

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

H074

For first teaching in 2015

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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.

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Paper 2 series overview

The style of the paper is well established with single questions on each of the novels and poetry collections based on extracts from the works. Although more often candidates would admit to being challenged to a much greater extent by having to analyse poetry than writing on a prescribed prose text, it is the case that the passage-based task on a studied novel is in practice not necessarily the easier of the two test areas.

Performance seemed similar to previous sessions and the small number of texts studied has not grown despite the appearance of two new poetry collections chosen to meet the need to offer more diverse literature. For the Prose, centres chose between *The Great Gatsby*, *Jane Eyre* and *Things Fall Apart* and ignored the other options. The number of collections studied for Poetry was also just three: selected Emily Dickinson, Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and *Rapture* by Carol Ann Duffy.

As the tasks are equally weighted on the paper, both marked out of 25, it is essential that candidates spend the same amount of time on each section and in the main that was the case. However, the format of the Poetry section seemed less of a surprise to candidates: there were several candidates who found responding to a novel by addressing two bullet points in relation to a set passage something of a trial.

Teaching of close reading skills

Possibly because of the way poetry is taught in the classroom, candidates concentrated on the two poems provided with greater focus than the passage from the novel. There was a tendency for responses to the prose texts to look at some features in detail, but to go for general concerns and larger themes too quickly. On the evidence of scripts seen, there could be more attention given to extract study from novels to meet the demands of the task and the challenge of the Assessment Objectives.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focused soundly on the tasks were able to use a range of contextual features led with points about the passage rather than whole text material in Question A were able to connect points so their responses possessed cohesion had mature or at least clear and considered expression were able to move deftly between poems in Section B used terminology and identification of features as a way to explore effects used what was given to them thoroughly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote on the text(s) without channelling their ideas throughout via the given task stuck to one contextual idea rather than moving through a range such as social-historical-political; biographical; genre used the passage as a springboard to whole text concerns without enough close analysis of the given extract moved from one thing to the next without much consideration of order or priority expressed themselves in a loose, maybe colloquial, fashion with surface errors present had clumsy transitions between poems in their discussion feature-spotted were unbalanced in their treatment of bullet points (Section A) or the two poems (Section B).

Section A overview

Most candidates knew their novel but did not have much strategy in terms of how to address the question, which was surprising given it is a standard formation. Many candidates started at the beginning, worked through the middle and finished towards the end of the piece. This going-through approach is acceptable, but too often the sense of the ways in which the story is told is somewhat taken for granted rather than explicitly focused upon even though writing about these ways is the main instruction for the task. Perhaps somewhat inevitably, some answers lacked some merit as a line of attack, but rather privileged plot. It would be useful to give candidates a basic structure where they look at description, action and dialogue – these three aspects supplying an entry into ‘ways’ the story is conveyed. These are broad areas but do allow a focus on the first bullet point, ‘techniques’. In most instances the prescribed passage will have such material and this three-part format will prove useful.

The second bullet point was better handled and, for better candidates, did not need to be a second section, but could be integrated in the answer to the task as a whole where narrative techniques are explored. Some candidates were happier with this invitation to use whole-text knowledge and achieving the right balance between the two bulleted strands became their challenge. The marking was responsive to writing that used the passage as an entry into a larger consideration of the novel’s story or embedded response to the extract as part of the wider exploration of story; but candidates need to be careful not to be seen to be avoiding the passage in favour of some pre-learnt agenda which dominates their answer booklet. Prior preparation is desirable, but offloading what has been revised and only superficially employing the board-selected material or using it well for only a rather short section of their answer goes against the notion of a prescribed passage for comment.

Misconception



There is a misconception that whole-text knowledge trumps close reading skills. Too often candidates moved away from the passage to whole-text concerns, which -- while relevant -- were more to the candidates’ interests, but not really satisfying AO2. An extract that is provided should be thoroughly explored and its fine detail interrogated.

Question 1

1 Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

Write about the ways in which Charlotte Brontë tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

[25]

This question was well done overall, although there were not many centres picking up this option.

There was plenty of description of Rochester to consider; Gothic elements to explore; a relationship starting to build towards the end of the passage creating anticipation after the reflective section. There was also speech that could be looked at, although that was often glossed over as candidates were more interested in this first encounter with Rochester and his looking over Jane and not revealing who he was. Only the most adept considered the notions of power and judgement running through the piece.

