

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

J352

For first teaching in 2015

J352/01 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

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Paper 1 series overview

This was an extremely small cohort so only a few of the questions on this paper were attempted. There were few issues with timing and most candidates completed all the questions. Most candidates offered developed responses and demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied. The best papers offered responses which used carefully selected quotations to support the points made, close analysis of language and structure, and sensitive awareness of contextual factors. Less successful responses often demonstrated reliance on chunks of learned content with little effort to relate it to the task or offered very general responses with few textual references. In a very small number of scripts there was some misreading of the extracts provided.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered sustained and interwoven comparison in Section A, part (a) • Considered the time periods and settings of the extracts in Section A, part (a) • Looked at one moment in the play in detail in Section A, part (b) focusing fully on the question • Used precise quotations to support points in Section A, part (b) with developed analysis of language • Used the extract to offer detailed analysis of language and structure in Section B • Offered relevant and embedded consideration of context in Section B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only offered the most obvious points of comparison in Section A, part (a) • Used the extract to answer Section A, part (b) • Adopted a descriptive approach to Section A, part (b) looking at a number of moments in the play • Failed to offer any language analysis in Section A, part (b) • Described the extract in Section B • Only offered fleeting references to the wider novel in Section B • Failed to offer any analysis of language and structure in Section B.

Section A overview

Part a)

In part a) of the questions in Section A candidates are required to compare an extract from their taught modern prose or drama text with an unseen extract from a text of the same genre. The question includes three bullet points designed to help candidates structure their responses to address the assessment objectives. It was clear that most of the candidates in this small cohort understood the requirements of the task offering points of comparison and addressing the bullet points offered. The most successful responses offered sustained and interwoven comparisons of the extracts. Some candidates spent unnecessary time and effort referring to the wider text when discussing their taught text in part a): they are only expected to focus on the extracts provided on the paper and should not spend time linking the extract to other moments in the text.

Most candidates responded to 'An Inspector Calls' and were able to access the unseen extract from 'The Real Thing' successfully comparing the way that the characters delivered and responded to the accusations. There were some responses to question 1a that suggested that candidates may not have studied the whole text as they completed part b) using the extract set for part a). They were still able to access marks for their response to part a) but no comments on the extract set for part a) will be credited in the response to part b).

The assessment objectives were generally well addressed in part a) responses. With the extracts printed on the paper, candidates had little excuse not to offer textual support, or develop a personal response to the task set (AO1). A small number of candidates dealt with each extract separately forgetting the requirement to compare them. Most candidates remembered to comment on the writers' use of language, form and structure (AO2), with the most successful responses offering perceptive analysis of both extracts, drawing comparisons of the way that the writer's used language and structure. Weaker responses sometimes used subject terminology inaccurately. The best analysis of language in the drama texts emerged naturally through analysis of the way that stage directions could be interpreted, the way that the characters interacted, and the impact of the language used on the audience's understanding of characters and situations.

To address AO3 the best responses commented on and compared the context of the extracts by referring to the settings and/or situations being explored, although some were less successful in making relevant comments on how contextual details informed their understanding of the extracts. For example, when comparing 'An Inspector Calls' to 'The Real Thing', few candidates pointed out that the unseen extract was based in a more modern setting than 'An Inspector Calls' and considered the impact of that on the way that the characters responded to the events. Candidates are reminded to use clues, both in the introductions and in the extracts themselves to show understanding of AO3.

Part b)

In part b) of this section, candidates are required to choose a further moment in their set text to explore the question set. The question is related to part a) but usually widens in scope. The most successful responses to part b) chose a section of text to focus on in detail, although some candidates chose several moments or took a wider overview of the question, which was an equally acceptable approach. In this part of the question only AO1 and AO2 are addressed so candidates do need to analyse language, form and structure in their response.

Where several moments were used for the response to part b) there was often very little attempt to address AO2, as the comments tended to be rather general and sometimes descriptive. This was most apparent in responses on Mrs Birling which sometimes turned into a general discussion of her character.

Where the candidate discussed a key moment thoroughly, there was far more scope to analyse language and structure to make sure that the assessment objectives were addressed more evenly. A number of candidates offered a great deal of contextual information in this part of the question, which could sometimes be credited as relevant textual information to offer a response to the task (AO1) but was sometimes 'bolted-on' learned information for AO3 that was not relevant to the question. There was also a great deal of information offered about the presentation of capitalist and socialist attitudes in 'An Inspector Calls' which were not always used to explore a moment where someone is blamed for something. Candidates should be reminded that AO3 is not assessed in part b) of Section A on this paper. Weaker responses to part b) tended to be rather descriptive with few textual references and often no attempt to analyse language, form and structure at all.

Some responses to part b) were rather short and undeveloped. This was sometimes because the candidate had spent too long on part a) but was also linked to lack of preparation at times. Candidates do need to learn quotations to respond successfully to this part of the Section A question. They should prepare key moments of their text and revise them thoroughly to prepare for part b) of Section A.

Section B overview

In Section B, candidates are offered a choice of an extract-based question leading to a whole-text response, or a discursive question on the whole text. Both question types were attempted by candidates in this session but most of this small cohort answered on 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', 'A Christmas Carol' and 'War of the Worlds'.

On this section of the question paper all three assessment objectives are addressed, as well as AO4 (SPaG) and most candidates seemed very aware of the need to both analyse language, form and structure, and show understanding of the contextual details relevant to their set text. When choosing extract-based questions, most candidates were aware that the extract offered opportunities to address AO2 and use textual references effectively. Many then discussed the wider text focusing much more on AO3. This was a sensible approach and worked very well in ensuring that all the assessment objectives were addressed fully. A small number of candidates did not move beyond the extract or made rather fleeting references to the wider text. As this is a whole-text response, to access the higher mark levels candidates must spend a reasonable amount of their response considering the wider text. Some candidates moved through the extract describing the meaning of each sentence rather than focusing on the question; this was particularly apparent when discussing Mr Utterson.

The best responses offered close analysis of language, form and structure, using subject terminology naturally and effectively. There were some examples of candidates who spotted literary features and offered an example from the extract but did not make any meaningful comments about how the use of such language or literary techniques enhanced the effect of the writing. At times subject terminology was used inappropriately with limited understanding of its implications in the writing. Some of the best analysis was offered at word and phrase level, simply commenting on the impacts and effects of individual words and phrases. Some candidates confused the genre of the text, referring to their novel as a play throughout their response.

Most responses showed understanding of relevant contextual knowledge and were able to use it effectively to support their analysis of the text when answering the question. Occasionally learned context was too dominant in responses, and sometimes not used particularly relevantly. Candidates should reveal their understanding of context in their discussion of the text while addressing the question.

Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

To prepare for Section A, candidates should be encouraged to use the introduction to the unseen extract to look for clues to context.

For part (b) candidates should closely annotate key moments from the text and revise them thoroughly, including precise quotations and language analysis.

For preparation for Section B, candidates should practise annotating extracts for AO2.

For preparation for Section B, contextual knowledge should be taught as it arises in the text to make sure that it is used relevantly to support textual analysis and comment.

All candidates should be prepared for the discursive style questions in Section B and encouraged to choose them when they are not confident about the extract-based question.

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