

Examiner Report Synopsis Language GCSE 2018
Language GCSE

Overall, examiners felt that pupils' ability to cope with the demands of the exam papers had improved. All boards noted that pupils had been well prepared and commented on pupils' genuine engagement with some of the texts and writing topics provided.

Paper 1
AO1 Retrieval/ Inference/ Synthesis

- Many students **began their selection with either 'he' or 'Mr Fisher', thus ensuring the correct focus** of the question was addressed (AQA)
- **Focus only upon the lines given.** Read the question so as to select the correct information. Avoid quoting at too much length. Practice locating individual words or phrases (Edexcel)
- Some responses were unselective, imprecise or unfocused (Eduqas)

AO2 Language/ Structure Analysis

- Students found the bullet points on Q2 helpful. Note: the use of the word 'could' rather than 'should' is deliberate and significant: **there is no requirement to cover all of these aspects.** (AQA)
- Sometimes the **selection of very lengthy examples led to paraphrasing** and discussion of ideas rather than analysis of language. (AQA)
- The most successful answers to Q3 **understood that the story was a construct.** They offered an overview of the structure of the whole source before breaking it down into its constituent parts and analysing the **shifts in perspective and focus** (AQA)
- Phrases such as **'at the beginning', 'in the middle' and 'at the end' provide a useful framework, but merely discussing the content of what is happening in the story at those points is not sufficient.** This question requires students to think about why something is placed at the beginning, middle or end of the source, not just what. (AQA)
- Candidates must **balance comment on language and structure** to achieve Level 2. (Edexcel)
- Less successful answers made little reference to the focus of the question, 'tension' (Edexcel)
- There is **no need for an introduction or conclusion** on this question (Edexcel)
- **The best answers got the overview** and added a selection of details to clinch the argument. **Less successful responses went on a search for devices** and, unfortunately, often made little reference to the text. (Eduqas)

AO4 Evaluate texts Critically

- **The more students could select evidence ...and link their ideas together with words like 'even though' and 'despite',** the more considered their evaluations became (AQA)
- **A few focused too heavily outside the given lines** (AQA)
- Students would have benefitted from considering their own impressions in relation to the statement before they began to write (a 'coherent stance' – Eduqas), ... students who **started with a sense of their own evaluation and then constructed an argument with a focus on the what and the how** were the most successful. (AQA, Eduqas)
- Weaker answers were often brief and **showed only a partial understanding of the text, which limited their ability to evaluate** how successfully the writer had achieved those effects (Edexcel)
- Some candidates did this question with impressive focus and economy but others wrote a lot and did not get very far at all. **Sometimes less is more** (Eduqas)

AO5/AO6 Narrative/ Descriptive Writing

- **Planning:** An increase in planning seemed to lead to more concise responses (AQA). Remember - organising a narrative to meet a fixed conclusion requires thought and planning (Eduqas)
- Some students continue to produce **formulaic responses with a contrived use of senses: I can see/I can hear/I can smell.**
- Others continue to include **over-ambitious vocabulary that is misused and obscures meaning** (AQA)
- There is also an argument for **not over-preparing students with formulaic methods,** especially for creative writing. (AQA)
- **Punctuation:** Some students planned a **checklist of what punctuation to include** and ticked each one off once they'd used it, **irrespective of whether or not it had been used correctly or effectively. Take more care with the basics** of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (AQA, Edexcel, Eduqas)
- Candidates are free to **make use of the images, or not,** as they choose. (Edexcel)
- The mark scheme makes specific reference to structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion, therefore **incomplete texts will not be able to access the full range of marks** that is available for this question (Edexcel)

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Paper 2

AO1 Retrieval/ Inference/ Synthesis

- Students are reminded to **select no more than four statements**. For every statement beyond four which is identified, the student loses rather than gains marks (AQA)
- Interpretation is key to success in Question 2 - The additional phrase 'what you understand about' was intended to clarify the task for students (AQA)
- Pay attention to the focus of the question (Edexcel). Read the question carefully (Eduqas). Students should be **prepared to respond to a more concrete focus as well as a more abstract focus** for this task (AQA)
- References to specific terminology are unnecessary in order to achieve a mark for Q2 (Edexcel)

AO2 Language/ Structure Analysis

- Some students tended to comment on what effect the language had on 'the reader' in a **contrived and generalised way**. E.g. it creates fear, tension, intrigue or excitement, for example. **This type of comment is too generic to be judged 'clear'** and rewarded in Level 3. (AQA)
- Students should **look at the specific effects of particular words**, zooming in on them for a really tight focus (AQA)
- There was some reliance on looking for common structural points such as sentence structure. Candidates here were good at finding both language and structure features, but not as confident at explaining **theme types and repetition**. (Edexcel)
- The most effective way of tackling this type of question is by **moving methodically through the text**, selecting salient details and commenting, where appropriate, about the impact of the detail. Disappointingly, too many candidates still regard this type of question as one in which simply 'feature spotting' (Eduqas)

AO3 Comparing Writers' Ideas and Perspectives

- The mark scheme for this question (Q7) indicates that **'Responses that are unbalanced will not be able to access Level 3 or above**, where explanation of writers' ideas and perspectives is required alongside a range of comparisons between texts.' (Edexcel)
- Where students were less successful, they tended to fall into the same traps as last year:
 - focusing on ideas at the expense of perspectives;
 - dealing with the texts separately without making meaningful connections;
 - identifying methods used without exploring their effect or how they contributed to presenting the writer's point of view (AQA)
- There were candidates who ignored the bullet points entirely and as a result struggled to gain many marks. (Eduqas)

AO4 Evaluate Texts Critically

- The majority in the mid-levels were able to comment clearly and explain events and ideas, although some attempted to comment on each one of 'SITE' where there was more to say on, for example, theme and setting. (Edexcel)
- Responses that were in Levels 1 and 2 tended to indicate that 'the writer shows this successfully', which did not allow them to meet higher levels by evaluating texts critically, for example in terms of the audience and purpose of the text, how it may be successful or not successful in different ways. (Edexcel)
- In order to offer a view and evaluate the text, it was sensible to track through the text, commenting where appropriate. (Eduqas)

AO5/ AO6 Transactional Writing

- Familiar traps that have been identified in previous series:
 - over-use of linguistic devices;
 - imprecise use of more sophisticated vocabulary;
 - a failure to signpost the direction of the response;
 - an inability to sustain an appropriate tone or style for the given audience, tending towards the colloquial or over-familiar
 - Note: students are not required to comment on every aspect of the statement provided
 - Students should continue to plan their ideas and incorporate more structural features in their writing (AQA)
- Focus on crafting and organisation whatever the nature of the task. Be ambitious in the structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original. (Edexcel)
- Write a piece that is 300-400 words - it allowed the articles to range quite widely, and be both informative and engaging (Eduqas)
- Technical accuracy is important (Eduqas, Edexcel, AQA)