The passage was so rich that candidates managed not to skew their answers overly towards the second bullet point and were able to comment on matters relating to the genre that were integral to the extract: Gothicism, social position, romantic attraction.

Question 2

2 F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Write about the ways in which F Scott Fitzgerald tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

[25]

Most of the candidates wrote on this text and it was handled in different ways. Some had the appropriate focus on the extract; some were keen to respond to the mention of Daisy to write about doomed love and of the swimming pool as a hint of Gatsby's demise. These are points worth making, but when treated for too long unbalanced some answers, with the result that the wealth of material in the passage was not always discussed.

Candidates who considered dialogue often made large and broad claims about interactions between Nick and Gatsby when this exchange was from early in their relationship and benefitted from close reading.

Some candidates did too much with the initial description of the house, showing the need to have a plan or strategy covering several bases.

Exemplar 1

2	<p>In the given extract, Fitzgerald uses the homodiegetic narrator of Nick Carraway to criticise, condemn and explore the behaviour and life style led by the materialistic wealthy business men in the 'Roaring Twenties.'</p> <p>Significantly, the extract begins with light imagery, which is a key symbol and motif throughout the novel, implemented by Fitzgerald to explore the conventions of 'fame.' Carraway explains calmly 'I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire.' The temporal adverbial phrase 'for a moment' conveys the limit of the fear Nick felt, simply understating it to a mere 'moment', perhaps foregrounding the idea and recurring theme that every feeling and every event is restricted by the law of time; everything is temporary - wealth, happiness, life. Fire is often described a metaphorical configuration of passion and intensity in literature, here, Fitzgerald conforms to this and highlights how the passion between Daisy and Gatsby (as referenced later in the extract) is temporary and perhaps foolish, just as Nick appears at the revelation that his house is - in fact - not on fire. This foreshadows the unsuccessful result of Gatsby's</p>
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continual pursuit for Daisy.

Furthermore, this use of collected, ordinary language from Nick: 'for a moment' and the adverbial frontal phrase 'burning a corner' is used with the intent of presenting himself as ~~some~~ somewhat unbothered by the event of his house being on fire. Carraway is attempting to separate himself from the corrupted behaviour of the upper classes, showing he is not infatuated by the prospect of material things. ~~Nick is~~ Carraway is therefore attempting to place himself on a moral high ground in comparison to other characters, revealing his bias for when he later appears to condemn Gatsby's behaviour.

In this extract, dialogue is used to present the shift in dynamic between the pair of Gatsby and Carraway. Nick repeatedly uses declaratives when conversing with Gatsby - 'It's too late', 'I've got to go to bed.' Here, Carraway is using positive face to respectfully decline Gatsby's offers and maintain the relationship, though there is an underlying passive tone suggesting that Nick does not wish to spend time with Gatsby. Perhaps Carraway is retrospectively narrating in this

manner to create an assumed distance between himself and Gatsby, thereby separating him from Gatsby's later referenced criminal activities.

On the other hand, Gatsby appears eager to speak to and please ~~Gatsby~~ Carraway - '[correcting him] quickly' and through the repeated phrase 'I don't want to put you to any trouble.' Though this ^{temporarily} establishes Gatsby as a pitiful character, it is structurally effective to convey Gatsby's tendency to manipulate those around him as he successively mentions a 'little thing' and questions Nick's interest in participating in his 'little business'. The ~~pre-mod~~ repeated use of the pre-modifying adjective 'little' connotes how Gatsby wishes to euphemise and conceal his criminal behaviour, and is apprehensive of Nick's response. It also signifies the lack of attainability and guilt the rich possess for their immoral actions. The ~~per~~ parenthesis in the line 'if you don't make very much - You're selling bonds, aren't you...?' ~~states~~ illustrates Gatsby's verbal hesitation and false start which highlights how he is nervous to reveal his true money.

		source to Nick.
		Though Nick may appear innocent in this exchange and as a morally righteous character, a sophisticated readership can appreciate that this is Nick's desired perception of himself, he represents the typical, contemporary, wealthy American - his outlook revolves around condemning other's behaviour whilst remaining blissfully ignorant that they are a participant in the problem. For example, Tom Nick's excursion with Tom to meet, and party with, his mistress Myrtle or his attempt in this extract to reunite the married Daisy with Gatsby. It is clearly contradictory for Nick to present himself as innocent. his use of the

Exemplar 1 responds to Section A (Question 2) producing clear and developed work overall, despite some technical solecisms (e.g. "meer" for "mere") and a loose structure at times (the second paragraph for instance moves between a range of points – light, time and fire). It has terminology (AO1); addresses meaning (AO2); and demonstrates relevant contextual understanding (AO3). Its security in Level 5 seems unarguable, but it could be sharper in terms of organisation.

