

Moderators' report

A LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in English
Language and Literature (EMC)

H474

For first teaching in 2015

H474/04 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by the moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements, identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation, and comment on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. The report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

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General overview

In this session, moderators once again saw much to celebrate in the work submitted for this NEA component, with many of the positive features highlighted in previous reports still very much in evidence. At its best, the work was exploratory, ambitious, and thoughtful in Task 1, and authentic, purposeful, and often highly creative in Task 2. Candidates continue to use the NEA as an opportunity to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and understanding developed across two years of study: their understanding of non-fiction text types from Paper 1, their insights into literary genres from Papers 2 and 3, and their grasp of narrative construction from Paper 3. In Task 1, the strongest work was characterised by detailed exploration of meanings, underpinned by the confident application of analytical concepts, methods, and associated critical terminology. There was clear evidence of ambition and accomplishment in much of the comparative work submitted for this task. Candidates made thoughtful connections between their chosen texts, often drawing effectively on skills developed elsewhere in the A Level to support their analysis of meanings, methods, and contexts. The strongest work demonstrated real enthusiasm and commitment for the texts chosen and the connections between them.

In Task 2, a wide variety of original writing forms and topics were again seen. The strongest work was crafted, informed, and highly individual, frequently targeting 'real world' or public-facing contexts and clearly shaped for a specific audience.

Key message from the NEA June 2025

The Non-Exam Assessment is at its most successful when genuinely synoptic, enabling candidates to draw together learning from across the specification in both their critical and creative work. The most impressive submissions this session showed ambition not only in the selection of texts and focus for Task 1, but also in the production of challenging and original non-fiction pieces for Task 2. At its best, the NEA provides a genuine showcase of candidates' capabilities at the end of their A Level studies, and much of the work seen this session was of a very high standard.

Candidates who did well on Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing:	Candidates who did less well on Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing:
- selected a free-choice text that enabled a wide range of thematic and stylistic connections to be explored in relation to the specification text (AO4) - integrated discussion across both texts, allowing analysis of one text to illuminate understanding of the other (AO4) - applied a range of literary and linguistic concepts and methods, linked meaningfully to the exploration of meaning in both texts (AO1/AO2) - explicitly referenced relevant contextual factors to explore writers' social and cultural attitudes and to inform critical analysis (AO3) - produced work that was well-structured, coherent, and fluent, with accurate and consistent use of critical terminology (AO1). - studied a wide range of relevant non-fiction text types in preparation for Task 2 - produced an introduction that referenced both style models and the intended context of reception - demonstrated a clear understanding of genre conventions, with work that was ambitious and creative - produced original writing that had multiple purposes and showed clear audience awareness.	- discussed each text in parallel with limited or token points of connection (AO4) - applied only a narrow range of concepts and methods in discussion of a shared theme (AO1/AO2) - presented contextual material separately from the comparative analysis, rather than using it to inform interpretation (AO3) - produced work that was underdeveloped, lacking fluency, or inconsistent in the use of terminology (AO1). - struggled to demonstrate secure understanding of the conventions of the chosen text type - produced a generalised introduction focused mainly on topic rather than form, purpose, or audience - produced writing that was narrowly informative, limiting the demonstration of creativity - relied heavily on researched material that was insufficiently mediated or re-shaped, limiting opportunities to demonstrate originality and flair.

Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing

Most candidates understood the benefits of integrating discussion of their two texts in a way that allowed one text to illuminate the other. AO4, the weighted assessment objective in Task 1, was generally well handled across the cohort. It is clear that many centres are now thinking carefully about how comparisons and connections can remain central to this task — from initial decisions about texts and titles, through planning and drafting. There were still some instances where candidates dealt with each text in turn, addressing one in full before moving on to the second; however, this approach tended to stand out as the exception rather than the norm. The strongest responses, as ever, moved deftly between texts, drawing on a range of comparative linkages — thematic, contextual, and stylistic — with comparisons often embedded within the development of central arguments.

Task titles were generally more focused and helpful this year and typically opened up broader areas of comparison. Titles that encourage exploration of a range of structural and stylistic connections, as well as common themes, tend to lead to stronger, more integrated comparative responses. Narrower titles focused on a simple theme or one text often limited the potential for whole-text analysis, leading to more segmented or list-like responses.

