

Exam Skills – for new AQA GCSE (from September 2015)

Paper 1 *Explorations in creative reading and writing*

1 hour 45 minutes

Section A – based on an extract from a novel or short story (20th or 21st century)

Q.1 Worth 4 marks – a straightforward content comprehension task

- spend approximately 5 minutes on this
- no planning required
- only draw answers from the lines in the text which are specified
- you can quote or paraphrase
- assessed for AO1: *Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas; select and synthesise evidence from different texts*

Q.2 Worth 8 marks – a ‘use of language’ question

- spend no more than 15 minutes on this
- will require close reading and annotation of the text but no formal planning
- only analyse the use of language in the lines specified
- assessed for AO2: *Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views*
- note definition of ‘language’ given in the mark scheme: *i.e. Words / Phrases / Language Features / Language Techniques / Sentence Forms*
- note *Skills Descriptor* for a level 4 (7-8 marks) answer:
Shows detailed and perceptive understanding of language
- *Analyses the effects of the writer’s choices of language*
- *Selects a judicious range of quotations*
- *Uses sophisticated subject terminology accurately*

Q.3 Worth 8 marks – a ‘structure’ question examining the ‘whole of the source’

- spend no more than 15 minutes on this
- may well require annotation of the text but no formal planning
- remember to address the ‘whole of the source’
- assessed for AO2
- note definition of structural features in the mark scheme: *Structural features can be: at a whole text level e.g. beginnings / endings / perspective shifts; at a*

paragraph level e.g. topic change / single sentence paragraphs; at a sentence level e.g. sentence length

- Note *Skills Descriptor* for a Level 4 (7-8 marks) answer: as above for Q.2 except that instead of *writer's choice of language* candidates are asked to analyse *the writer's choice of structural features*

Q.4 Worth 20 marks – requires a more personal critical response to a section of the text (emphasis in the question on readers' *impressions*)

- spend approximately 25 minutes on this
- will require close reading and annotation but no formal planning
- remember to only respond to the section of the text specified
- assessed for AO4: *Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references*
- note *Skills Descriptor* for a Level 4 (7-8 marks) answer:

At the top of the level critical evaluation will be perceptive and detailed

- *critically evaluates the text in a detailed way*
 - *offers examples from the text to explain views convincingly*
 - *analyses effects of a range of writer's choices*
 - *selects a range of relevant quotations to validate views*
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Section B – Writing

- worth 40 marks (24/16 split – 24 marks for content/organisation and 16 marks for SPAG)
- spend approximately 45 minutes on this and aim to write at least two sides of A4
- candidates should be encouraged to plan their responses – at least to have an outline of the different paragraphs they will cover
- candidates are offered a choice of two tasks – one narrative response and one descriptive (based on a picture)
- AO5 *Content and Organisation: Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.* (A lot of words but basically boils down to: **accuracy / shape & organisation / variety.**)
- AO6 *Technical Accuracy: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect with accurate spelling and punctuation.*
- Candidates must remember to check their response for accuracy.

Paper 2 *Writers' viewpoints and perspectives*

1 hour 45 minutes

Section A – based on one non-fiction text and one linked literary non-fiction text (one from the 19th and the other from the 20th/21st century)

Q.1 Worth 4 marks – a straightforward content comprehension task.

See guidance for Q.1 on Paper 1 – exactly the same advice applies.

Q.2 Worth 8 marks – a summary task drawing from both sources

- spend approximately 15 minutes on this
- will require annotation of both sources and some formal planning – key points in note form
- assessed for AO1: *Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas; select and synthesise evidence from different texts*
- note *Skills Descriptor* for a Level 4 (7-8 marks) answer: *offers perceptive interpretation of both texts; synthesises evidence between texts; selects judicious range of quotations from both texts*
- This is still a summary but the task is not quite so mechanical as in the old *Information and Ideas* exam – two sources, the element of 'interpretation' and the new requirement for quotes all present a new challenge.

Q.3 Worth 12 marks – a 'use of language' question

- Spend approximately 20 minutes on this

See guidance for Q.2 on Paper 1 – exactly the same advice applies

Q.4 Worth 16 marks – a 'presentation of theme' question examining students' reaction to both sources.

- spend approximately 20 minutes on this
 - will require annotation of both sources and some planning – key points in note form
 - assessed for AO3: *Compare the writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed across two or more texts*
 - note *Skills Descriptor* for a Level 4 (13-16 marks) answer: too many empty words to quote – boils down to *detailed and perceptive* – plus *judicious range of quotes*
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Section B – Writing

All of the guidance for the writing task in Paper 1 applies here – 45 minutes / 40 marks (24/16 split), Assessment Objectives etc

- You are given one task (no choice) which will be argument-based / persuasive writing – a re-creation of the sort of 'feature articles' boys will become familiar with over the course of their English GCSE.