Question 3

3 Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*

Write about the ways in which Chinua Achebe tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

[25]

There were some responses to this task. Candidates were often very knowledgeable about the text, but less able to stay with the passage and integrate their whole text information with what had been provided for comment. Big ideas such as colonisation and the need to move away from a somewhat stereotyped traditional view of African race and culture at times dominated answers.

Often candidates were happier with the start of the passage rather than what came later.

The storytelling focus really needs strong emphasis on this text, given its ideological impact has clearly been an important part of the teaching. It might be helpful to differentiate between the purpose of the text and the purpose of the extract and to stress that, while both are important, the extract should not just be treated as a springboard to more conceptual thematic concerns.

Section B overview

The poetry tasks were better done in the main than the answers on the Prose texts, possibly because the balance between the two selected poems had been established over the years of the Specification as needing to be pretty even. The emphasis on comparison was considered in the majority of responses too: there may have been some see-sawing between texts, but that was better than two juxtaposed mini-essays with cursory attempts to link the two halves. The task stem for Section B instructions privileges stylistic analysis ('language and poetic techniques') and this was in evidence, although candidates tended to lead with a subject matter or thematic connection before analysing the writing more closely. It is the ability to move between specifics in two texts in the collection that characterises strong candidates as well as sensitive interpretation communicated via a fluent and flexible style.

Candidates wrote on only three of the six collections but were able to introduce contextual factors although these were a little predictable across the answers: a distrust for authority and organised religion in William Blake responses; isolation and independent outlook in Emily Dickinson's life and work; and the fluidity of sexuality in Carol Ann Duffy's relationships. There is room for candidates to have more strands and more flexibility in their treatment of context in future years.

Question 7

7 William Blake

Compare the ways William Blake uses language and poetic techniques in 'The Tyger' and 'London'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

Answers were responsive and there was some sense of the two texts coming from the Experience section of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. More thoroughness was shown by candidates writing on 'The Tyger' whereas there was more selectivity in terms of what was treated in 'London'.

Candidates felt William Blake was the speaker in 'London' and stated he was used to wandering the streets where he lived, whereas the persona in 'The Tyger' was not really investigated although the interrogative standpoint was appreciated. There were a number of candidates who took a reader response approach to 'The Tyger', citing the spelling as a method of foregrounding the questioning stance (the y in 'tyger' being seen as a way of suggesting "why"). It was strange that no candidate mentioned archaic spelling.

Candidates did address form, although sometimes this stayed at the level of description rather than exploring effects.

Exemplar 2

7	B	<p>In the poem 'The Tyger', the word Tiger is misspelt. Blake did this and replaced the 'i' with a 'y' to enforce the meaning of this poem of 'why'. Throughout the poem as a whole, Blake questions everything God has created around him and questioned where it has all come from. The religious connotations with this poem are emphasised when he mentions 'the Lamb'. The oxymoron between the features of a lamb - being so frail and gentle - to a tiger tiger - being fierce and strong could be symbolising the difference between innocence and experience - a collection both poems are a part of. In the poem London there is a similar concept. At the end of the poem it uses an oxymoron 'Marriage hearse'. A 'hearse' symbolising death and sadness whereas 'marriage' is seen meant to be the happiest day of your life. He could be referring to marriage as extra innocence - you think its</p>
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going to be an enjoyable experience and the reality hits. I believe Blake uses this feature to emphasise childhood innocence as he was part of the romantic movement. They disliked any nature being harmed, worshipped childhood innocence and had strong views on religion.

In the poem London, his romantic views are enforced with his clever use of diacope. The word 'charter'd' is repeated on the second line. This states everything is owned by the government - for example the river 'Thames'. Blake would be criticising this due to his romantic values. Similarly, ~~anaphora~~ repetition is used in the poem 'The Tyger'. The first stanza is repeated at the end. This could be done to display the fact after all that questioning and searching for the answers - they are back where they started. In the ~~third~~ fourth stanza, ~~there~~ a Volta is used - the mood shifts from being lighthearted and jolly to having a lexical field of danger.

