an 11-18 comprehensive school. Running standardizing meetings I have met teachers working in pupil referral units, secure units, special schools and mainstream schools. It's clear that being able to adapt the ELC specification to different contexts has proved very useful.

Students

Moderating work from special schools has, at times, been quite humbling. In mainstream schools it can be easy to focus on what students can't do. In special schools, ELC enables students to show and have properly accredited, their progress up from P scales. In many cases, special schools have been very creative in designing the content of ELC units for their students. ELC is widely used in PRUs too. It helps keep students in touch with education, keeping a foot on the achievement ladder for some, perhaps saving others from themselves. Whatever the educational setting, the unit-based structure allows students to achieve success in small steps. GCSE is, of course, suitable for most students, but there is a significant minority for whom either the skill level or the format does not fit.

Content

English is not just about literacy. Not having good literacy skills doesn't mean a student can't enjoy the



content of a play, poem or book. And it does not mean that s/he can't convey responses in writing, albeit not to the extent of a GCSE student. The Drama and Media units, for example, provide an opportunity to explore complex issues and make students think and perhaps even enjoy the experience. The speaking and listening requirement is another opportunity to stretch students.

Teachers

If teachers are thinking about using ELC, my advice is not to be put off by the external assignment requirements. They are flexible enough to exclude very few students. Remember that access arrangements can overcome barriers for students too. I'd also urge teachers to consider developing their own coursework units. Remember, just one writing, one reading and the speaking and listening unit need to be done through the external route. I have seen some very creative, even quirky, interpretations of the unit outcome descriptions in the specification. You really can make ELC English work for you!



AQA's Entry Level Certificate, specification 4970, has been extended until 2015. The 2013 specification is available in Key Materials at: aqa.org.uk/elcenglish

If you have any queries, please contact Claire Murphy, Assistant Subject Manager, on 0161 953 7503 or e-mail CMurphy@aqa.org.uk

New Views at the National Theatre (NT)

by Mark Londesborough

The National Theatre's New Views programme currently offers young people in London opportunities to engage with how play writing can challenge thinking about the world and motivate both writers and audiences to become more active citizens.

As well as developing their skill and confidence in articulating their views, the programme aims to broaden and extend students' cultural, social and political horizons through engagement with plays and a wide range of professionals both inside and outside the theatre. Next academic year (2011/2012), New Views goes nationwide and we're looking for up to 60 schools and colleges across the UK to take part.

What is New Views?

Unusually for a theatre programme, New Views doesn't focus on students' practical drama or theatre-making skills. Indeed, the students who take part aren't necessarily Drama or English students. Instead, the project is informed by the NT's commitment to new writing, as a focus for exploration and critique of contemporary issues: 'an energetic confrontation of the world we're part of, and the ideas that fuel it'¹.

Starting every October and continuing into the summer term, a group of around 100 16- to 18-year-olds from schools and colleges in deprived parts of the capital meet once a fortnight for seminars and writing workshops. The theme for the programme changes each year and follows the NT's repertoire. This year

it's been climate change, with a focus on *Greenland*. Last year David Hare's *The Power of Yes* was the starting point for work on understanding the financial crisis. As the programme goes on, students see two or three productions per term and engage in a wide range of activities including debate, creative and polemical writing. In their seminars, students work with NT writers, meet politicians, activists and people working in the fields they are examining.

Everything written over the two terms is collated, edited and turned into a piece of theatre that is staged, very simply, at the NT. The aim isn't to get one cogent play out of it, nor to put on a spectacular show; the whole is much more like a cabaret of short dramas, speeches and performed poetry, with the emphasis squarely on the quality and originality of the writing. Writing about real life social issues for an audience means that students have to research their work thoroughly: they need (and want) to get a good grasp of the situation before commenting on it. Having time to discuss their views with their peers in advance means they can rehearse (and sometimes revise) their thoughts in a place where they know that any criticism, however incisive, will be supportive and constructive.

What's in it for students?

I wanted to be a writer, but [New Views] has made me think: why don't I do it seriously? Now I want to be a writer who makes people think about things and make a change.

New Views participant 2009



¹ Nicholas Hytner, National Theatre Annual Report 2004-05

The NT believes passionately that engagement with theatre can enrich the lives of young people: giving them opportunities to develop their creativity and explore issues that affect our society. Theatre challenges our prejudices, offers an exciting arena for examining the uncomfortable and the controversial. It humanises the big political questions. It has a unique capacity to help us engage with our political heritage: placing writer, actor and audience in the minds of the players on the stage of history's momentous events.

