

**GCSE (9–1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**J351**

For first teaching in 2015

**J351/02 Summer 2022 series**

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## Introduction

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

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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

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## Paper 2 series overview

J351/02 is one of two examined components for GCSE (9-1) English Language examination which was first examined in June 2017. Each of the components follows a similar structure and tests the same assessment objectives but J351/02 assesses candidates' response to fiction texts whereas J351/01 assesses their response to non-fiction texts. The other difference is that in Question 2 of J351/01 candidates must synthesise information from two texts, a skill which is not tested in J351/02.

Candidates should prepare for this examination by practising how to read unseen literary texts with confidence and understanding. Candidates should learn how to select and interpret relevant details from the text and identify and explain features of language and structure. They must be able to identify similarities and contrasts between the texts and evaluate the impact of each text on a reader.

This component of the series worked well in terms of differentiation although candidates in the range of Level 1-3 perhaps found both reading passages rather less challenging than previously. Most of the candidates had been thoroughly prepared for the exam and knew and could demonstrate what they had to do. Centres should be congratulated on the continuing confidence and ability candidates show with Question 4. They could still score more heavily on Question 2 and Question 3.

The examiners' team enjoyed reading some lively and thoughtful essays in Section B.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allotted sufficient time to read and ponder the passages carefully and thoughtfully</li> <li>• located key moments and language points as they did so</li> <li>• considered both differences and similarities between the two texts</li> <li>• planned each response so that they were sure to cover sufficient ground when they started to write</li> <li>• remained conscious of and sensitive to the very important differences between the structure and development of each passage from outset to climax</li> <li>• took time and care to plan their writing so that it was original, came from a considered choice of alternatives, in which both tasks had been assessed for their potential</li> <li>• ensured that there was a clearly defined shape and structure to the writing with a discernible beginning, middle and end.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not read the passages with sufficient thoroughness and insight</li> <li>• did not read each passage consecutively and did not ponder similarities and differences between them</li> <li>• struggled to locate and differentiate language and structure in one or both passages</li> <li>• used much less of the space in the answer booklet to respond to the tasks</li> <li>• made no distinction in their reading and answering between the violent action of T1 with real terror from the first line to last and the much different growing psychological terror experienced in T2</li> <li>• went for the first writing scenario that occurred to them</li> <li>• did not finish or wrote at far too great a length to sustain focus and accuracy.</li> </ul>

## Section A overview

Candidates' responses showed a clear understanding of the demands of each question. In previous sessions candidates' responses to Questions 2 and 3 have shown some uncertainty about the requirements of each task in terms of what constitutes language and structure. In this session, on the other hand, most candidates organised their responses to these questions with at least similar, if not greater, effectiveness.

### Question 1 (a)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier.

1 Look again at lines 3–8.

(a) Identify **two** words or phrases which show the birds acting aggressively.

.....

..... [2]

Many candidates were able to gain 2 marks here by referring to the lists available in the mark scheme. However, the key to gaining mark/s here was firstly to select the individual words from the question parameter of lines 3 to 8, and secondly, to avoid responding in whole sentences without indicating the correct word or phrase. A number of candidates selected 'Each stab of a swooping beak tore his flesh.' thereby denying themselves the mark/s available. Other candidates typically answered with the following examples:

*'stab of a swooping beak'*

*'swooping beak tore'*

*'A black-backed gull dived down at him'*

*'rose to dive again'*

*'They kept coming at him'*

The first two in the above examples of candidates' responses gained the full 2 marks whereas the others gained 1 mark only. Of course, as noted in the mark scheme, relevant acceptable combinations of the above and the others listed in the mark scheme were perfectly acceptable and were rewarded. The key to responding accurately on 1 (a) (and 1 (b)) is that candidates should learn the basic difference between a sentence and a phrase (even at say the level of punctuation) and/or select single words twice, in response. The question rubric about 'Two words' needs to be understood in this context. A number of candidates, perhaps understandably selected *'The terrible fluttering wings'* or *'the beating wings'* for their responses. These were not credited because they each refer to flight, irrespective of whether birds are being aggressive or not.

Neither this question, nor 1 (b) or 1 (c) requires any attention to language. This is AO1: which is concerned with what the (specifically selected lines in) the passage say, not how it is said. That is AO2, Questions 2 and 3 in this paper.

### Question 1 (b)

(b) Give **one** detail which suggests that Nat is frightened.