This could symbolise the ~~say~~ the difference between innocence and experience and emphasise the danger of growing up and losing that innocence.

In the poem 'London' sibilance is used, alongside enjambement. 'Hapless Soldiers Sigh' The 's' sound could be ~~its~~ demonstrating the 'sigh' and, making the reader feel more involved with the poem and therefore the will 'HEAR' the message this is presenting them with. In the third stanza, the ~~at~~ beginning of each word creates an acrostic stating 'HEAR'. This could be a demand from Blake telling the ignorant hierarchy to listen ~~and adapt~~ to the struggles these people are facing. Both poems have a continuous rhyme scheme, the Tyger being mostly in ~~the~~ rhyming couplets and London displaying an ABAB rhyme scheme. The fact they both have a ~~the~~ regular rhyme scheme could be

seen as irony as they sound jolly whereas they are ~~discussing~~ discussing serious topics - represented by the lexical field of poverty in London. The rhythm of the poem London can be described as a walking beat. Blake use of ~~the~~ iambic pentameter ~~and~~ intelligently creates the imagery of ~~the~~ the narrator - being Blake - walking around London, listing everything he sees. This poem could be from Blake's experience as he was born in London and lived there throughout the industrial period.

The use of end stop is more common in the poem 'The Tyger' as almost every line is punctuated. However, in the poem London the line stating 'marks of woe' is the only line using end stop.

This is cleverly done to emphasise the message and to emphasise the sadness these people face daily. This could link to later in the poem where the metaphor 'mind-forg'd manacles' is used to create an image of these

		people confinding themselves to
		this sad life. As Similarly a
		metaphor of disapointment is used
		in the Tyger 'water'd heaven
		with their tears'. This line shows
		just how disapointed Blake
		feels about the society he lives
		in as it is stating God would
		also be dissapointed- as he
		is above heaven.

Exemplar 2 looks at two texts from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, specifically two poems from the Experience section. The writing has some surface flaws but is earnest and directly communicates (AO1). There are a range of stylistic features identified and ideas given about their effects (AO2). Contextual insight is shown at the parts where Blake's relationship with London is mentioned. There is a sense of the collection as a whole and how details pick up wider aspects; for instance, the lamb reference bringing up Innocence (AO4). Competent seems a good description of the response, which was assessed to be in Level 4.

Question 8

8 Emily Dickinson

Compare the ways Emily Dickinson uses language and poetic techniques in 'I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –' and 'Because I could not stop for Death –'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

Answers on Emily Dickinson made a few points per poem but were rather selective in terms of what was attempted, and the elements of cohesive overview and comparison were less pronounced in answers on these texts.

Candidates missed some obvious tricks such as arresting first lines in both texts and Dickinson's idiosyncratic approach to punctuation and frequent use of dashes.

There were a few candidates who appreciated the dark humour of 'I heard a Fly buzz', but the sense of Death being a gentleman caller, a different approach to context, was not taken up by candidates writing on 'Because I could not stop for Death'. It was the case that candidates had a few ideas on each text which they made stick, but there was often no great sense of a developing perspective and the ambivalence of some of the phrasing.

Question 11

11 Carol Ann Duffy

Compare the ways Carol Ann Duffy uses language and poetic techniques in 'Write' and 'Elegy'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

Responses on *Rapture* were frequently the best offered by the cohort. They were characterised by nimble movement between the texts and personal informed approaches to detail. It was in the area of context that answers could have had more range and flexibility.

Candidates frequently referred to different stages of the persona's changing experiences seeing them as references to Carol Ann Duffy's own life. There was also a sense of the collection as a whole and the movement through different aspects of love as threads in a woven tapestry.

In the best work, candidates moved seamlessly between the two texts in a way not seen on the other two collections where developments in the argument were clearly signposted but segmented the responses somewhat.