Students and teachers tell us that engaging in the kinds of activity that New Views offers gives them a chance to take things seriously in a way they sometimes find hard in school. Examining ideas and topics closely, over an extended period, helps develop students' learning stamina and encourages them not to take what they read in the papers, or in the top results on Google, as the final word on a subject. Within the programme, students have a degree of freedom to decide what themes and issues are discussed and investigated. This gives them a sense of control and ownership as well as helping them recognise their personal connection to the important social issues they discuss. Students and teachers recognise the benefits:

First, I wanted to let you know how helpful I think the New Views programme was for my students last year. [Two students] who were Year 13 both ended up with A in Drama and Theatre Studies as did [student] who did the New Views programme a couple of years earlier. [One] is off to Cambridge, [another] to Warwick and [a third] is trying to decide between Exeter and Guildhall – for a non-selective state comprehensive, not bad, I think! I'm sure the enriching programme at the National helped them. Which brings me to the question – any chance it is happening again this year and if so could I put a few strong candidates forward?*

How your school can get involved

The NT wants young people throughout the UK to be able to benefit from the kind of learning that New Views offers and so, starting in September 2011, a new version of the programme will be available to schools nationwide. The NT will provide training for teachers to set up student writing groups in 60 schools across the UK. The groups will receive tutorials in playwriting, online and in person, from some of the UK's finest writers. After seeing NT productions in London, on tour regionally or via NT Live in local cinemas, students will explore key and challenging issues for contemporary society and investigate ideas and themes raised in each of the plays.

In their writing groups, students will be encouraged to ask challenging questions, make discoveries and articulate their unique perspectives on the plays they see. Developing from this process of research, discussion and tuition, students will be

commissioned to write their own one act plays with a socio-political theme. They will receive editorial input from professional playwrights, before finally submitting their work to the NT in May 2012.

In June 2012, one play from each UK nation and region will be shortlisted. Rehearsed readings of each will take place at the NT. One overall winner, chosen from the shortlist, will be staged in London, with NT company members performing the roles.

We'd love to talk to you about getting involved, so please e-mail us at: discover@nationaltheatre.org.uk and put **New Views** in the subject line.

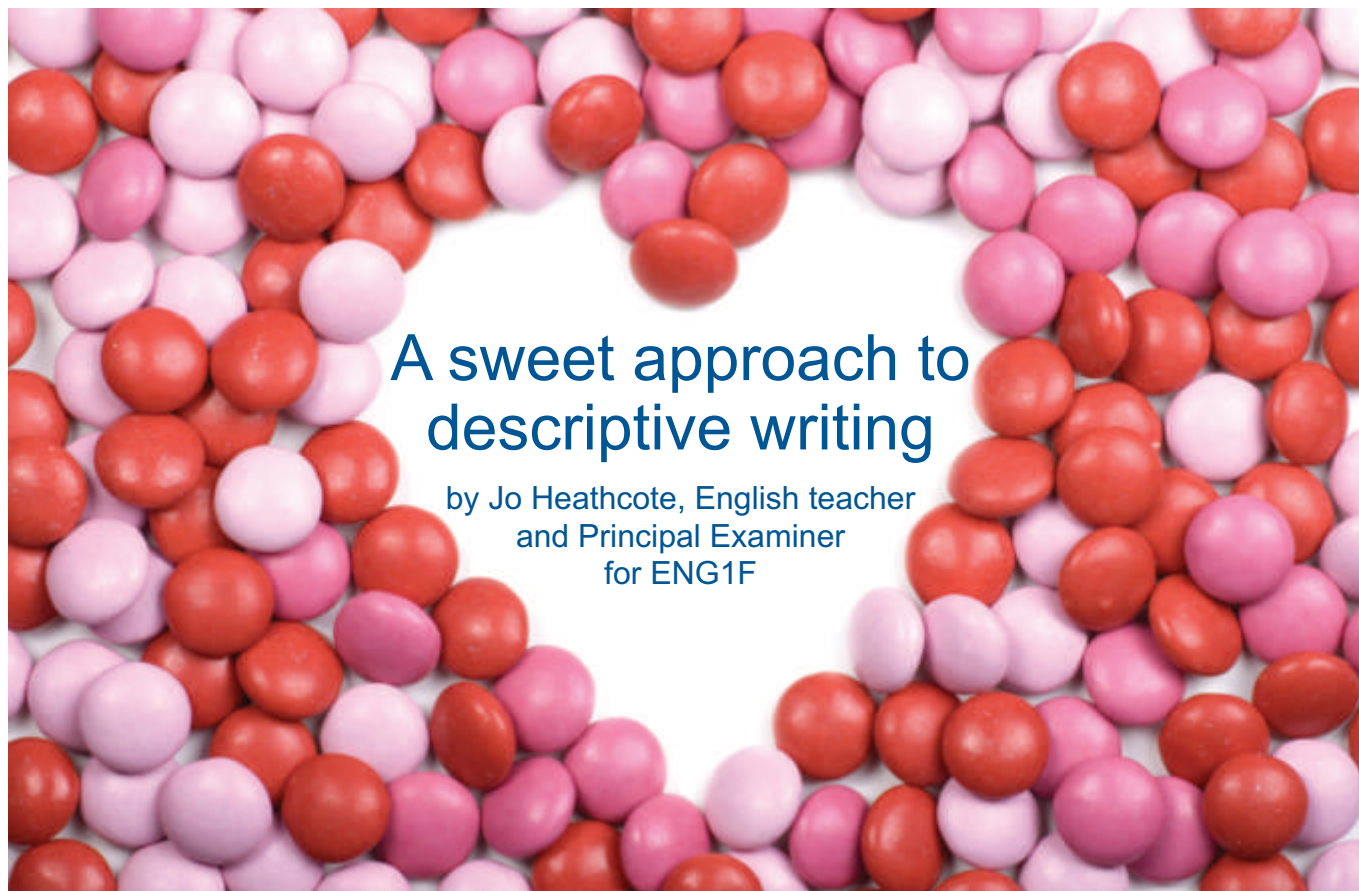
Mark Londesborough is the National Theatre's Secondary and Further Education Programme Manager