.....  
..... [1]

Most candidates were able to score a mark on this question even though many offered two details in their responses as with the following example:

*'Nat dropped his hoe and ran towards the cottage'*  
*(or, alternatively, 'he covered his head with his arms')*

Such examples were not penalised because they have been selected and organised by the candidate and are not whole sentences lifted 'directly from the text'.

As with 1 (a), it was quite common to see responses such as the following candidate responses:

*'He hammered upon it'*  
*'He shouted loud'*  
*'He screamed'*  
*'He said 'Let me in, let me in'*

Of course, such examples did convey his fear but all of them were *taken from the wrong parts of the text* and so were not credited. Furthermore, such examples had a knock-on effect for 1 (c) because the question specifically states: 'Explain how **this** detail shows Nat is frightened'. A wrongly selected 1 (b) example meant that candidates did not gain a mark for 1 (c) irrespective of their respective explanations.

### Question 1 (c)

(c) Explain how **this** detail shows that Nat is frightened.

.....

..... [1]

The response requires a reference and an inference. If the inference refers to what has been stated in 1 (b), then it is assumed: but candidates were not penalised for starting with a different one.

Many candidates managed to identify the inference of their selected reference to fear through responses such as the following:

'Nat dropped the hoe so he could run quickly to the house'

'Nat covered his head to protect himself'

'Nat ran to the house so he could get to shelter quickly before any more birds stabbed him with their beaks'

## Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier.

2 Look again at lines 15–24.

How does Daphne du Maurier use language and structure to present the drama of Nat's escape from the attacking birds?

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
..... [6]

Most candidates managed to focus on the question of Nat's dramatic escape from the attacking birds by analysing both language and structure. Better responses not only dealt with language and structure equally but also explained the effects in some detail without repetition.

Some candidates did not focus on the set lines from the passage and included commentary on L 9-14: which could not be credited.

The most successful responses covered all the set lines which was needed to take a response to L5 or L6. Many dwelt on 'short sentences' as usual: more successful responses saw the reduction to a simple three word closure from opening statement which is more complex. The repetition of 'Let me in' and its effects was noted by almost all candidates but many fewer were able to explain the onomatopoeic effects of what follows or make links between them.

In order to gain marks on the gannet candidates had to see that it 'dropped like a stone' with a 'thud' because, like the gulls before it, it was dead. Or at least allow the examiner to assume that by not stating that it was still on the attack.

Some candidates did not write enough when responding to Question 2 and sometimes lost focus on the question. Although candidates, generally, were more accurate in their collective identification of parts of speech for this paper compared with previous papers, the rule must remain: do not use parts of speech if you aren't sure what they are or don't understand them in the first place. Candidates lose marks, sometimes because they misidentify and confuse them.



## Exemplar 1

Daphne du Maurier uses the short sentence, 'Everything was dark'. This creates suspense and adds pace to <sup>the</sup> story. Also, the use of the word, 'Everything' emphasises the total, engulfing nature of the dark which adds to Nat's fear. du Maurier uses the tricolon, 'circled, retired, soared' to emphasise the impatience of the gulls itching to get him. The repetition of the phrase "let me in" portrays Nat's desperation and utter fear which adds to the drama. The use of the gruesome image, 'bleeding hands' presents the relentless, violent attack of the birds. The use of the violent verb, 'hammered' further emphasises Nat's desperation and adds to the dramatic urgency. The use of the phrase 'whir of the gulls' wings' and specifically the noun 'whir' makes the gulls seem robotic, and mechanical, which further increases the drama of Nat's escape.

This is a very good example of a response which is concise, very clear and gets full marks. Note the balance that the candidate achieves between points on language and structure and the ways in which they counterpoint each other.

### Assessment for learning



Many candidates had not read the passage right through to the end and not understood that the outcome of the ferocious attacks is that the gulls and finally the gannet die. Certainly it is still very threatening when it is 'poised for the dive': but 'the wings folded suddenly over the body' in the moment of death and it is the corpse that 'dropped like a stone'. One can only emphasise the essential need for thorough reading and understanding *before* taking on the questions.

## Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *I'm the King of the Castle* by Susan Hill.

**3** Look again at lines 1–17.

Explore how the writer uses language and structure to present Kingshaw's developing response to the appearance of the crow.

Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.

**[12]**

Much of what should be applied to Question 2 should be applied to Question 3 with the proviso that Question 3 responses should be longer (as the answer booklet suggests) but equally detailed because there is more textual information to be analysed. Candidates should expect to cover and analyse ALL the detail in the set extracts from the passages.

