

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

J351/01 Autumn 2021 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 November 2021 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 exam paper nor examples of candidate responses.

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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

Paper 1 series overview

The J351/01 Communicating Information and Ideas component of GCSE English Language assesses candidates' ability to read and write non-fiction texts. The reading assessment tests candidates' ability to evaluate and compare the ways two texts present a particular topic. The writing assessment tests candidates' ability to write in a specified form for a specified audience and purpose.

Candidates should answer the questions in the order they are given. Each question is designed to prepare students for the next question so candidates would be well advised not to respond to the writing task until they have completed the reading section. Not only do the topics of both writing tasks draw on themes explored in the reading section but the close analysis in the reading section of how ideas are presented may remind candidates of approaches they can take in their own writing.

The short answer questions in Question 1 should help set the scene in Text 1 for the candidates. The synthesis and selection task for Question 2 helps the candidates work out the similarities between the texts in preparation for Question 4 in which they start to explore the differences. Question 3 draws the candidates' attention to features of language and structure which the writer of Text 2 uses to present their ideas. Candidates may reuse material from their responses to earlier questions in their response to Question 4 because they are using it for a different purpose.


<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"> • Read the questions carefully • Used their time well in the reading section • Selected relevant textual evidence/quotations • Used subject terminology • Explained the effect of the writer's techniques • Analysed language and structure • Compared the writer's methods • Adapted their writing for their audience • Used ambitious vocabulary • Spelled common regular words correctly • Used punctuation within the sentence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected irrelevant details • Chose irrelevant similarities for Question 2 • Supported similarities with unclear quotations • Labelled techniques without explanation • Made no comments about structure • Made little or no comparison in Question 4 • Spent too little time on Question 4 (25 minutes is advised) • Did not adapt writing to suit the form • Did not use paragraphs • Used the comma splice.

Section A: Reading – Overview

The reading section contains two unseen texts which have a thematic link. The first text will always be from the 19th century and the second from either the 20th or 21st century. As this qualification is not tiered, the texts may be slightly edited to make sure that they are both accessible for all candidates and challenging for the most able.

Text 1 was an extract from the autobiography of P T Barnum which was written in the 19th century. Text 2 was taken from a newspaper article written in response to the release of a film about the life of P T Barnum in the 21st century. Almost all candidates understood that Text 2 was far more critical of P T Barnum than Text 1.

Most candidates showed clear understanding of the main points made by each text. Many were able to write about the way Barnum presented his achievements in Text 1 in a much more positive light than Fryer did in Text 2. Only some, however, were able to describe how Fryer balanced her criticism with some acknowledgement of Barnum's success.

	OCR support	<p>A delivery guide for teaching how to read 19th century non-fiction texts can be found on the OCR website using the following link:</p> <p>19th century texts Delivery Guide for OCR GCSE (9-1) English Language</p>
---	--------------------	--

Section A Question 1

Question 1 is designed to be an accessible start to the examination. It should help all candidates to achieve some marks at the start of the examination. The question tests candidates' ability to select and interpret information.

There were very few candidates who could not work out that for Question 1a the first thing that Barnum wanted to achieve was to put money in his purse. Some candidates, however, used their own words when the question was asking them to identify the phrase that conveyed this idea: here, the precise quotation is needed.

Almost all candidates tried to give two ways that Barnum's museums were better than other museums. Most were able to quote the key words 'largest' and 'most interesting' which was enough to show that they had interpreted the material correctly.

Question 1c was designed to demand a greater level of interpretation. Many candidates were distracted by the word 'philanthropist' which they knew from the glossary meant doing good so they simply copied out the sentence which included the word 'philanthropist' which gained them no credit.

The question was asking for more than this; it was asking for a specific example of one way that Barnum had benefited the public which went beyond Barnum's general claim to have done so, e.g. spreading knowledge about the varied forms of animal life.

Section A Question 2

To prepare for Question 2 candidates should read both texts carefully. This question should help candidates to see the connections between the texts and set the scene for Question 4 which requires candidates to consider the differences between the two texts.

Previous examination reports have explained that candidates should not comment on the methods writers use to present their ideas (AO2) as this will gain no credit. Centres have clearly borne this in mind when preparing candidates as very few used this approach in this session.

It is clear that centres have also prepared their candidates to organise their responses clearly. Most candidate responses identified three similarities and used evidence from each text to support each similarity they described.

The expected similarities are listed in the mark scheme, but the list is not exhaustive. Examiners will reward any valid similarity identified by candidates. Some candidates in this session, however, were describing any similarity rather than relevant similarities, i.e. achievements, and thus gained no credit.

Some candidates explained a relevant similarity clearly and offered two quotations in support without explanation. It would be better to summarise in the candidate's own words how the evidence supports the stated similarity rather than quoting without explanation.

Section A Question 3


The question asks candidates to explore how a writer has used language and structure to convey ideas about a theme. Structure includes any feature of a text at or above sentence level, or at text level. For more about how to write about language and structure, refer to the OCR support link below.

This question asks candidates to look at a specified number of lines. Candidates had again been well prepared by centres for this question because almost none made reference to material from outside the specified lines.

The most successful candidates linked their references to Fryer's choices of language and structure to how they conveyed her criticisms of the representation of Barnum in the film. Less successful candidates labelled features without any comment on the writer's purposes.

There were a significant number of candidates who simply retold the content of the text without any reference to language and structure. Those who included quotations which had significant linguistic features were credited for some awareness of language.

