

AS and A LEVEL
Student Guide

ENGLISH LITERATURE

H072/H472
For first teaching in 2015

Applying the Assessment Objectives: A student guide

Version 1



Introduction

Dividing up the AOs and hitting them separately is a tough ask. More often than not you'll address one or more at the same time. This guide will show you how that happens.

Keep what you write sharply focused on the question and you will hit AO1. If the AS Level Shakespeare question reads **'Coriolanus is a play in which actions speak louder than words'**, an opening line like **'Coriolanus is one of the most continuously action-packed of Shakespeare's plays'** clearly hits AO1. Look closely, and you'll see that other AOs are being touched on too. AO3 perhaps... Coriolanus is being contextualised within Shakespeare's other plays. And AO4 maybe... a link to other texts is being made.

You have to hit AO1 in the AS Level prose question too. This time you have to address the question while making links between an unseen extract and your set text (AO4). A sample question on the OCR website reads **'Discuss ways in which Fitzgerald presents the rewards and disappointments of pleasure seeking in *The Great Gatsby*'**. The narrator in the novel, Nick, is both caught up in and outside of the pursuit of pleasure, a candidate argues. And by grappling with the terms of the question (pleasure seeking) the answer hits AO1. The unseen extract, taken from Dorothy Parker's *From the Diary of a New York Lady*, is then drawn in: **'In contrast the narrative voice of the passage is someone more obviously caught up in the restless pursuit of pleasure.'** The focus is still sharply on the question: **the rewards and disappointments of pleasure seeking.** The candidate thus hits AO4 (comparison between texts) but also addresses AO1 by focusing on the terms of the question. This is one way to hit more than one AO at a time.

To hit AO1 you have to give personal opinions about a text's meaning, but this is only part of what you need to do; the opinions must also be informed. In other words, backed up with textual evidence. And here's how another AO is hit. If you're showing how language, form and structure shapes a text's meaning (the meaning you've ascribed to the play or novel), you're also addressing AO2. So, as you can see, separating out the AOs is virtually impossible. You might also be arguing how language shapes the meaning a critic or director has ascribed to the play – and that's addressing AO5 (different interpretations). In short, when you address one AO, you'll most likely be taking care of others.

Moving on to look at AO2 in more detail, the meaning that you argue is shaped by language, form and structure could be the one ascribed in a proposition about your set-play. This AS Level proposition, for instance, argues that **'The women in *Richard III* are more than just victims'**. A candidate could agree with the statement and hit AO1 and AO2. **Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville... is possibly the most outspoken of Richard's enemies early on, continually challenging his snobbery, his 'blunt upbraidings' and 'bitter scoffs'.**

Or they could disagree and still hit AO1 and AO2. For instance, here a candidate focuses on the structure of *Hamlet* to contest the AS Level proposition **'A great surprise of the play is that Claudius has a conscience'**. First the candidate considers how Claudius shows he can feign a conscience in public as Hamlet's uncle speaks of 'weighing delight and dole' to the court, and then compares this with a later moment when Claudius, in an aside prompted by Polonius's observation that piety can sometimes mask 'the devil himself', says: 'How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!' The candidate then says **'Claudius's insight seems to be the sincere expression of a burdened soul'** the candidate continues **'It is not surprising... that the man who can dissemble depth of feeling in public can confide it sincerely as an aside to the audience.'** The candidate shows (in a coherent, informed argument AO1) how language (AO2) from across the play (structure AO2) suggests it is no surprise that Claudius has a conscience (focus on question AO1).

AO1 and AO2 are also assessed in the A Level Shakespeare extract question. AO1 demands an informed response, one that's supported with evidence. In the A Level extract question rather than a proposition being provided, you come up with a personal opinion about what the main thrust of the scene is *yourself*: how are the characters feeling? What is the mood? How is this dramatised? For instance, asked to discuss the scene in which Hamlet challenges Gertrude following the staging of *The Mousetrap*, a candidate begins with **Both the mother and son meet in an excitable, inflamed mood: this is matched by the language – accusative and imperative on his part; angry, frightened and perplexed on hers.**

You can then move on to AO2, looking at how the language, form (dramatic conventions) and structure support what you've said. Here a candidate brings in language and structure to support what they asserted

above: **...as the scene closes, Hamlet takes control and expresses his feelings about the murder and incestuous marriage – ‘almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king, and marry with his brother’. The almost jocular rhyme focuses attention on the play’s key terms – mother, kill, king, marry, brother. The snarling plosives suggest that Hamlet suspects his mother of complicity in the murder. This leads into a formal speech in a more academic tone, filled with images of nature perverted, and heaven offended...**

Make sure you use specialist terminology when you’re discussing how language, form and structure (AO2) bolster your personal and creative arguments (AO1). Using literary terminology is another strand of AO1. For instance, rather than saying Prospero solves seemingly unsolvable problems in *The Tempest*, call him a *deus ex machina*.

