OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL
Transition Guide

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H470
For first teaching in 2015

KS4–KS5 Focus
Reading Critically

Version 2

www.ocr.org.uk/english

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Possible Teaching Activities (KS4 focus)

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Introduction

A LEVEL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Key Stage 4 to 5 Transition guides focus on how a particular topic is covered at the different key stages and provide information on:

- Differences in the demand and approach at the different levels;

- Useful ways to think about the content at Key Stage 4 which will help prepare students for progression to Key Stage 5;

- Common student misconceptions in this topic.

Transition guides also contain links to a range of teaching activities that can be used to deliver the content at Key Stage 4 and 5 and are designed to be of use to teachers of both key stages. Central to the transition guide is a Checkpoint task which is specifically designed to help teachers determine whether students have developed deep conceptual understanding of the topic at Key Stage 4 and assess their 'readiness for progression' to Key Stage 5 content on this topic. This checkpoint task can be used as a summative assessment at the end of Key Stage 4 teaching of the topic or by Key Stage 5 teachers to establish their students' conceptual starting point.

Key Stage 4 to 5 Transition Guides are written by experts with experience of teaching at both key stages.

Key Stage 4 Content

GCSE English Language Content*

Subject content:

- Identify bias and misuse of evidence
- Reflect critically and evaluatively on text, using the context of the text

As assessed by:

- 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
- AO4: evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references

Key Stage 5 Content

A Level English Language Content*

Apply critical and creative skills in close reading, description, evaluation, analysis, interpretation and production of texts and discourses.

As assessed by:

- AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.

* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254497/GCSE_English_language.pdf

* http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013/

KS4 to KS5

Topic: Reading critically

Comment

How the topic is presented at GCSE and A Level:

- Many source materials could be presented for analysis and critical reading both at GCSE and A Level. The level of challenge presented comes not from the text itself, but rather from what we ask students to do with it.

- At GCSE, students are asked to focus on the text itself. What is it about the way language is used, and structured, which creates an effect? What is the effect created? How does this relate to its purpose?

- At A Level, students are asked to focus on the text, but also to show an awareness of what is 'behind' the text. Who has written this text? What do the language features used in the text suggest about the writer, and their intentions? Now, not just what is the purpose, but what are the purposes? Who are the audiences? In what contexts may this text be received? This is not merely an opportunity to speculate, however! Possible answers must be supported by features found in the text – the candidate must be able to articulate WHY they have come to a particular conclusion.

- At GCSE, the implication is that there is one, right answer. At A Level, candidates are expected to be able to explore multiple possibilities, and how these possibilities are created. Those who struggle with the transition from GCSE to A Level are often those who still seek the 'right answer', or who are satisfied with one answer for each issue – purpose, audience, and context.

- Introducing students to acronyms such as PAS (purpose/audience/style) at GCSE are helpful ways in, since the same questions help the student to read critically and analytically at both GCSE and A Level. It is the complexity of the answer that changes. 'Style' at GCSE could be as simple as an overall impression supported by one language feature: "an informal piece of travel writing which uses some metaphors (eg "…..") to….." whereas at A Level we might expect a more complex analysis, touching on different language levels: "a formal text using complex latinate vocabulary (such as…), enhanced by the writer's use of deontic modality (eg "….") to….

- **P-A-S – different questions to ask:**

This table is intended as a generic starting point only – there are of course ways to extend the analysis at both GCSE and A Level, as well as questions which suit particular text types.

GCSE		A Level - further questions	
Purpose	Why has this text been written? What does it intend to achieve?	**Purpose**	What is the *primary* purpose of this text? How do you know? What *other* purposes are there? Evidence?
Audience	Who would read this text?	**Audience**	Who did the author intend/expect would read this text? How does the language used demonstrate this? What effect did the author intend to have on the expected audience? Who else might read this text? Why? How would the language affect this audience? Is this in line with the writer's intention for the piece? Are there any mismatches between intended audience and purpose, or language use? Why have these occurred? What might they tell you about the text, or the context in which it was written?
Style	What type of text is this? What sort of language has been used?	**Style**	How does this text exploit/ignore the conventions of its type? Why? Effect? In what context would it appear? Are there different possible contexts? How does this affect the way the text might be received? How formal is this text? How do you know? Why has the writer chosen this degree of formality (assuming it is a deliberate choice. If not, what does this tell you?)?

KS4 to KS5

Comment

- A simple starting point would be to present students with a text they are familiar with at GCSE level, and ask them to complete a basic P-A-S annotation. Then, in small groups, give them the A Level extended questions for one area of P-A-S, and ask them to explore the text in more detail. Groups can then feedback. You could choose a text which would be interpreted differently depending on the context in which it was printed (eg relationship advice from a male author in a women's magazine versus a men's magazine) in order to demonstrate the significance of context of production/reception (eg the tone could be interpreted as humorous, or patronising, in the first publication, versus sincere in the second).

- The aim with such activities is to elicit exploratory discussion of texts, and to encourage students to realise there is no definitive answer, but there are many possible facets to explore, which may influence their analysis and interpretation of language features discovered along the way.

- You could extend this to having students pick a language feature they find interesting, and try to include an element of their P-A-S findings into a sample PETAL paragraph (point-evidence-technique-analysis-link to P-A-S).

