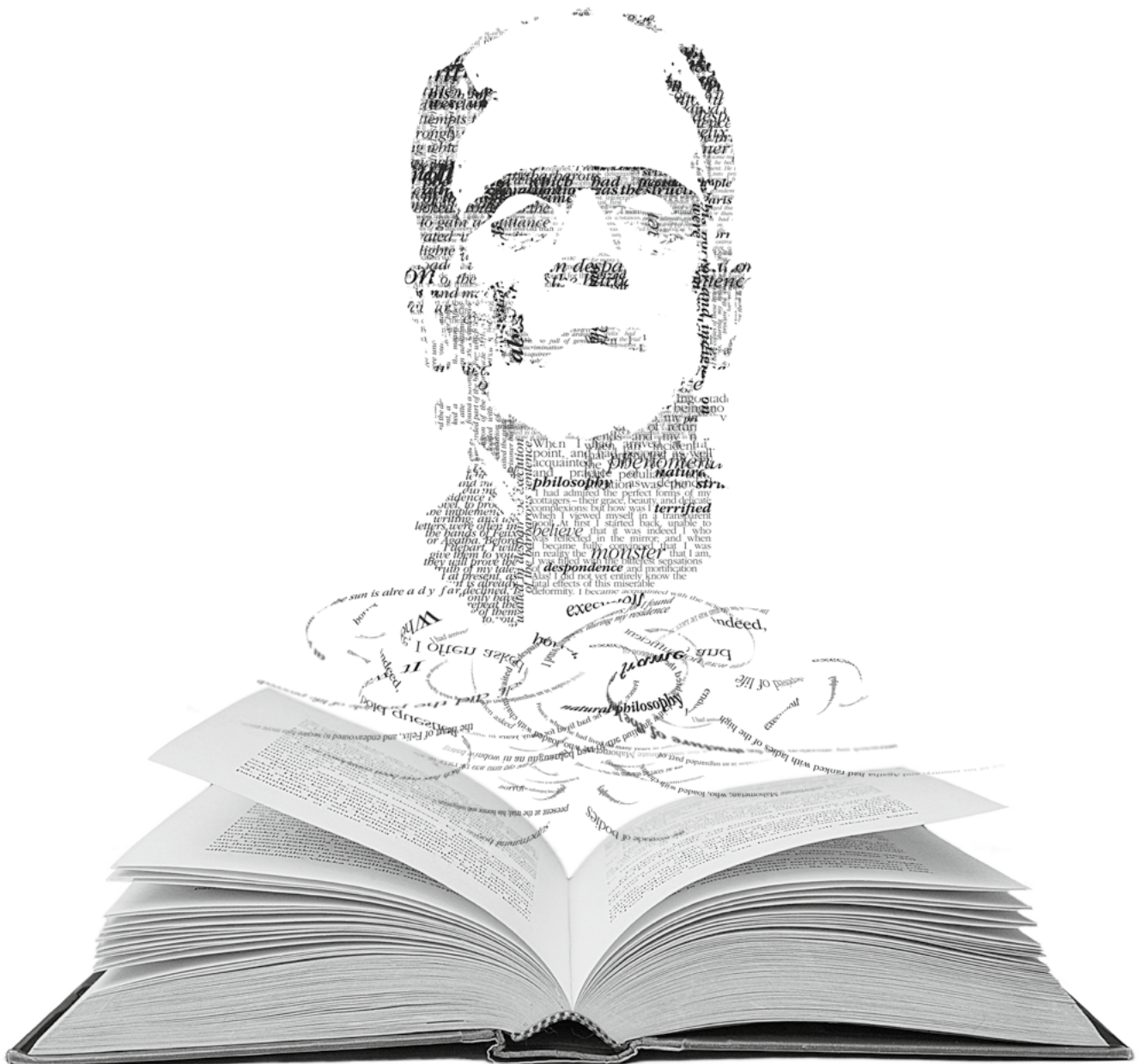


A LEVEL

ENGLISH LITERATURE H071 H471

INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH

Section B of Unit F661 - Poetry and Prose 1800-1945



Unit F661 is the examined unit of the English Literature AS Level, and carries 60% of the marks for this level. In this introduction, you will find advice to help you prepare for Section B of the examination and the ways in which your work will be assessed.

HOW TO APPROACH AN EXAMINATION

There will be a choice of two questions on each prose text. These questions may ask about a theme (marriage or innocence, for example); a character or characters; or an aspect of the writer’s technique (such as irony, humour or narrative method).

For example, an essay question on Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* might read:

‘In Pride and Prejudice, marriage is presented primarily as an economic arrangement.’

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

In this example, the question begins with a statement and then invites the candidate to discuss it. There is, of course, no one right answer to this question. It would be possible to earn marks by either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, or by offering a more nuanced argument which arrives at a balanced view. Success will be determined by the clarity and quality of the **argument** and **illustration**.

