

GCSE (9–1)
Candidate Style Answers

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351
For first teaching in 2015

Exploring effects and impact

Component 02

Version 1



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Introduction

These candidate style answers accompany the OCR GCSE (9-1) English Language J351 specification for first teaching from September 2015.

OCR has produced this resource to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE English Language specification and to bridge the gap between new specification release for first teaching from September 2015 and availability of exemplar candidate work following first examination in summer 2017.

This content has been produced by OCR examiners to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and to provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a high level response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions. The questions addressed in this document are taken from the sample assessment materials for Component 2, Exploring effects and impact: Section A: Reading, questions 2-4 and Section B: Writing, question 5.

As these responses do not replicate student work and have not been through full standardisation ahead of formal grade setting for the new specification, they have not been graded. There are instead, indications of what a high level response might include, in accordance with the mark scheme.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

SECTION A: READING MEANINGS AND EFFECTS

Question 2

Question 2 is about Text 1, *Unreliable Memoirs* by Clive James.

Look again at lines 12-21

How does Clive James use language and structure to make his description of Mr Ryan's lesson entertaining?

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

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.

Exemplar Response

The first way James uses language to convey the description of the lesson is through the use of understatement. The fact that the writer describes what happened as "an accident in the laboratory", illustrates the idea that the catastrophe of nearly blowing up the school has been reduced to an accident which reduces the importance of what happened. This enforces the idea of comedy. As well as this, further on in the text the writer suggests you had to be "more careful than he was" which reflects how the whole event has been understated because being "more careful" than a man who has just blown up a school is underplaying how careful you would need to be.

The second way that James uses language and structure to make his description more entertaining is through the use of metaphor. James describes the teacher Mr Ryan as "shocked, scorched and gassed" which suggests that he's a soldier and this links to the simile of the battle of the Somme. Mr Ryan is seen by James as fighting against the school, perhaps to avoid his retirement as he is now an old man. The list of three descriptive words shows the effect of the explosion on his face, as he is scorched by his experiment and this is almost like a cartoon image of a mad professor.

Another way James uses language and structure to create his description of the lesson as entertaining is the use of imagery. He describes Mr Ryan as an "ancient Greek god". The word "ancient" reinforces how old Mr Ryan is and how he shouldn't be doing dangerous experiments. Also, the idea of a Greek god is someone who is powerful and it is funny to compare the teacher to something so much more significant than he is. Perhaps he thinks he is more powerful than the school or that he is untouchable in some way.

Commentary

The candidate starts with an impressive comment on understatement which shows clearly that the candidate understands how humour is being created (AO2). Whilst written expression is somewhat awkward, the response nevertheless communicates the effect of 'underplaying' or 'understatement' soundly. This idea is developed with the comment on him being 'more careful', showing close attention to language detail.

The second paragraph shows very successful exploration of language (AO2) with a sophisticated comment on the metaphor of the old man in his own battle against the school. The comment on the 'mad professor' is original and engaging and demonstrates insightful consideration of effects. The quotations here, perhaps afford more detailed exploration, however, and there is a tendency for the candidate to move on, before fully exploiting the well-selected quotations.

The final paragraph continues in similar vein, with appropriate quotation readily identified and an original focus on how humour is created.

Overall, the candidate is adept at appreciating how language

has been used for the effect of entertaining the reader and has used a range of relevant subject terminology. They have not, however, commented on structural techniques and this omission in coverage, as well as the lack of development of some of the discussion, might prevent a top band mark being awarded.

Question 3

Question 3 is about Text 2, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark.

Look again at lines 1-23

Explore how the writer presents Miss Brodie's attitude towards Miss Mackay, the headmistress.

Support your ideas by referring to the language and structure of this section, using relevant subject terminology.

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.

Exemplar Response

The writer makes Miss Brodie's attitude towards Miss Mackay very clear when she describes her closing the door "with the utmost meaning". She is clearly annoyed that the headmistress has left the door to her classroom "wide open" and is making a point about whose classroom it is by closing her door. The "meaning" she wishes to convey is possibly her annoyance at the intrusion into her classroom and it is perhaps noticeable that Miss Brodie doesn't say anything but lets her actions speak with the "utmost meaning". The fact that Miss Brodie passed "behind" her may hint at the power relations between the two teachers, with Miss Brodie being "behind" the "headmistress" in status. She may keep her "head up" so as not to be downtrodden by the intruder into her classroom. She also looks "hard" at the door which implies that she might be waiting to see if the headmistress comes back into the room, or that she is glaring at the headmistress through the door in a way to show her disapproval.

Miss Brodie further shows her attitude to Miss Mackay when she says, "I don't believe in talking down to children." She clearly thinks that Miss Mackay is doing so when she interrupted the lesson. Although she does not make it clear in what she says, the tone of this comment reinforces her disapproval of the headmistress. The fact she talks about what she 'believes' suggests that she has a different set of educational values to the headmistress and she disagrees with the headmistress' approach to learning.

