

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

H474

For first teaching in 2015

H474/01 Summer 2024 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

Paper 1 contains one question. Candidates are asked to write a comparative analysis of the ways in which language is used to convey meaning. Text A is from the OCR (EMC) Anthology; Text B is an unseen non-fiction passage and can be either originally written or spoken.

To do well, candidates need to be able to:

- use their Anthology text to good effect, demonstrating genuine understanding of the text's purposes(s) as well as contexts of production and reception
- demonstrate an understanding of the unseen text, including its purpose(s) as well as contexts of production and reception
- apply a range of relevant concepts, methods and subject-specialist terminology accurately and to good effect to analyse both texts
- take a genuinely and consistently comparative approach, allowing the texts to shed light on each other.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made rich, agile and purposeful AO4 connections which had been planned with care • moved between the two texts approximately equally, allowing them to shed light on each other (AO4) • balanced AO2 and AO3 comment approximately equally and, in the strongest responses, synthesised analysis and contextual comment • selected relevant AO1 concepts and methods and made apt choices of terminology, evincing advanced-level study beyond GCSE • made nuanced AO3 comment about contexts of production, contexts of reception, and generic conventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made AO4 connections that were glancing, based on binary modality, and/or were undeveloped • tended towards more descriptive/narrative AO3 contextual comment rather than integrating this comment with AO2 analysis • returned the wording of the question at length, incorporating binary comment on modality (AO3) • used AO1 concepts, methods and terminology that were not relevant to the text pairing • used AO1 concepts, methods and terminology that were more accessible. In some responses, there was little evidence of advanced-level study of the subject.

Question 1

Text A from the anthology is an extract from Captain Scott's diary entries (March 1912) which documents the final days of Scott's return journey from the South Pole. The diary was discovered alongside his body.

Text B is the start of a speech given by Sara Safari in 2017. Sara set out to be the first Iranian woman in history to climb the Seven Summits (the highest mountain in each of the seven continents). In this TED Talk, she describes her decision to climb the first Summit (Mount Everest) and her journey from teaching engineering to climbing mountains.

- 1 Carefully read the **two** texts and compare the ways in which the writer in **Text A** and the speaker in **Text B** use language to convey meaning.

In your answer you should analyse the impact that the different contexts have on language use, including for example, mode, purpose and audience. [32]

Most candidates began their responses with some form of introductory overview of the two texts, often outlining salient features of the contexts of both. As with previous series, in the strongest responses the introductions were succinct and relevant, providing an introductory survey and demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the texts' contexts of production and reception. Some candidates used the introduction as a thesis opening to their response, outlining their connections in summary form. When kept brief and relevant, this was a helpful approach and often provided a steer for the rest of the essay.

As with previous series, extended introductions providing extensive biographical context, binary modal comment, and/or returning the wording of the question are unlikely to help orientate the candidate for the rest of the response. Candidates would be better advised to use this time carefully to plan a more succinct and focused response. Examiners did see evidence of planning across the range of attainment Levels; in some responses, the plan seemed to have taken a significant amount of time to produce with a consequently much shorter response.

Most candidates considered the intrinsically dangerous and ground-breaking elements of both texts and understood that both Scott and Safari were threatened by nature and the prospect of death. Many candidates made the linkage that Scott died, and Safari survived. In the strongest responses, candidates went beyond this binary distinction and discussed the different purposes of the two texts, with Scott's final diary entries recognised as an attempt to memorialise his team and their experiences in unimaginable conditions and their endurance in the face of impending mortality. This was contrasted with Safari's use of her speech to inspire and motivate others because of her experiences and her responses in the near-death moments.

Many candidates commented on generic conventions as observed or flouted in both texts. In stronger responses, candidates recognised the contextually problematic nature of Scott's diary and made nuanced comment on it as anticipated public record, scientific log, repository of personal thoughts, doubts and feelings and, ultimately, as a final testament. Many candidates commented on the progressively shorter and more elliptical nature of the entries, linking this insightfully to the environmental, physical and mental conditions of Scott and his team. In stronger responses, candidates used this contextual comment to analyse how Scott conveyed his thoughts and feelings about the team's situation. In less strong responses, the comment remained at the level of linking the shorter entries to Scott's physical decline, but without comment on Scott's own words.