In addition, if you merge AO1 and AO2 your answer will cohere. You don’t have time to mention all the techniques used in the extract or the play, but you do have time to mention the techniques that help bolster the argument you’re making.

Sometimes the language, form and structure only go so far in shaping meaning. Context needs to be brought in too. AO3 (context) also feeds into AO1 and AO2.

We can see context as a thread (a mood or a character trait for instance) that links the devices a writer is using.

For example:

Mentioning context can also help you address the question more clearly (AO1). In an essay debating whether the female characters in *Richard III* are victims, a candidate hits AO2 when they note that **Anne moves from thinking of the misshapen and homicidal Richard in grotesque terms (‘adders, spiders, toads’ and –weakening a little– a ‘hedgehog’) to surprising herself that she is starting to flatter him, with possible stirrings of sexual interest.**

But this doesn’t deal with the terms of the question – we’re not told whether the candidate thinks Anne is a victim – so as yet it’s not hitting AO1. To do this, the candidate must bring in AO3 (context). The candidate adds: **Anne Neville is too highborn to choose her lovers - or to intervene in the family conflicts that draw them away from her. So, like many women of royal blood, she must graduate quietly and haplessly from one feudal House to another, from Neville to Lancaster to York, just as the patriarchs bid her.**

By bringing in AO3, the candidate is able to argue that Anne is a ‘professional victim’, forced to find attractive a man who is responsible for the deaths of her husband, her father-in-law and (in part) her father. Context then, like language, structure and form, is a way to bolster your argument.

The above is designed to illustrate that in AS and A Level English Literature, AO1, AO2 and AO3 are interlinked and interdependent. The worksheets that go with this guide seek to explain how to hit the different assessment objectives, and through the activities, demonstrate how these AOs often overlap. This guide consists of activities and guidance that will help students to understand and address the following assessment objectives:

AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts

AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of contexts in which literary texts are written and received

The activities explore how AO1, AO2 and AO3 could be addressed across all components, when tackling the different questions in the English Literature AS and A Level qualifications.

Additional information

AS Level English Literature

Component 1. Shakespeare and poetry pre-1900

Sample question paper:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Candidate style answers:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/281463-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf>

Component 2. Drama and prose post-1900

Sample question paper:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Candidate style answers

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/281464-drama-and-prose-post-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf>

A Level English Literature

Component 1. Drama and poetry pre-1900

Sample question paper:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/171432-unit-h472-1-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Candidate style answers

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/260998-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf>

Component 2. Comparative and Contextual study

Questions and candidate style answers:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/225775-candidate-style-answers-co2-comparative-textual-study.pdf>

Teacher Guidance – Applying the Assessment Objectives

Student activity 1

What is AO1?

Task 1

‘Hamlet is destroyed by his impulsiveness, not his uncertainty’

- a) If this question appeared in ‘Section 1 – Shakespeare’ of the ‘Drama and poetry pre-1900’ component of the English Literature A Level, which AOs would be assessed?

AO1 and AO5.

- b) How would you support or challenge this proposition if it was a question in this section of the A Level?

Students should refer to different interpretations to support their answer. EG: Benedict Cumberbatch’s Hamlet at the Barbican in 2015 was not impulsive; he was in control and logical, almost mechanically minded. Maxine Peake’s Hamlet at The Royal Exchange in 2014 was impulsive and passionate.

- c) Which AOs would be being assessed if it was a question in ‘Section 1 – Shakespeare’ of the ‘Shakespeare and Poetry pre-1900’ component of the English Literature AS Level?

AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4

- d) How would your answer differ if the above proposition about Hamlet was an AS Level question?

Students could support the proposition by referring to language (AO2): Hamlet’s ‘rash’ impulsiveness when he kills Polonius is underlined by the language: the alliterative ‘dead, for a ducat’; his nonchalant ‘Nay, I know not’ – this leads to his banishment from Elsinore (though this doesn’t destroy him, as the proposition asserts). Or students can use AO2 to disprove the proposition: Hamlet’s impulsive murder of Polonius doesn’t weigh on his conscience. He doesn’t see his deed as ‘rash and bloody’. In fact he appropriates these criticisms and aims them first at Gertrude (and Claudius):

‘A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother’

And then at Polonius:

‘Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool...’

Students could use AO3 to disprove the proposition. A Shakespearean audience would find credible Hamlet’s uncertainty over the ghost’s provenance, whether it is ‘a spirit of health or goblin damn’d’; and that he is not impulsive, he understandably (to a God-fearing Shakespearean audience) does not kill Claudius while he is praying.

Task 2 and 3

See AS and A Level English Literature Candidate-style answers on OCR website for proposition ideas and possible content.