The National Theatre's programme of education and public engagement opens up the NT and its repertoire, skills, resources and artistry, to people of all ages.

Through a wide range of participatory projects and online resources, the NT provides opportunities to explore all aspects of theatre performance and production and develop creative, critical and practical skills.

Activities take place at the National Theatre, in our dedicated John Lyon's Education Studio at the NT Studio, in schools and with partner theatres and organisations across London and the UK.



Teaching descriptive writing provides a great opportunity to broaden student skills in:

- writing outcomes
- reading
- responses to texts.

It really adds to the language and presentation toolbox they will definitely need for the new GCSE English/ English Language exam.

Great description is, of course, very different from great storytelling. Indeed, leading students away from slipping into narrative when they describe, is one of the first chores we often face. It's a difficult call, because great description might still involve a sense of movement, there might still be a voice, we might still witness an event. To my mind, leaving it to the experts is always the best way forward. How do real writers – not me on my interactive whiteboard – paint such vivid pictures for us?

By looking at examples of fabulous description before we ask students to do any, we are actually being pretty sneaky. It's a great opportunity to get students picking out descriptive words, phrases and images with highlighters and then working out:

- what these techniques actually are
- what effect they have on the reader.

Sentence structures and varieties could be included here too. And let's face it, lessons are always more fun when the felt tips come out!

Apart from that, any excuse to dig out some of Roald Dahl's brilliant character descriptions has to be a good thing. If you want to encourage some wider reading for more able students or if, like me, you just want to make the day altogether nicer by reading out bits of your favourite books, just dive in and enjoy yourself. I remember reading the opening of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* many years ago and its vivid descriptions have stayed with me and provided many a lesson starter.

My current hot favourite, though, has to be pretty much anything by Jon McGregor, whose poetic descriptions can inspire some brilliant work right across the age and ability range. His description of a city at night is a gift to anyone teaching descriptive writing. Every time I use it, *somebody* in my class writes down the title of the book and I go home happy.

'So listen.

Listen, and there is more to hear.

The rattle of a dustbin lid knocked to the floor.
The scrawl and scratch of two hackle-raised cats.

The sudden thundercrash of bottles emptied into crates. The slam-slam of car doors, the changing of gears, the hobbled clipclop of a slow walk home.