Connections and Comparisons (AO4)

The vast majority of responses in this series contained some comparison of the two texts. There was less stand-alone treatment of the texts than we have seen in some series, and most candidates at all levels made genuine attempts to compare. The descriptor 'explore' in relation to connections begins as low down the mark scheme as the bottom of Level 3, so candidates need to be doing more than 'make' connections to achieve beyond Level 2 for AO4. Although this component's Assessment Objectives are not heavily weighted, AO4 is still the dominant AO and the extent to which a candidate makes agile, insightful and sustained comparison can be a significant distinguishing factor in the overall marking of a response.

Successful candidates explored at least three different connections throughout their response. Comparative topic sentences were also used by candidates who did well, which clearly set out the comparison being made. This was followed by integration of AO1, AO2 and AO3, with further connections made between the texts throughout the exploration. The most successful candidates made multiple exploratory connections between the texts throughout their response.

As with previous series, the strongest answers responded with agility to the specific text pairing when making connections, rather than forcing the texts into a pre-planned comparative framework which was not always apt for the texts given. In stronger responses, candidates started with a similarity or difference which was thematic, contextual or based on a feature of language or structure, then made several movements between the texts based on this connection before moving on to the next comparative point.

While some candidates made connections based on linguistic concepts and methods such as figurative language, lexis and semantics and syntax, others used thematic and contextual connections, such as exploring the representation of hope in both texts and the contrast between Scott's stoicism and Safari's display of emotion, or their different reactions when confronted with the reality of death (but then problematised this with the different temporal durations/social contexts). Candidates who made these connections successfully also often embedded perceptive AO3 contextual comment on, for example, different social attitudes towards death and the overt expression of emotion.

Less successful candidates based their comparisons around simple differences in context, such as written and spoken mode. Some candidates identified these comparisons but then wrote about the texts separately. Some candidates used comparative discourse markers such as 'similarly' when moving between texts, but without making a meaningful comparison. In some responses, candidates were clearly making a meaningful comparison but had not identified it as such, and this can be self-penalising as it is left to the examiner to decide if a comparison was intended.

Many candidates concluded their responses with a summary comparative paragraph containing little or no analysis. While this may have acted as a reflective checking point for candidates to summarise the content of their responses, it did not often garner much credit. Many candidates would have been better advised to use this time to either write another comparison or to plan with care at the start of the exam.

Successful points of comparison included:

- both are facing extreme weather conditions
- both make use of figurative language
- both are close to death but react differently

- both use self-deprecating humour
- both have a sense of audience/audience address
- both present nature as a hostile force
- different structures (linear versus cyclical) and how these reflect contexts and purposes
- different attitudes to showing emotion linked to social norms (stoic/understated versus overt/emotional)
- different uses of pronouns
- both have a sense of hope/hopelessness.

Exemplar 1

1		<p>Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lexis + Semantics • Grammar • Phonology • Pragmatics (Context) • Discourse (Genre) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face Theory: $\neq \checkmark/x$ - T/V/Con/Divergence - <u>Overt/Covert Prestige</u> - Grice's Maxims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Qual (Truth), Quant, Rel, Manner (Clear).
		<p>• Context = Beaten to Pole by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, found w/ his body, Documents their last days.</p>	
			multimodal
		<p>A = Writer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G: diary entry • A: British Public • S: journey back from South Pole • P: Ensure seen as heroic, convey struggle + ensure families looked after • Tone = dark + serious 	<p>B = Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Formal • G: speech • A: TED Talk + ppl w/ low motivation • S: her decision to climb • P: encourage others + tell story • Tone = motivational + excited
		<p>⊗ Stats to show expertise!</p> <p>✓ ② Imagery</p> <p>③ Tone → due to beat to pole / likely succeeded</p> <p>④ Era diggs!</p>	

		Text A is a diary entry written by Captain Scott on the way back from the South Pole, where he was beaten to the pole by Norwegian explorer Roald Admunsen Admunsen. Scott writes for the purpose of ensuring the British public view him and his team as heroic, to convey the suffering of him and his team and to ensure the men's families are looked after back home in England if Scott and his team do not make it back from the expedition. Conversely, text B is a speech given by Sara Sagan as a TED talk (a usually informative speech given by experts in a field). She speaks for the purpose of telling her story of climbing ^{Mount} Everest and the the motivating factors that led her there, likely to motivate others to pursue a huge task that they believe they could never achieve.
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In Exemplar 1, this candidate has planned their AO4 comparisons with care and the opening paragraph sets a clear and succinct trajectory for the rest of the well-structured and consistently comparative response. There is some lack of nuance in the AO3 comment on Scott's diary, but also some insight going well beyond returning the wording of the question and binary comment on differences in mode.

