

Examiner Report Synopsis Language and Literature GCSEs 2017**Language GCSE**

Overall, examiners were happy with how pupils coped with the exam papers. The chosen extracts ‘resulted in students of all abilities genuinely engaging with the reading material and responding positively and confidently to the thematically linked writing stimuli’ (AQA). In both papers 1 and 2 examiners were impressed by candidate engagement with the reading material and pupil ability to cope with the demands of answering the questions in the given time frames (AQA, Edexcel, Eduqas)

Paper 1**AO1 Retrieval/ Inference/ Synthesis**

- **Don’t over-complicate it!** Only select relevant information. Don’t try to interpret. (AQA, Eduqas)
- **Start the bullet points with the focus of the answer** e.g. *As the focus was Rosabel, students who began their points with ‘She...’ or ‘Rosabel...’ tended to produce more relevant, and therefore credit-worthy, answers.* (AQA)
- Candidates must take care and ensure that they only **choose words and phrases from within the line range** given in the question (Edexcel)
- Be sure to **look closely at the wording of the question** and make sure that you are addressing it directly (Edexcel, Eduqas)

AO2 Language/ Structure Analysis

- **Lack of comment on effect:** Students who performed less well on this question often identified and labelled language features but failed to comment on the effect on the reader or explain a reason behind the writer’s choices. (AQA)
- **Misuse of subject terminology:** it is what the student does with the subject terminology that is credited, rather than the mention of an obscure term that the student does not understand and does nothing with. (AQA)
- **Selection of appropriate examples:** some students struggled to address the task of selecting appropriate examples of language and analysing what the effects were in context (AQA)
- **What happens where and why?** In its simplest terms, students are required to examine what happens where and why, usefully asking themselves the question, ‘How does reading about this at this point add to my understanding of the text as a whole?’ (AQA)
- **The most successful students 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 in a way that explored their significance (AQA)
- It really was not necessary to plunge into fanciful assertions about the mystical power of **punctuation or sentence length.** (Eduqas)
- Stronger answers were those that **offered an analysis of both features** (Language/ Structure) and which were focused upon how these were used to show the narrator’s thoughts and feelings. (Edexcel)

AO4 Evaluate texts Critically

- **Failure to address ‘Methods’:** Students dealt with the ‘what’ but not the ‘how’, which limited how far they could move into a given level. Those who did consider methods tended to focus on language (AQA)
- As you go through your answer, **make sure that there are times when you are saying how well something has been done** rather than just explaining how it has been achieved. (Edexcel)
- Some candidates did not get beyond a simple personal response to the character at the conclusion of the passage. Better responses attempted to comment on the **development of the character in the passage as a whole and provide some textual support** (Eduqas)

AO5/AO6 Narrative/ Descriptive Writing

- **Lack of planning:** Many students would have benefitted from a **quality rather than quantity approach:** having the confidence to take time to plan, and then craft a shaped and structured response in two or three sides, with time at the end to revise and improve. (AQA, 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)
- Candidates need to appreciate how important it is to **engage their readers quickly** at the start of their writing, by whatever means they choose (Edexcel)
- Take care throughout with accuracy of all sorts: spelling, punctuation and grammar. (Edexcel, AQA, Eduqas)
- Imaginative storytellers would be better advised to **write from personal experience and give their narratives some authenticity.** (Eduqas)
- There were a **large number of ‘prepared’ narratives which had little or no relation to the specified titles.** It is difficult to give much credit for communication and organisation to this type of response and candidates need to be reminded that the titles are not there just to be ignored if they choose (Eduqas)

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Paper 2

AO1 Retrieval/ Inference/ Synthesis

- **Follow the instructions!** Students need to be aware that writing T and F next to each of the statements rather than shading the circles as instructed, for example, means they risk not getting the marks they deserve. (AQA)
- The important advice for this question is to **read what is being asked for** and **select the correct information.**(Edexcel)
- Candidates sometimes **gave longer answers than were required** to achieve marks (Edexcel)
- This was a straightforward 'search and find' task but candidates' responses indicated **the real importance of reading the question carefully.** (Eduqas)
- The ability **to infer and to make connections** is key to success in Question 2. The focus for Question 2 will always be content-based, and is likely to be narrow and students should be prepared to respond to the precise focus of the task (AQA)

AO2 Language/ Structure Analysis

- The best responses began by focusing on the content and not on feature-spotting (Eduqas)
- Candidates who **tracked the text methodically** found they had plenty of material upon which to base their answer. (Eduqas)
- The key to success in Question 3 is to **focus on comments on the effects of language.** The best responses **explored in detail the effect of specific words and** phrases (AQA)
- Elaborate **subject terms were often over-used and frequently misunderstood** (AQA, Edexcel)

AO3 Comparing Writers' Ideas and Perspectives

- **Avoid prepared structures:** there was limited evidence of an overly mechanistic approach to structuring responses to Question 4, suggesting students were finding their own way intuitively through the task. For instance, students would make a point about the father's acceptance of his son growing up, support this with a quotation and link the quotation to a comment on the method exemplified in the textual detail. They could then switch to compare this attitude to the mother's refusal to accept her son's 'disappearance', support this with a quote from Source B and link it to a comment on a method used by the other writer, and so on. Such a means of structuring is sufficiently flexible to be applied to any comparative task. It is a method which is relatively easy to teach, and is appropriate for students of all abilities. (AQA)
- Almost all responses were able to compare texts, even at a basic level. The high level responses tended to **focus more on perspectives as well as ideas.** (Edexcel)
- In this specification there is the requirement to identify what the writers say about a specific aspect of the text but additionally to **explore the ways in which writers get their message or viewpoint across.** (Eduqas)

AO4 Evaluate Texts Critically

- Candidates should be encouraged to **focus on what the question asks them to evaluate, not just evaluating 'the text'.** Candidates should **consider alternative readings.** (Edexcel)
- In this paper, in order for candidates to answer this question, **they needed to have a clear understanding** of what Dickens' views were, and how he made those views clear to his readers before they could effectively respond to those views. It is worth emphasising, once again, **the importance of reading the question carefully** (Eduqas)
- **Methods! The most disappointing aspect of responses to this question was the tendency of some students to ignore the reference to methods in the task entirely.** This omission left students offering a more two dimensional comparison which engaged exclusively with the 'what' and not the 'how' (AQA)

AO5/ AO6 Transactional Writing

- **Don't make it up:** Of particular note as being often out of place were the ubiquitous statistics and spurious surveys, fake experts and fictitious anecdotes, none of which were very effective in supporting a clear argument. It is rare for a student who introduces the opinion of a made-up scientist to be rewarded for a convincing argument (AQA)
- **Planning:** there was precious little evidence of students using their time wisely to consider how they would structure a sequence of points to convey their argument. To write less and to craft it more would be useful advice for all. (AQA)
- **Sentence structure** is an area to focus on: use of passive/active; varying the way sentences begin; more use of subordinate clauses to begin complex sentences; effective use of one-word sentences and one-sentence paragraphs to demonstrate conscious crafting (Edexcel)
- To tackle the task effectively, it was important for candidates to have a clear sense of the **intended audience** and then shape the material accordingly. (Eduqas)
- **Technical accuracy** often made a significant difference to the overall mark (Eduqas, Edexcel, AQA)