There were many excellent, detailed responses to this question, sometimes spanning three to four pages. There was scope for different interpretations of the text in response to the question and such interpretations were equally rewarded providing the interpretations were supported by textual references and explained in terms of language and structure. One particular topic which divided candidates about Kingshaw's developing response to the crow was the reference to its size and its 'small glinting eyes' and 'scarlet' mouth. Some candidates argued that before becoming frightened of the crow, Kingshaw admired its beauty because it 'glided down' into the corn, and 'glinting' implied shiny, and 'scarlet' was 'a rich colour'. This interpretation was further supported by the reference to 'the great crow'. More often than not, however, the negative connotations of evil, blood and darkness were associated with the crow's appearance and the horrible screech of its 'hoarse caaw'.

There was much to say about the structure of these three paragraphs which a good number of candidates might have done more justice to. The sentences are arranged to show, exactly as the question states, 'Kingshaw's developing response'. So that, for example, the references to the crow's mouth: para 1: 'inside of its mouth was scarlet' is intensified in proportion to the child's growing fear and self-consciousness and repeatedly closer proximity of the bird, into its amplification in para 3: 'hoarse caaw.... from *inside* the scarlet mouth'.

The second paragraph acts as a break from the intensification of the bird's actions and turns its focus to (as many candidates started to observe) what is going on in Kingshaw's head. There is no alternative interpretation to seeing that he tries and fails to rationalise his way out of a fearful situation. Hence the third paragraph is shorter and more intense than the first, dealing with one dramatic action of the crow which triggers the child's flight.

## Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The Birds*, and **Text 2**, *I'm the King of the Castle*.

4 'Both texts powerfully present people terrified by the power of nature.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss the characters' different experiences of nature
- explain how far both are experiences of being terrified
- compare the ways the writers present people terrified by nature.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

[18]

There were some excellent critical evaluations achieved through sustained interwoven comparisons. Many candidates recycled material from their Question 2 and Question 3 responses but were careful to use the material as part of the wider evaluation as opposed to just analysis. There were many textual aspects compared such as context, character, type of attack, ending and so on. There was disagreement about whether the physical assault on Nat – a man – was more fearful than the growing psychological unease of the boy, Kingshaw. The majority of candidates had been well prepared for this task and it was pleasing to see that candidates kept returning to the question statement in order to keep focus.

Although it was perfectly possible to achieve good marks by agreeing with the task's proposition, many candidates disagreed to good effect, seeing that whereas the gulls are the instrument in T1 and Nat the agent, the roles are reversed in T2. This underpins the continuous horror of T1 as opposed to the gradual build-up of apprehension and dread in T2. Put more simply, candidates wrote words to the effect that 'anyone would have been as terrified as Nat in the circumstances but who would have behaved like Kingshaw over a single crow? It's because he was already being bullied'.

Finally, there was much (more in some cases) to say about the respective closures of each text.

After all the dramatic terror of the gulls and the gannet, Nat at least manages to find safety in the cottage and the support of his wife. Kingshaw, on the other hand, goes from a situation of pleasant safety (walking in a cornfield) to severe trauma of weeping as he 'keels over, going straight downwards'. We are left, by contrast, on knife edge suspense.

## Exemplar 2

Both texts powerfully present people terrified by the power of nature. In text 1, Nat has to escape a flock of aggressive birds, whilst in text 2, Kingshaw flees from a Chasing Crow.

In Text 1, it says "Nat <sup>covering</sup> covered his head with his arms, he ran towards the cottage". The use of "Covering his head with his arms" connotes fear, and could be interpreted as him trying to mentally hide himself from the birds. This fear is also present later in the extract when Nat says "He hammered upon the door with bleeding hands". "Bleeding hands" shows that he has been significantly injured and weakened by the birds, whilst "hammered the door" connotes franticness and desperation.\*

In text 2, it says "Kingshaw began to

run, wanting to get away", which connotes fear, as the ~~moment~~ This fear is also present in the tricolon of simple sentences towards the end of the extract: "He looked up, The crow kept on ~~running~~ coming, He ran" However, I think that Text 1 more powerfully presents fear of nature, as the shift from the scene being calm to one of fear is more abrupt, and ~~that~~ seems more scared than Kingshaw.

\* The sense of desperation is also seen when it says "He screamed" implying that he is terrified.