The rippled roll of shutters pulled down on late-night cafes, a cracked voice crying street names for taxis, a loud scream that lingers and cracks into laughter, a bang that might just be an old car backfiring, a callbox calling out for an answer, a treeful of birds tricked into morning, a whistle and a shout and a broken glass, a blare of soft music and a blam of hard beats'

If nobody speaks of remarkable things,
Jon McGregor (Bloomsbury, 2002)

The description rolls on into morning and as well as its lyricism and quirky structure, it provides a real opportunity to look at language. Teaching descriptive writing enables us to teach students skills to tackle the exam's language question, by looking at interesting verbs, pairs of adjectives and compounds. We can look at personification, metaphor and onomatopoeia without having the poetry anthology open. In other words, we can transpose all the skills we use to teach Literature into an English Language lesson, helping students to write, using the same techniques they need to analyse when they read.

And it needn't be dull. One of my favourite ways of helping students get to grips with descriptive language emerged when I was decorating my lounge. Check out the descriptions in the paint brochure – adjectives to die for. And making your own paint charts is a great way to help students of any ability to get to grips with the noun phrase. Next time you are in a DIY shop, sidle over to the paint mixer and help yourself to one or two of those fabulous colour swatches.

On Friday afternoon, you need teams of three or four, a colour swatch for each

team, A3 paper, glue sticks, scissors, felt pens and of course, your favourite books for the starter. Remind students about adjectives – they will all have forgotten them from lower school, no matter how hard you tried – then be brave and introduce noun phrases. They will pretend to be confused when you tell them nouns can be adjectives too, but plough on.

Their task is to design a collection of paint colours. Every shade in their collection must have a name to describe it, which is a noun phrase. The collection then has to be given a title to describe it, again a noun phrase. The first challenge comes in writing the blurb for the collection. Can they include even more adjectives, perhaps a simile or a metaphor? You can have green teams, blue teams and red teams and keep both the fashionistas and the footballers happy.

The objective of the paint chart activity is not to get them deciding how they'd like their bedroom to look. Develop the lesson by asking the teams to take the descriptive words and phrases from their collection and use them in a piece of descriptive writing. The focus could be a person, place or time of day. You could have a go at this yourself with The candy store example below to provide your students with a model before they start.

Teaching language tools on a Friday afternoon can still be fun, if it's coated with a little sugar. What's more, the descriptive outcome might just be a real treat!

The candy store

Use these pinks and lilacs – soft as sifted sugar – to create a delicate and romantic haven. These colours are calming and bring a sense of sweet harmony to your home.

These bolder shades are richer, more luscious, mouth watering colours which can be used to create luxurious, opulent spaces with an accent on seductive drama.



Controlled assessment and grade boundaries

Responding to your queries about unit grade boundaries in our new GCSE specifications.

In each specification, unit boundaries are determined by an awarding committee, according to the regulators' *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice*. The *Code* requires awarders to inspect candidates' work and take account of statistical and technical evidence. Clearly, this cannot happen until exams have been taken. Before this, it is impossible to predict what the unit boundaries will be. The overall standard of GCSEs, however, will not change in the new specifications, so centres can expect students to gain similar subject grades to counterparts of comparable ability in previous years.

For internally assessed (controlled assessment) units, we advise centres to:

- (i) mark the work according to the assessment criteria, without recourse to any expectations about a student's grade
- (ii) assign estimated grades, based on the grade descriptions in the specification and on knowledge of students' achievements in previous years in comparable specifications. For example, is a student's work of a similar standard to that of a student who gained grade C in the previous year?





If students are informed of their internally-assessed marks, it is important to remind them and their parents/carers that these marks are subject to moderation by AQA.