Further Resources to Support AO4 Comparison



The OCR Teacher Guide for the Anthology gives potential foil texts for the Anthology texts. These could be used as practice unseen paired texts to help students to plan meaningful AO4 connections in timed conditions.

Concepts, methods, and terminology (AO1)

One strand of AO1 concerns written expression, and there was a pleasing array of essay voices in evidence, with most candidates demonstrating a high level of clarity in their written expression. There were few responses which lacked fluency. On these occasions, a candidate had attempted a highly academic register, but without the underpinning skills to check their writing for coherence.

The A Level exams come at the end of a two-year programme of advanced-level study of the subject. Candidates have built on their understanding of the study of language and literature throughout their school and college careers and will, of course, draw on concepts, methods and terminology that they have learned throughout this whole time. In less successful responses to this paper, however, there was often little evidence of English study beyond GCSE.

Candidate *can* use GCSE-level terminology well and to good effect when linked to insightful analysis and contextual comment, for example Safari's use of a simile or Scott's personification of the weather. Where this went beyond GCSE comment, this was handled very well indeed. Candidates achieving in the lower Levels of the mark scheme, however, tended towards more routine AO2 linkage and AO3 commentary, for example 'this persuades the listener' or 'this makes the reader want to read on'.

As with previous series, some candidates identified a feature but then quoted more extensively, making it difficult to credit the accuracy of the identification. This can be easily resolved by the candidate underlining the precise part(s) of longer quotations for clarity.

In the mark scheme '[...] *relevant* concepts and methods' is a descriptor at all levels, and candidates have to evince at least '[...] some *appropriate* terminology' to get into the bottom of Level 3 for AO1. In the strongest responses, candidates made apt selection of a range of relevant concepts, methods and terminology and applied these insightfully and consistently to their comparative analysis.

In less successful responses, as in previous series, the AO1 selection was often not apt for the text pairing, not varied, or not always indicative of a candidate at the end of an advanced-level programme of English study. Aristotle's *pisteis*, for example, were used extensively in responses, often with limited success. The spoken nature and rhetorical features of Safari's speech did lend themselves to this application. Many candidates, however, then attempted a parallel application to Text A, commenting for example on Scott's 'use of logos' in recording the weather conditions or using 'specialist jargon' to lend himself credibility. There was often fair comment on Safari's use of pathos in her description of her near-death experience, but the subsequent attempted links to Text A often evinced an insecure understanding of the nature of the diary, presenting Scott's writing more as crafted rhetoric or narrative fiction.

Some candidates applied concepts and theory to the texts. When done well, this comment was genuinely insightful. Some candidates, for example, commented on synthetic personalisation in Text B and examined its motivational purpose and direct address, then moved to direct address in the appeal at the end of Text A, or compared the use of pronouns in both texts and used Critical Discourse Analysis in relation to Text A. Some candidates made comment on genderlect, and this was most insightful when linked to contexts of production and social attitudes and mores (e.g. early 20th century ideas about masculine stoicism and patriotism versus Safari having the courage to defy social norms but also displaying emotion and acknowledging fear).

Less insightful application of concepts included, as in previous series, Grice's Maxims applied here to a written text and a planned non-interactive speech. Some candidates attempted to use Goffman's Face Theory - with some success if nuanced comment was made on Safari and Scott's self-deprecating humour, although this was not really an apt selection. Comment on Accommodation Theory was not helpful, with candidate assertions about Safari's downward/upward convergence suggesting an insecure understanding of the concept.

Some responses evinced misunderstandings of Scott's language, with his idiomatic use of 'ass' labelled as taboo language and the reference to 'spirit' misread as morale. Some candidates commented on Scott's archaic lexis, but then made analytical points which were either routine '[...] this is because he was writing in 1912' or misread the diary as deliberately crafted to 'sound old-fashioned'.