To construct a successful argument, you need to make sure that you have considered all of the important terms in the question. In the above example, you need to write about the nature of marriage in the novel and decide whether it is primarily an economic arrangement, or whether there are other equally important aspects of marriage – for example, you might suggest that marriage in this novel is also presented as an expression of love, or that it is devoted to the bringing up of children. Your essay should be clearly structured. For example, you could consider a number of marriages, one after the other, and show their nature and purpose; or you could consider a number of reasons for marriage (money, love, family) and draw examples from different marriages to illustrate your points.

You should also aim to use quotations to support your answer, especially with reference to AO2 (see below). Remember that AO2 can also be satisfied by ‘references to the text’, however, so that your own brief account of an event or moment will sometimes be as helpful as a quotation. Lengthy quotations are difficult to remember and rarely of much use; try to learn brief and telling moments from the text.



WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES?

Your examiner will mark your work on the basis of four Assessment Objectives: AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

Assessment Objective 1

Articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression.

Answers should be **creative** in the sense that good candidates will respond imaginatively, selecting and combining interesting and telling moments from the novel which help to arrive at an answer to the question.

They should be **informed** by a reasonable level of awareness concerning the novel; for example, of information about the writer, the nature of novels of the period in question and of novels in general. Such information should support the answer but not be allowed to dominate it.

Above all, answers should be **relevant**: when writing practice essays, it can be helpful to check each sentence to ensure that it is helping to form an answer to the question. You should aim to use key terms from the question at times during your essay, and especially in the conclusion. A brief introduction which engages with the terms of the question is very helpful too.

During your study of the novel, you should become familiar with **appropriate terminology and concepts**: for example, you should be able to discuss ideas such as 'irony' and 'narrative voice'.

Coherent, accurate written expression is an essential part of a good answer: you should check the accuracy of your spelling and punctuation and especially your grammar to ensure that your essay is completed to a high standard and can be readily understood.

Assessment Objective 2

Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts.

This Assessment Objective requires you to look closely at the detail of your set text. You need to show how the writer of your novel achieves his/her effects through choices of language, form and structure. Methods of writing will vary according to the novel you are studying: comments on **language** might include references to dialogue (for example, the phonetic representations of speech in *Wuthering Heights*) or passages of description (such as Thomas Hardy's presentation of setting in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*). Writing about **form** might lead you to consider narrative methods chosen by the author (first person narrative in *The Great Gatsby*, or use of letters in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example). Material relating to **structure** might include thoughts about the time scheme of the novel or the effectiveness of its ending (both important in *The Age of Innocence*). Remember, it is not enough to list methods used by a writer, even if you offer examples; you must always analyse the effects of the writing as well.

Assessment Objective 3

Explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers.

This Assessment Objective combines different ideas, and will require you in your AS Level coursework to relate two texts to each other. Here, however, the requirement is to understand and demonstrate that your study of the set novel can be enhanced by considering **the interpretations of other readers**. These readers might be critics of the novel, but they could also be your teachers or your fellow students. The key thing, whatever their origin, is to represent alternative points of view clearly. You do not need to give detailed references to your critical reading. You will find ideas to help you meet this Assessment Objective in the support reading you are required to do for Section B of this paper. In a good essay, a candidate should aim to develop his/her own answer to the question using the support of these other interpretations.

Assessment Objective 4

Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

This Assessment Objective requires you to think about ideas and information in addition to the set text. These ideas might be social or historical (for example, what was the role of women in society at the time your text was written or is set?); they could be literary (what is this novel like in relation to others by the same writer, or by his/her contemporaries?); they could be biographical (what were the important influences on the life of the writer when s/he produced this novel?). It is also helpful to consider different critical reactions to the novel over the period of time since its publication. Contextual study requires some research and learning, but should never be allowed to dominate an answer; take care to avoid writing long paragraphs of contextual information which do not support your argument.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE 'COMPLEMENTARY' TEXT?

Your AS Level course requires you to study six set texts in total: three for the coursework unit and three for the examined unit. You will, however, only be examined on **two** of your **three** set texts in the AS Level exam: the Section A poetry and the Section B novel. The third set text comes in the form of support reading or a 'complementary text' taken from the list of books recommended by OCR (see OCR Specification for AS Unit F662 p.12) or from other similar literary-critical works. These books have been chosen to help increase your awareness of the nature of literary study and to inform your reading of your Section B set text. If you look again at the Assessment Objectives, you will see that this critical reading will help you to achieve under AO1 ('articulate informed responses to literary texts') and AO3 ('informed by the interpretations of other readers').

This 'complementary' text has been designed to be flexible and to support you at the stage you have reached in your study. You are not expected to read a complete work of criticism (although you may, of course); you and/or your teacher are invited to select relevant material from one or more of the texts listed, or from other similar texts. For example, if you are studying *The Great Gatsby* you will probably look at material about the unreliable or limited narrator; if you are reading *Pride and Prejudice*, material on irony would be more appropriate.

You are not required to quote from these texts or to make specific use of them in your answers; as stated above, you will not be examined on your critical reading in a separate task. However, we have recommended this reading to improve your understanding of the subject as a whole and your Section B text in particular, and we hope that it will help you move on from GCSE to a more sophisticated approach to your study of literature. Used properly, this additional text will certainly help you to maximise your potential in your Section B examination performance.

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