This is a middle range response which is on the right lines but might have gone so much further in terms of scope and detail. The lack of interwoven AO3 points is salutary and the lack of development of the evaluative points is equally so.

## Section B overview

It would seem candidates warmed to the two titles below with, perhaps, Topic 5 being the more popular. There were some truly excellent stories which belied the limited time available within the confines of an examination. The vast majority of candidates managed the time spent on Section A and time spent on Section B very well. What was particularly pleasing was that those candidates who found spelling problematic, were not dissuaded from writing detailed, imaginative responses and therefore gaining deserved AO5 marks. As always, some candidates often found it difficult to stay with one main tense, and sentence punctuation errors were also a challenge for some. As always, there were more candidates whose writing was stronger than their reading than vice versa.

### Question 5

**5** *The Power of Nature.*

Use this as the title for a story.

You should:

- choose a clear viewpoint
- describe the setting
- explore your characters' thoughts and feelings about their experience.

[40]\*

There were many imaginative accounts of the power of nature in a range of contexts. Some of these accounts focused on the destructive side of nature by way of storms and tsunamis and so on. Many candidates chose to write about the (often destructive) power of human nature very successfully. What was impressive overall was the often faultless control over the writing and the use of language techniques learned from their reading skills and applied to their own writing.

### Exemplar 3

*S. The power of nature.*

*A Kaleidoscope of red, orange and yellow leaves carpeted the ground. Bare trees stood tall, clinging onto their last dying leaves right before winter hits. The air was thin and bitter, nibbling away at all the hairs on my skin.*

A reflection could be seen in the water; the dim stars were hidden away by the a blanket of grey clouds. I saw my face in <sup>the water</sup> it too.

An old man stared back at me, his <sup>wrinkles</sup> ~~wrinkled~~ made his <sup>skin</sup> ~~face~~ seem detached from his face. His once-black hair had disintegrated and become grey, blending in with the clouds. His clothes seemed rough, as if he hadn't washed them or taken them off in years. There was stains on his trousers too, mud on his knees.

Surprised, I looked back up from the ~~ten~~ pond, watching a path reveal itself as a gust of wind shaved the leaves to <sup>reveal a</sup> ~~reveal~~ ruined concrete path.

Every step I took led me closer and closer to a log; yet the ground became colder and colder.

It was a log. Only a log; that had clearly fallen over and left to be <sup>embattered</sup> ~~overcome~~ overwhelmed by layers of <sup>moss</sup> ~~moss~~ and dirt. The roots had trekked a way back into the dirt, dispersing like snakes digging deeper into

the wet ground.

A wave of silence overpowered me, as if the  
all the ~~hawking~~ <sup>crying</sup> birds had gone silent,  
to watch me trek ant towards the log.

Slowly and cautiously, I raised my arm onto  
the lichen of the log. It was as if  
time had slowed down, at which <sup>point</sup> an ant  
crept up from the log onto my hand,  
directing my eyes to an engraving on  
the log.

"Z + C", enclosed in an awkwardly-drawn heart.

All the memories came back to me at that  
moment. I remembered reading books with her,  
sat on this log. I remembered playing games  
with her, sat on this log. I remembered  
loving her, sat on this log.

Because that's the power of nature - it kills  
everyone you love.

This shows what you can do with two sides of clear, ever intensifying suspenseful narrative. There are some very skilful concise moments, especially the narcissus reversal moment with the pond which is the first critical step in the revelations which follow.



## Question 6

6 Write about a time when you experienced something you did not expect.

You should write about:

- why that experience was unexpected
- how the experience affected your thoughts and feelings
- the way you feel about that experience now.

[40]\*

Responses to this topic were typically more personal and perhaps some of the accounts had in fact actually happened. Many of these responses were very powerful, particularly when it came to fond personal memories, bereavement and loss:

*'I accepted it the way it was but I didn't want to accept what happened when I cam (sic) home from school one day too. My sister was upstairs crying and I didn't know why. I wanted to go to her but my parents gestured for me to sit down. So I sat.*

*'Your dad and I have decided that he should move out.'*

\*\*\*

*'I squinted. To the left hand side of the huge slab of grey rock I could just make out a singular centimetre of pink fabric poking out. A toothy grin broke out over my face.*

*'Found you!'*

*Olivia and I giggled excitedly.*

As always, one felt that in the privacy of the examination hall candidates were much readier to frame and adapt powerful moments of personal or imagined personal experience than they might otherwise have been elsewhere.

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