Successful AO1 application included:

- the use of figurative language to present the extreme weather conditions
- the use of questions in both texts and their different purposes and effects
- pronouns and possessive determiners, including direct address
- narrative structures, linear versus cyclical and links to contexts and purposes
- word class identification when done well and linked to meaning, e.g. the sentence-final italicised use of the adverb 'nearly' in Text A and the use of verbs to indicate near-death experience in Text B
- modality and modal verbs, to indicate stoicism and duty in text A and sensory deprivation and helplessness in Text B
- syntax, including elliptical and minor constructions to reflect experiences, both 'real' and co-occurring in Text A and retrospective and crafted in Text B
- use of aural techniques linked to meaning and effect
- use of humour and self-deprecation
- use of colloquialisms and their effects
- different ways of referring to death.

Understanding of the significance and influence of contexts (AO3)

In the mark scheme, there is a marked difference in the descriptors for AO3 between contextual 'awareness' (Levels 1-3) and 'understanding' (Levels 4-6). Candidates who made most of their AO3 comment on binary differences in mode and genre or degrees of planning/spontaneity tended to be limited to Levels 1-3 by not demonstrating understanding of the significance and impact of contextual factors on language use.

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of Text A as the 'seen' Anthology text and were able to situate the diary in its social and historical contexts. In stronger responses, there was very sensitive understanding of both contexts of production and reception. At the very top end, candidates recognised the ground-breaking nature of the Terra Nova Expedition and how difficult it is for a modern reader to understand the unique nature of Scott's experience. There was also a nuanced understanding that the deep sympathy we feel when reading the diary comes from the fact that we know the outcome and what ultimately happened to the men.

In stronger responses, candidates made very perceptive comments on contemporary early 20th century social mores and expectations including different ideas about duty, patriotism, stoicism and religious belief. Candidates were able to link Scott's writing to his role as an experienced military officer, seasoned explorer, and leader. There was more open-minded (but not laboured) commentary on the diary's different functions and intended possible audiences.

Most candidates made comment on the decreasing size and gradually more elliptical nature of Scott's diary entries and the contextual reasons for this. Stronger responses tied this comment insightfully to Scott's own words and how he represents the brutality of the experience and its effects both on him and on his team.

In less successful responses, candidates made more generalised comments about the nature of the diary, for example asserting that its sole audience was intended to be Scott himself, but without recognising the broader contextual concerns around Scott's writing. Some candidates identified Scott's final valediction as a standard generic convention, evincing insecure understanding of contemporary generic contexts.

Candidates seemed very comfortable with the genre and persuasive and motivational nature of Text B and most were able to situate the text well in its contexts of production and reception. In less secure responses, candidates tended towards less nuanced, more GCSE-style analysis of the speech with more routine linkages to analysis of meaning, e.g. '[...] this makes the reader [sic] want to climb mountains', or the use of rhetorical questions '[...] makes the audience think'.

In more successful responses, candidates made pertinent comments on Safari's self-presentation and self-deprecation and linked this to her motivational purpose, often integrating comment on the trope of 'Everest' and how Safari overcame challenges and fears. Subtler contextual commentary recognised Safari as atypical of extreme mountaineers and situated her self-presentation in its motivational context '[...] Safari seems to be saying that if I can do it anyone can'.

Across both texts, the most successful responses demonstrated sustained sensitivity to the real-world contexts of both texts and were able, conceptually, to slot them back into their places.

Directly Parallel AO3 Comparisons

Directly parallel comparisons based on purpose do not always translate well across both texts and candidates should be advised to make comparisons apt and tailored for the specific text pairing. In this paper, for example, some candidates asserted that both texts' primary purpose is to persuade people to undertake (or not undertake) expeditions in extreme environments and this evinced insecure contextual understanding.

Analysis of ways meanings are shaped (AO2)

As in previous series, the amount of analysis in evidence tended to correspond to the strength of a response. In responses in the lower mark Levels, AO2 linkage and analysis tended to be significantly sparser than the AO3 comment.

While AO2 is the least weighted assessment objective, this weighting is not great, and candidates should be reminded of the first part of the question wording '[...] compare the *ways* in which the writer in **Text A** and the speaker in **Text B** use *language to convey meaning*'. Candidates are explicitly guided here to comment on how meaning is created in addition to the influence of mode and other contextual factors. A distinguishing feature of mid to higher Level responses is that they include AO2 analysis of meaning alongside contextual comment. In the mid-range, this tended to be approximately equally balanced between AO2 and AO3. At the top end, AO2 and AO3 comment tended to be consistently synthesised and symbiotic.