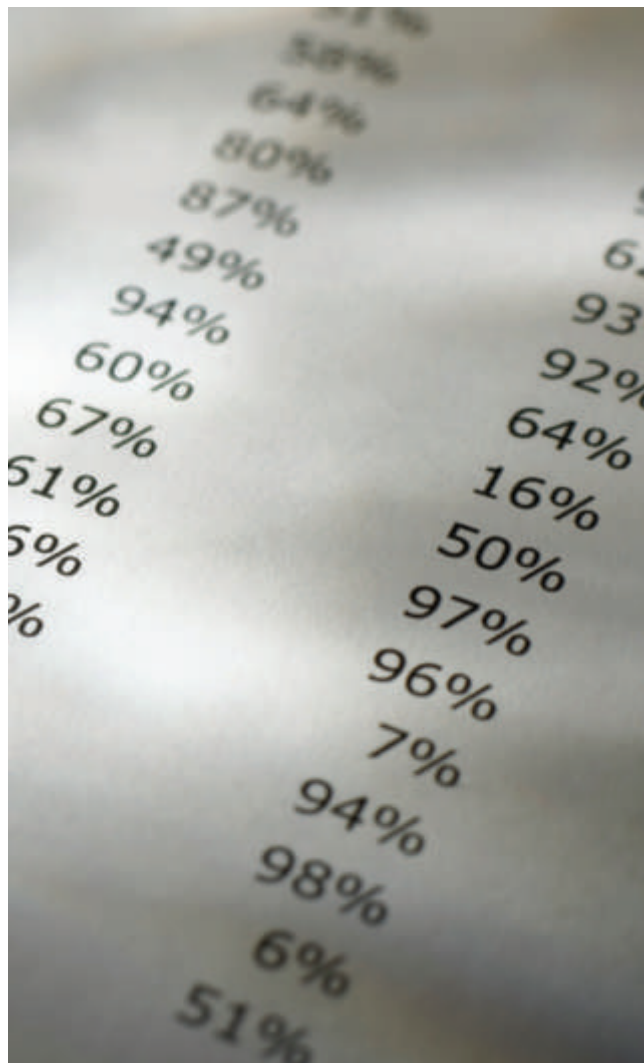
When a specification has been in operation for some time, grade boundaries for internally assessed units often stay the same from year to year. Adjustments are, however, sometimes made, for example to maintain an appropriate balance between external and internal units. Such adjustments are in the interest of fairness to candidates and do not indicate a change to the subject standard.

The grade boundaries discussed above relate to raw marks, which are the original marks awarded after moderation, for internally assessed units. These raw mark grade boundaries should not be confused with the uniform mark grade boundaries, published in the specifications. The uniform mark scale (UMS) is used to ensure that unit results from different series have the same value when contributing to an overall grade, irrespective of the difficulty of the paper. In the UMS, the A* boundary is always at 90% of the maximum, A is 80%, B is 70% and so on. However, this does not mean that candidates necessarily have to score 90% of the marks on the paper to gain A*, 80% to gain A, 70% to gain B etc.

Suppose, for example, that:

- the maximum raw mark for a unit is 50
- and
- the maximum uniform mark for the unit is 80
- and
- the (raw mark) grade A boundary for the unit is 36.

The grade A boundary is 72% of the maximum raw mark (36/50). However, a candidate with a raw mark of 36, will receive the uniform mark which is at 80% of the maximum, ie 80% of 80 (= 64).



For further details about the UMS, see: *Uniform marks in A-level and GCSE exams and points in the Diploma*. This booklet is available at aqa.org.uk under Qualifications / Results Statistics / UMS.

Noticeboard

New controlled assessment tasks released

The GCSE controlled assessment task banks, for submission in January and June 2013, are now available on e-AQA in Secure Key Materials. Please make sure that your students are doing the right tasks for their year of submission. If you are in any doubt, please contact your Subject Adviser for advice.

What texts are you teaching?

What texts have you chosen to teach for the new GCSE specifications? Have you tried anything you haven't taught before? What is going down well? If you have any experiences you'd like to share with colleagues, please e-mail rzjohnson@aqa.org.uk

Subject Advisers

If you are preparing candidates for the new English GCSE specifications, please feel free to contact your Subject Adviser for help and guidance. He/she can help if you have questions about the suitability of controlled assessment titles or, perhaps, if you need general information about exam issues.

For Subject Adviser contact details, please ring 0161 953 7504 or e-mail english-gcse@aqa.org.uk

Do you teach Media Studies?

Have you booked a place on the Media Studies Conference in Birmingham on 16th July?

This great event promises:

- interesting and engaging talks by key note speakers
- a choice of exciting workshops including Photoshop and film making
- 'Ask the Expert' and 'Ask the Technician' drop-in sessions
- a wide range of expertise and support for teaching all aspects of GCSE and A-level Media Studies.

You can even gain CPD credits for attending, thanks to our partnership with Edge Hill University.

Book your place and you could win a day's free teacher support from our senior examiners, simply go to: <http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking/> (cost £195).

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-Upon-Avon offers sessions to schools to support our English specifications. For more information, go to www.shakespeare.org.uk

You can also follow their blog, covering all matters Shakespearean, at <http://bloggingshakespeare.com>

Odd socks for Comic Relief

The English section at our Devas Street office stepped up and stepped out to wear 'Odd socks for Comic Relief' on Wednesday 14th March. The whole team got involved, with some interesting results!

Prizes were awarded for:

- best colour clash combo
- worst matched combo
- best accessorised single sock.

Altogether, we raised £32 for Comic Relief which we gift-aided. We would like to thank everyone who got involved. It was an easy, fun way to raise some money.