The more successful candidates discussed a wide range of linguistic and structural features. Text 2 did, however, contain more straightforward features of language and structure, to which lower attaining candidates often successfully referred.

	OCR support	<p>A teaching guide about writing about language and structure can be found on the OCR website using the following link:</p> <p>GCSE English Language J351 - Language and structure guide</p>
---	--------------------	---

Section A Question 4

The first three questions on this examination prepare candidates for this question. The question is worth 18 marks so candidates should spend approximately 25 minutes planning and writing their response. Candidates should stop and think carefully about how they will frame their response before they start writing.


In this session the question asked candidates to consider how far the texts presented Barnum's life as successful. Most candidates understood that the first text was less critical than the second text. Many candidates were able to attribute this to the fact that Text 1 was written by Barnum himself.

Less successful candidates tended to focus on whether Barnum's life was successful rather than on how the texts presented his life. They tended to focus on what the writers told us about Barnum's works and were often quite impressed by his achievements.

More successful candidates wrote about the presentation of ideas by each writer. They demonstrated the critical evaluation required by Level 5 and above for AO4 by considering how the writers deployed information and language to present Barnum's activities in different ways.

Where candidates considered the ways the writers presented their ideas, even if they did not directly compare them, they were able to achieve Level 3 for AO3. Where candidates compared the ways that writers presented their ideas, they were able to achieve Level 4 or better.

Better responses explored nuances by commenting on which text presented Barnum's life as 'more' or 'less' difficult by the narrators. Words like 'more' or 'less' allow candidates to express some of the more subtle differences between the texts and access the higher marks for comparison in AO3.

	OCR support	<p>A teaching guide about comparing and evaluating texts can be found on the OCR website using the following link:</p> <p>GCSE English Language - Comparing and Evaluating Texts: Question 4 Teacher Guide</p>
---	--------------------	--

Section B: Writing - Overview

The writing tasks in this section are designed to build on what candidates have read in Section A of the examination. It is unwise to advise candidates to do the writing task first because candidates may be able to use what they have read to inspire the content and style of their writing.

In this component there is a choice of writing tasks which can both broadly be described as non-fiction. Each task specifies a clear context for the writing and candidates are expected to adapt their style of writing to suit the form, audience and purpose of their chosen task. The tasks will require candidates to write in the form of an article, letter or speech/talk.

Question 5 asked candidates to write a talk for other students and was a popular task. Many candidates chose well-known public figures and included an impressive amount of detailed information about their character and achievements to explain their reasons for liking them.

Candidates generally achieved the purposes of the task by describing the person and explaining what they had achieved to persuade their audience to like them. Very few, however, showed a clear awareness of the audience they were supposed to be addressing.


Centres would be well advised to prepare their candidates to write the words of a talk by teaching them some simple techniques; the use of first and third person pronouns; mentions of the time when, and the place where, the talk is happening, and references to shared knowledge of people and places.

Question 6 asked candidates to write a letter to a friend about a difficult decision. It was also a popular task and candidates were generally able to explain clearly the decision they had to make and the consequences of different courses of action.

Candidates generally handled the letter form more successfully than candidates managed the talk form for Question 5. Many candidates were still less successful, however, at maintaining a consistent sense of the audience of the text, i.e. the reader of the letter.

Most candidates spelled most words correctly and most were able to write coherent sentences. It would be good to see candidates using more ambitious vocabulary precisely and accurately to convey their ideas.

Very few candidates were able to use accurate punctuation either between or within sentences. Time spent teaching candidates how to use paragraphs to organise their ideas and to create effects would help the more able candidates to achieve the highest levels.

	OCR support	<p>A teaching guide about spelling, punctuation and grammar can be found on the OCR website using the following link:</p> <p>GCSE English Language and English Literature - The Little Book of Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar</p>
---	--------------------	--

Supporting you

Review of results

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our review of results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Supporting you through 2021-2022

Our priority is supporting you and your students this autumn and to support you as you prepare for summer 2022 exams. We'll update our [website information](#) regularly with resources, guidance and key information.

Take a look at our support for:

- [Teachers](#)
- [Students](#)
- [Exams officers](#)

Keep up-to-date

We are sending a weekly roundup to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular CPD courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. All our courses for the academic year 2021-2022 are being delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses on the relevant subject page on our [website](#) or visit [OCR professional development](#).

Signed up for Exambuilder?

ExamBuilder is the question builder platform for a range of our GCSE, A Level, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and Functional Skills qualifications. See the full list of available qualifications in the [sign up form](#).

ExamBuilder is **free for all OCR centres** with an Interchange account and gives you unlimited users per centre. We need an [Interchange](#) username to validate the identity of your centre's first user account for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Supporting you

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool.

For the Autumn 2021 series, results analysis is available for GCSE English Language, GCSE Mathematics and Cambridge Nationals (moderated units) only.

It allows you to:

- review and run analysis reports on exam performance
- analyse results at question and/or topic level
- compare your centre with OCR national averages
- identify trends across the centre
- facilitate effective planning and delivery of courses
- identify areas of the curriculum where students excel or struggle
- help pinpoint strengths and weaknesses of students and teaching departments.

Find out more at ocr.org.uk/activeresults.

Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk

For more information visit

 **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**

 **ocr.org.uk**

 **/ocrexams**

 **/ocrexams**

 **/company/ocr**

 **/ocrexams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



I like this



I dislike this



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2021 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource freely if you keep the OCR logo and this small print intact and you acknowledge OCR as the originator of the resource.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.