Some of the stronger AO2 comment made in this series included:

- the use of modal verbs in both texts: 'shall' in Text A giving a sense of stoic determination commensurate with the calibre of the men and societal expectations, and in Text B, the repetition of the negated modal 'couldn't' creating a contrasting sense of lack of agency and powerlessness in the face of nature

- the use of interrogatives, rhetorical, hypophora, but for different purposes, e.g. to indicate candid and grave uncertainty in Text A and as a rhetorical feature to engage the audience in Text B
- the use of self-deprecating humour in both texts - the idiomatic simile 'like an ass' and the plosive alliteration in the noun phrase 'proud possessor of best feet' creating grim humour in Text A; Safari's self-representation as antithetical to the typical mountaineer with her syndeton of descriptive declaratives describing her lack of aptitude and experience in paragraph 8 of Text B
- the different approaches to describing their physical experiences, with Scott's use of litotes '[...] foot which is not pleasant to contemplate' understating the grim reality of his physical condition and Safari's overt expression of her distress with emotive dynamic verbs 'shaking', 'sobbing'. This was often then linked to perceptive AO3 contextual comment on societal norms and values
- the use of figurative language in both texts to create a sense of nature as a powerful aggressor or antagonist. Personification used in Text A 'weather doesn't give us a chance' and the onomatopoeic simile in Text B 'roared like a rocket taking off'. In both texts, humans are impotent in the face of extreme natural forces
- both texts use different ways to refer to death: 'it shall be natural' and 'the end'. Use of euphemistic pronoun and noun phrase in Text A and the verb 'end' in Text B, with both demonstrating an acceptance of the inevitability of death but in different socio-cultural contexts
- the use of syntax, both incidental and deliberately shaped. The increasingly elliptical syntax in Text A reflective of Scott's deteriorating physical and mental condition. In Text B, the use of the minor sentence 'The highest mountain in the world' to emphasise starkly the scale of the feat Safari is about to reveal. The use and placing of questions in Safari's speech as discourse markers
- the impact of different pronouns reflective of inclusivity and comradeship in Text A and the solo nature of Safari's expedition in Text B
- direct address used in both texts, at the end of Text A as a plea and deictically in Text B to address the audience for motivational purposes.

AO2 Inclusion

Candidates should be encouraged to check at planning stage that their comparative points give approximately equal scope for AO2 analysis of meaning alongside AO3 contextual comment. Neglecting AO2 analysis is a self-limiting approach and tends to demonstrate an insecure understanding of the texts' core meanings.

Exemplar 2

		<p>In Text B, Sara also comes in close proximity to her death, however ^{she} survives, which gives her ^{gives} this speech ^{speech} high significance as the audience will be out in front of someone who had, at one point, comprehended a profound phenomenon ^{concept} many humans struggle to understand - death. Sara states she ^{that} 'strangely, I felt at peace' in a short declarative sentence that would likely be spoken with a pause. The opening address shows the comp ^{complexity} behind different human reactions to death, showing the audience for ^{an} opinion of something many few get to experience. The speech was likely prepared by ^{for} to ensure the author's key points, however it has ^{it has} a spontaneous conversational tone to it ^{and this} and this is highly evident through its narrative story like conventions as she tells the audience her experience. Sara uses figurative language to convey the emotional aspect to her experience, which gives her speech an ^{making her speech} unconventional as she is not trying to be persuasive to her audience by any means. Sara states 'it roared like a rocket' when describing the chunk of ice that almost killed her, making use of zoomorphism in the animatistic verb 'roared' to show the inferiority she felt towards nature at this point. She creates a dynamic of the ice as a predator and herself as prey, creating an anticipatory tone to her speech as if she was telling the audience a story. This ^{This} creates patience ^{patience} in the audience as they too comprehend the fear she felt as she began to comprehend the possibility of her death.</p>
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Exemplar 2 is extracted from a Level 6 response and focuses on a comparison of how Scott and Safari react to the possibility of death (this section relates to Text B). The response exemplifies the integration of salient contextual comment (AO3) alongside insightful analysis (AO2) as well as the use of relevant terminology (AO1).

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