Exemplar 3

11.	<p>Both the poems Both 'Write' and 'Elegy' come from the collection 'Rapture' by Eavan Boland which follows a relationship from its seemingly positive beginning to devastating end. 'Write' is the twelfth poem in the anthology and therefore it can be inferred and also seen that the lower intense speaker's infatuation with her lover has become very intense. 'Elegy' however comes from the beginning of the anthology where the speaker's infatuation is not as prominent as 'Write' however a near disturbing fixation on the lover can be seen to start to appear.</p> <p>Both poems 'Write' and 'Elegy' suggest that an intense love, if it grows too much, can harm a relationship and have negative effects on both the speaker and the lover. This is in 'Write' the speaker claims that as they were 'willing and wishing' her face 'reddened, blackened, whitened, wash' by 'the sun'. The noun sun connotes warmth and passion whilst the verb 'ash' connotes death. The antithesis created between these two of ideas could imply that the love and emotional effects of love went too much that the speaker has almost been metaphorically washed burned by the passion. This is reinforced by the structure of the sentence at the phrase 'reddened, blackened, whitened to ash' as it is written in trochaic meter with the last syllable 'ash' being unstressed. This creates a falling meter and this negative tone reinforces the idea that an intense love can have many side effects and it has the ability to leave someone emotionally exhausted and lifeless. Similarly in elegy Elegy the speaker claims 'love', 'lit you heart with a flame'. The 'Flame' and 'lit' create a lexical field of fire which can both be dangerous and harmful whilst</p>
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also symbolising passion. The contrast between these two ideas reveals the complex nature of love to be both favourable and unpleasant. The past tense verb 'lit' implies that this love or even lover is no longer present suggesting again that the lover has perhaps metaphorically burned out due to the increasing of the love or insanity of the speaker which is visible in other poems.

In 'Write' the speaker emphasises the importance of slowing time and making memories within the relationship however in 'Elegy' the speaker does the opposite, they mentally speed up time and don't take a moment to appreciate the present. In 'Write' the speaker uses a diacope as she repeats ~~the word~~ 'write', 'or write', and 'then write'. Despite the adding of conjunctions 'or' and 'then' the repetition of the verb 'write' emphasises the speaker's ~~not~~ desire to capture parts of her relationship in the human language. In contrast to this the speaker in 'Elegy' appears to be laying next to the lover as indicated by the proximal deixis 'this' and 'here' however despite this, they mention the lover's 'skull', 'bones' and 'flesh'. These concrete nouns create a sense of a field of anatomy and imply that the speaker is imagining the death of the lover. This could be ~~due to the~~ because when Carol Ann Duffy was 16 she was involved in a romantic relationship with Adrian Henry who was 36, therefore if 'Rapture' was ~~potentially~~ about parts of this relationship it may have been normal for Duffy to imagine her lover dead as it would've been very likely that Adrian Henry died first.

Both poems 'Write' and 'Elegy' also use the idea of nature to demonstrate the speaker's ~~passion~~ intense feelings of love.

		<p>however there is a clear difference in the levels of obsession present in both poems.</p> <p>In 'Elegy', the speaker states 'I would lie on the grass above your bones till I ... mirrored your intimate grace'. The modal verb 'would' as opposed to a declarative phrase such as 'I will' implies that the lover has some sense of restriction and this is may only a possibility rather. The verb 'lie' and abstract noun 'grace' create connote a peaceful action and this may be because 'Elegy' is from the beginning of the anthology and during the start of the relationship, the speaker's fixation was not as prominent as that it was later. In 'Wreck' the speaker is to constructs the image of her 'pressing and pressing [her bones] into the ground'. For her former 'honey moon'. The polysyndetic phrase fused with continuous tense verb 'pressing' indicate a continuous action and consistent desperation to be with the lover. The plosives of 'p' in the phrase also create quite a harsh tone as opposed to the more peaceful action in 'Elegy'. In this way we see how developing feelings of infatuation can lead an individual to become potentially unhinged and even have negative effects on their physical behaviour.</p> <p>To conclude, Both 'Elegy' and 'Wreck' reveal how an intense relationship may not have a happy ending but can actually create emotional and even physical turmoil due to its confusing and overwhelming nature.</p>
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Exemplar 3 shows excellence in responding to Section B, Question 11. The script represents thoughtful work which shows a strong understanding of the two poems via a clear mature style (AO1); a definite focus on the creation of meaning (AO2) and sensible and knowledgeable use of contexts (AO3). There is a clear sense of the collection and the relationship between the poems and the whole selection (AO4). It would be better with greater accuracy – use of apostrophes and 'however', to give two examples. This is secure Level 6 work.

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