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Possible Teaching Activities (KS4 focus)

Checkpoint task

Possible Teaching Activities (KS5 focus)

Possible Extension Activities (KS5 focus)

Resources, links and support

Possible Teaching Activities (KS4 focus)

Activities

'Lobstering in Maine' activity – from OCR's resource package. This activity gives students an opportunity to explore how writers use language to create a humorous tone – or you could select the activity which explores how fact and opinion can be used for particular purposes/effects. Both activities offer an opportunity to explore specific language features chosen by the writer, and to consider their effect. For the purposes of this context, you would want to draw out how the students' findings are linked to an element of P-A-S.

Further Resources: There are further excellent inference resources in the EMC Spotlight on Literacy Guide (p264 onwards). http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/cat_detail.php?itemID=656

Checkpoint task

Topic: Reading critically

Checkpoint Tasks

- Give students a text and have them begin by reading and identifying simple P-A-S features.
- Students highlight all the verbs in the text. They do not read the whole text; they simply find the verbs and highlight them. (Tell students to discard any auxiliary verbs).
- Students see if they can spot any patterns in the verbs.
- Students see if they can group the verbs in any way and, if they can, they see if one particular group occurs in one particular part of the text (for example, the verbs become much more violent in the second paragraph.)
- Students discuss their findings and identify what the mood or atmosphere of the text is and how the verbs have been used to create this.
- At the end teacher elicits that sometimes breaking a text down into its component parts can help students to gain greater understanding. It is also a useful strategy for making challenging, unseen texts accessible to all students. It should be made clear that this is a strategy that they can use both before reading, and after reading if they have read a text and lack confidence in their understanding of the text's meaning.

Adaptation:
With some texts, the same activity can be applied, but the students highlight and look for patterns and categories in the use of adjectives.

Again, the aim is to encourage students to offer interpretations linked to the writer's intention, based on P-A-S features, so have students connect their findings re: verbs(or adjectives) to an element of P-A-S, either verbally, or through writing an analytical paragraph.

Topic: Reading critically

Possible Teaching Activities (KS5 focus)

Possible Teaching Activities (KS5 focus)

Layers of meaning – what influences how we understand texts?

Teacher guidance:

This task is suitable as an introduction to the demands of A Level, either towards the end of students' GCSE course, in an A Level induction, or early on in the A Level course, before they have been introduced to the Language Levels in any detail.

Introduce students to the poem 'Falling Leaves' by Margaret Postgate-Cole. Give no information about when the text was written, and ask students to read the poem and explore what the writer is writing about, how effects are created by the language and form used. Since students are prepared for exploring unseen poems for GCSE English Literature, they should have strategies available to them to enable them to make comments about tone and how it is created, etc.

Now introduce students to the concept of P-F-A-C (purpose-form-audience-context), and particularly the importance of C- context. Explain how contextual information can change how we read and respond to a text. Now share some contextual information about this poem:

- It was written in 1915, and is about WW1

- Postgate-Cole was a pacifist during WWI, but (perhaps surprisingly), an active supporter of WWII.

- She was an atheist, a feminist, and a socialist.

Ask students to explore how these contextual factors influence what we would consider the 'meaning' of the poem to be. Once you have established the central metaphor of the leaves representing dying soldiers, you could break the class into groups, to focus on each of the elements above. Students can then analyse how the language choices Postgate-Cole has used reveal/hint at her attitude to the area they are focussing on.

Groups can then feedback to the whole class, and discuss or rank order the different contextual factors, and how important they think each are to understanding the 'true meaning' of the poem. Remember to reinforce that all have some significance – there is not one right answer.

This activity has used a poem to start with, since students should be familiar with the skills needed to analyse an unseen poem. However, since the language analysis we are working towards is primarily linguistic in nature, once you have established the key concepts, you will want to transition towards non-fiction texts of varying forms and contexts.

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Possible Teaching Activities (KS4 focus)

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Possible Extension Activities (KS5 focus)

Resources, links and support

Possible Extension Activities (KS5 focus)

Topic: Reading critically

There are lots of excellent online resources to provide challenge and extension activities for your students.

This website provides lots of very useful links:

http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/alevel/resources.htm

Including:

Andrew Moore's A Level resource site for English Language http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/intro.htm

http://www.theguardian.com/education/interactive/2013/aug/16/test-your-english-language-a-levels

A fun test of students' grasp of meta-language – important underpinning to the ability to articulate how language is used to create meaning.

When you do move on to working with non-fiction texts at Key Stage 5, the TES resources website includes an activity called the TextTalkGame – read the text play the game – which is a very useful supporting resource. A variety of relevant tasks are available via TES resources, but be careful – some oddities can creep in under the guise of post-16 English language – including a very interesting PowerPoint about the history of Valentine's Day aimed at KS1!

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Possible Teaching Activities (KS4 focus)

Checkpoint task

Possible Teaching Activities (KS5 focus)

Possible Extension Activities (KS5 focus)

Resources, links and support

Topic: Reading critically

Resources, links and support

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The Word - Our termly update The Word provides useful information and helps to support our English community. Each issue is packed full with a series of exciting articles across the whole range of our English qualifications.

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Contact the team: english@ocr.org.uk

Continue the discussion on the English community forum: http://social.ocr.org.uk/

To find out more about GCSE and A Level reform please visit:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-and-a-level-reform

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