A final way that Miss Brodie's attitude is made clear is through the use of the structural technique of repetition. Miss Brodie repeats what the headmistress says when she says "Are we downhearted, no". She might be copying or mimicking the headmistress or she might be trying to suggest that she actually really is downhearted by the behaviour of the head.

Commentary

This candidate demonstrates skilled analysis of the language in the extract and has used precisely selected quotation to good effect (AO2). The first paragraph contains a number of embedded textual details (AO2) and explores and develops the attitude of Miss Brodie well. The comment regarding power relations is an original idea and the candidate has assimilated fully her understanding of the text with the use of the word 'intruder', picking up on Spark's description of "intrusion" in a subtle way.

The appreciation of how language has shaped meaning (AO2) is further developed in the sophisticated consideration of the differing women's educational beliefs. While the comment about 'talking down' is not fully exploited, there is much to recommend the response in terms of its consideration of language.

The response is, however, unbalanced in its discussion of structure. The point about repetition is sound, but the full implication of the candidate's analysis that imitation might be at work, is not exposed in the discussion. This should mean that the highest marks cannot be awarded, although this candidate will still achieve a strong mark for the evident quality of the written analysis and the effortless way analytical language has been used in the discussion.

Question 4

Question 4 is about Text 1, *Unreliable Memoirs* by Clive James and Text 2, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark.

'In these texts school is presented as a challenging place for the pupils.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss your impressions of the pupils' various experiences at school
- explain what you find unusual about their school environment
- compare the ways the writers present the pupils' experiences of school.

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives as well as how these are conveyed across two or more texts.

AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

Exemplar Response

These pupils obviously have what seem to be very different experiences of school in terms of the situations that are described, the cultures they are set in and the ways in which they are treated. Notwithstanding the differences there are some striking similarities and parallels in the experiences of school that are depressingly familiar.

Both sets of pupils are treated as captive audiences the teachers seek to impose their eccentricities on. "Make a Bunsen burner! He was apparently convinced... " And secondly "you will have the benefit of my experiences in Italy". Furthermore humiliation, whether from teachers or fellow pupils or even oneself is never far away: "those dreadful days when everyone else..." And latterly "Mary did not know". "Stupid as ever," said Miss Brodie".

For a variety of reasons the experience of learning is very limited: "Mary Luke, having ruined science... came back... to ruin science for me." And, by contrast, "Next year you will have specialists... you will receive the fruits of my prime". The example of "Jazz" Aked who "had a way of getting results" because he isn't odd or incomprehensible and (with heavy irony) "taught English according to the curriculum... Without resorting to violence" stands as a contrast to both. Both groups of students are subjected to fear whether it be through personal arrogance or complete incompetence.

The school environments described in these passages are unusual, to say the least.

For Clive James the playground, notionally a haven from teachers and their lessons, is a place of isolation and unhappiness "he (Carnaby) was always surrounded by lots of new friends" and it later critically described as "what passed for a playground." Playgrounds are not a concern in "Miss Jean Brodie" but whatever lies outside the classroom: (bad); as opposed to what goes on within it when she is in control; (good), is emphasized throughout. "shut the door with the utmost meaning"/ "looked hard at the door"/ "in case of intrusions from outside" etc. There are further emphatic concerns with opening and closing windows, which echo the sense of protective insularity throughout the passage.

Relations between students are as much of a concern for Clive James as relations between students and staff: "my essays were sometimes read out/ established again as teacher's pet." Whereas all relationships for Miss Brodie are directed both by her and through her: "in case we have any further intruders"; "you will get used to our ways". This contrast becomes broader in the light of lack of complicity between teacher and students on the one hand (evidenced by the repetition of "I" by Clive James) and the invitation to it by Miss Jean Brodie: "shut the door with the utmost meaning"; the mocking of

the headmistress “Are we downhearted no, are we downhearted...” Despite the horrors of the conflagration, Miss Brodie’s regime is much the more insidious and frightening.

Finally the long-term effects of the pupils’ experiences in their respective environments are stressed. Clive James makes a clear and non-ironic statement of his views: “It was invaluable training.” By contrast Miss Brodie’s remarks about the “the fruits of my prime” are a damningly ironic condemnation of her arrogant and selfish approach which goes way beyond the relatively mild eccentricities and incompetencies recorded by Clive James.

The comparisons and contrasts between the passages are supported by the different uses each writer makes of very different choices of genre. Clive James looks back on his childhood from an adult perspective and describes what he experienced as a child in ways that evoke the raw innocence of early teenage experience with the wit and wisdom of mature age. Terrifying though the explosion must have been, Clive James adds additional layers of ironic humour to the piece. “Wreathed/ garish/ stunned” all have a wry and ambiguous wit for example wreathed in smoke, not the oaken chaplet of a Roman Triumph) behind them and lead to the complex and self-mocking image of “an ancient Greek God in receipt of bad news”. This paragraph is built to a resounding climax with a subtle and immediate move to a more serious context “leftover from a battle on the Somme”. And moves on to the rhetorical flourish of the alliterated tri-colon “shocked, scorched and gassed”. Clive James’ style appears to be one which moves from one barely connected reference to another and then on to more than the reader expected.