Qualification	Component	Section	AOs	Link
AS Level English Literature	Shakespeare and poetry pre-1900	Section 1 – Shakespeare	1, 2, 3, 5	http://ocr.org.uk/Images/281463-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf
AS Level English Literature	Drama and prose post-1900	Section 1 – Drama	1, 2, 3, 5	http://ocr.org.uk/Images/281464-drama-and-prose-post-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf
A Level English Literature	Drama and poetry pre-1900	Section 1 – Shakespeare Part 2 questions	1, 5	http://ocr.org.uk/Images/260998-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf
A Level English Literature	Drama and poetry pre-1900	Section 2 – Drama and Poetry pre-1900	1, 3, 4, 5	http://ocr.org.uk/Images/260998-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf

Task 2

The example in the table is taken from a candidate-style answer. Students can use other candidate-style answers to help them fill in the tables, before embarking on their own propositions and examples.

Task 4

‘In the world of Hamlet trust is a rare commodity’

Candidate-style answer

As Hadfield argues, an Elizabethan audience may well have seen echoes here of the surveillance culture of the Court of Elizabeth overseen by Lord Burghley. Certainly, many modern critics and productions of the play have emphasised how Elsinore is presented as a prison, a place of spying, eavesdropping, duplicity and betrayal. Jan Kott in the 1960s saw the play as ‘a fable about totalitarian tyranny’ and in his 1996 film, Branagh uses the motif of mirrors to suggest the surveillance society and how the individual can trust neither personal relationships nor the operations of the state.

Flag up to students that all of the above is AO1 – an coherent argument that trust is a rare commodity in Hamlet.

AO3 – context

AO5 – reference to different interpretations

AO2 – how meaning is shaped. Implicitly addressed with unattributed quotation ‘prison’

Task 5

Students can take the propositions from the Sample Assessment materials:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/171432-unit-h472-1-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

They can then come up with contradictory statements. EG: ‘More a victim of his own arrogance than political plotting’ – ‘More a victim of political plotting than a victim of his own arrogance’ etc.

Task 6

The examples in the table from *Hamlet* and *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale* are taken from the A Level Component 1 candidate style answers.

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/281463-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf>

Before creating their own examples, students could look through the answers to find other examples where concepts and terminology and their effects are mentioned and put these in the tables.

Student activity 2

What is AO2?

Task 1

Flag up to students that by covering AO4 (looking at the line's context within the whole play and other Tennessee Williams' plays) and AO5 (considering a film interpretation), AO2 (how meaning is shaped) is also covered. In the same sort of way, AO1 is hit when the candidate synthesises all the different factors that shape the meaning of the line (final row), because a coherent and informed argument is being shaped.

Tasks 2 and 3

More examples from the candidate style answers can be found here.

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/260998-drama-and-poetry-pre-1900-candidate-style-answers.pdf>

Student activity 3

What is AO3?

Task 1 and 2

Below are some examples of how social/historical context is used in the A Level candidate-style answers on the OCR website.

Love is invariably possessive

Jarman sees the physical relationship of Gaveston and Edward positively, while an Elizabethan production may have interpreted homosexual desire as by definition lust – irrational, possessing. This is uncertain, however, in view of the frequent blurring of the edge between close male friendship and homosexuality in Renaissance culture. (P30)

Good writing about sexual relationships is invariably moral

Milton's own ideas, which accorded with the prevailing views of the day, suggest that woman was created by God to be man's companion. The creation myth that had Eve made out of Adam's rib suggests that man is first and woman secondary. Although modern readers may find this analysis of sexual relationships to be at odds with our ideas of equality we can see that at least Milton seems to be suggesting in the later books of 'Paradise Lost' that the new found honesty of Adam and Eve means that they are working together rather than against one another. (P33)

Milton suggested that Adam was 'fondly overcome with female charm' and modern readers may sympathise with the more subversive morality of the play 'The Duchess of Malfi' than Milton's more didactic moral purpose but Webster's presentation of the Duchess both subverts and conforms to the moral notion that women lead men to danger. Although we admire the Duchess's marriage as a challenge to her hypocritical court society, it can be read as a cautionary tale if we view it from Antonio's perspective.¹²⁰ 'There is a saucy and ambitious devil/ Is dancing in this circle. 'We must be careful of reading it only within a modern moral framework. (P33)

Men may seem more powerful than women, but the reality is very different.

...by slamming her door on a house of lies, Ibsen's powerful female heroine faces up to truths the whole world eventually came to acknowledge.

Task 3

Students can populate the table by looking at the candidate style answers here:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/225775-candidate-style-answers-co2-comparative-textual-study.pdf>

Task 4

See *An Ideal Husband* delivery guide for more on how the play was informed by Wilde's own life.



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