By contrast the third person narrative of the second extract works in very different ways that allow for a variety of voices all within the context of subtly ironic commentary. Muriel Spark tends to build on her portrait with cutting humour: “I don’t believe in talking down to children...” is a perfect example of Miss Brodie’s hypocritical double standards.

Despite the contrasts both writers make classical references central to these extracts. Whereas the picture of Mr. Ryan is a piece of affectionate mockery the portrait of Miss Brodie is one of deep insecurity dressed up as extreme self-dramatisation.

“Miss Brodie stood in her brown dress like a gladiator”: how, exactly, without looking ridiculous, one is made to wonder... “with raised arm and eyes flashing like a sword” draws out this incongruity.

“Hail Caesar!” she cried again, turning radiantly.../“Who opened the window?” said Miss Brodie” underscores her ludicrous, attention seeking performance with a bathetic reminder of the insecurities which lie beneath it.

Commentary

This is a highly perceptive and sustained evaluation of both texts which focuses sharply on the question. The texts are compared throughout the response and comments are supported by apt, skillfully integrated quotations.

All three bullet points are addressed evenly and the contrast between the first person narrative of Clive James looking back with an adult perspective, and the third person narrative of Muriel Spark allows the response to appreciate the ironic humour of the former and the more subtle ironies of the latter. The response makes it clear that Miss Brodie is more disturbing than any of the teachers encountered by Clive James.

The writers’ use of language to convey ideas and perspectives and deliberately influence reader response is analysed in detail throughout the response, with some highly perceptive observations.

This is a Level 6 response: ‘sustained critical evaluation... perceptive and considered... skillfully selected and integrated textual references’ and ‘a detailed interwoven comparison.’

SECTION B: WRITING IMAGINATIVELY AND CREATIVELY

Question 5

Imagine you are writing your autobiography. Describe your experiences of starting a new school.

You could write about:

- the people that made the biggest impression on you
- the ways in which you behaved
- the way that you feel about those events now.

AO5: Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.

AO5: Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

AO6: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Exemplar Response

Big School.

The buildings loomed large out of the early September landscape and I stood, trembling and frail in its shadow. Big School: the place I had been dreading. It was the start of the Autumn term, it was my first day and I was terrified.

Most of my friends from primary school were looking forward to moving on. They'd chattered their way through the summer holiday excitedly, speculating about whose form they would be in, whether they'd have the handsome PE teacher, Mr. Nesbitt or not, and busily planning how they were going to rule the school. But me? I spent that summer in abject trepidation, dreading the moment that I would have to put on my new school uniform. It was a uniform that would offer me no protection or shelter because there would be nowhere to hide from the nightmare that would welcome me to my new school. You see, it wasn't only me and my friends who were starting that year, but a girl who had made my life hell, from the moment she joined my primary school in Year 3. She was a bully. And she had picked me out as her pet victim from the moment she had come crashing into my life, spoiling any sanctuary or happiness that I should have known.

It had started small. At first, she would just pull faces, prod me when the teacher praised me, or shout names in the playground. But her actions became darker over time; she developed an apparent hatred for me and made it clear, whenever she was around me, that she found my presence distasteful. I would see her hanging around on the corner of my street at weekends on her bike; she would follow me in the playground; she blocked my way in the canteen at lunchtime. Her hatred coloured my life, turning childhood from rainbow primary colours to grey – and then to a black, black existence.

What was extraordinary, however, was that from that very first day at secondary school she left me completely alone. It was as though the chemicals in the air had been altered. While all of us knew some students, there were very many faces amongst the crowd of new Year sevens that were unfamiliar and that created an entirely different dynamic for us all. She didn't haunt me in the corridors, she didn't comment on my clothes when I walked past her. Gradually, inch-by-inch, the realisation dawned on me that my bully had moved on –perhaps to another victim, I don't know, but I was at last free to breathe again, to settle into my new routines and to build and develop my friendship groups.

When I look back, her presence had hung over that last primary school summer like an enveloping fog. Secondary school arrived for me like a sunrise: instead of repeating the torture of my primary school days, I blossomed in confidence. Free from the worry of who I would see around the next corner, I started to plan things, to join in. Up until that point I don't think I had realised quite how much I had avoided because of her. Now I was free to go on school trips, to join clubs – even just to put my hand up in class and answer questions. By the time it came to starting our GCSE courses it didn't occur to me that I might be put into the same option blocks as her. But, do you know, by then it just didn't matter. I was free of her. Starting secondary school had given me a completely new lease of life.

Commentary

The candidate has constructed a very reflective piece that comments in detail on personal experience, demonstrating a secure sense of form and purpose (AO5). The candidate has pursued an original line from the prompts in the question but the focus of reflecting on what has been learned through experience remains the core focus of the writing.

There is an excellent sense of the audience throughout and the writing is engaging.

Despite a tendency to slip into cliché at times, the candidate has clearly thought about language choices and has utilised imagery to good effect. There are very few occasions where the vocabulary choices are not precise and spelling and punctuation are accurate. Some sophisticated language choices are made.

Sentence structures are fully exploited to enhance clarity and generate meaning throughout.



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Facsimile 01223 552627

Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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