For example, one candidate responded effectively to the title:

'Explore how 12 Years a Slave and The Hate U Give present resistance to injustice through narrative perspective, voice, and characterisation.'

This allowed the candidate to explore not only thematic connections but also language, form, and structure, supporting a more analytical, whole-text approach.

Similarly, the title chosen by another candidate:

'Compare how Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal and The Secret History explore identity and emotional damage through narrative voice, characterisation, and structural choices' enabled the candidate to move beyond surface thematic comparison, instead considering how meanings were shaped and conveyed in both texts.

In addition, at the most basic level, the structure of the task title should act as a reminder to candidates of the assessment objectives they are required to address. One centre this session adopted the useful practice of including a generic guidance paragraph below each title, reminding candidates of the full AO coverage required:

In your essay you should explore the connections (AO4) across these texts and analyse the literary and linguistic concepts and methods used to shape meanings (AO1/AO2). You should also explore the contexts in which the texts were produced and are received (AO3).

This mirrored the instructions seen in examination questions elsewhere in the specification and was a very helpful approach.

A key marker of success in Task 1 was the careful and deliberate use of terminology. Candidates who selected concepts and methods judiciously, using them to support nuanced interpretation, achieved higher marks for AO1. Moderators noted a general improvement in this area, with fewer instances of vague labelling or 'feature spotting' than in previous sessions. However, as the NEA allows time for planning, reflection, and redrafting, the most successful responses were those in which terminology had been purposefully refined and securely embedded to support detailed analysis. Centres are reminded of a new resource, the [Literary and Linguistic Terminology Glossary \(H074/H474\)](#), available via Teach Cambridge, which is a very useful tool in developing candidates' conceptual knowledge and precision in use of terminology for this component and across the specification. Centres are encouraged to use the drafting process to help candidates sharpen both their critical vocabulary and their written style.

As noted in previous reports, some candidates referenced linguistic theories, particularly in discussions of gendered interaction (drawing on theorists such as Tannen, Cameron and Lakoff) or conversational dynamics (such as Grice's maxims or Goffman's face theory). While this can add an interesting dimension, candidates should be reminded that scripted dialogue differs from spontaneous speech, and theories drawn from real world discourse may not directly apply to crafted texts. Authorial intention and textual construction should always be foregrounded in analysis.

Contextual knowledge (AO3) varied in relevance and integration. Some pairings, such as those involving Winterson, Orwell, Masters, and Funder, gave candidates rich opportunities to examine wider social and cultural values. In such cases, contextual concerns are central to the writers' intentions and the experiences depicted, although some candidates treated them as peripheral rather than integral. In other cases — notably with Capote — extended biographical or historical detail was included without being clearly connected to the analysis of textual methods or meanings. The most effective AO3 responses integrated specific contextual insights in ways that deepened understanding of how writers shaped their texts.

In many of the most successful responses, the interplay between AO1 and AO2 was especially strong. Candidates applied conceptual understanding directly to the effects of language and structure, producing analysis that was both precise and perceptive. Such responses typically demonstrated internal coherence, with terminology, textual evidence, and interpretation consistently aligned.

Given that many candidates following this specification will progress to higher education and may also be undertaking EPQs or studying other essay-based subjects, developing skills in critical evaluation, discerning use of research, and proper academic referencing will benefit them beyond this component. Centres may wish to encourage more formal referencing practices — using tools within Word or Google Docs — and guide candidates towards appropriate academic sources. This can help candidates present their research more professionally and avoid over-reliance on general resources such as revision websites.

Task 2: Original Non-fiction Writing

Task 2 requires candidates to produce a non-fiction piece of approximately 1000–1200 words, accompanied by a 150-word introduction explaining the chosen non-fiction form and reflecting on the literary and linguistic techniques employed. Moderators noted continued improvement in the use of introductions this session. Many candidates cited specific style models and made explicit references to contexts of production and reception. It was encouraging to see some candidates drawing on non-fiction texts from Paper 1 as style models – O'Farrell's *I Am, I Am, I Am* remained a common reference point. The Paper 1 non-fiction anthology clearly continues to be a valuable resource in preparation for this component.

The strongest Task 2 submissions demonstrated a secure understanding of non-fiction as public-facing writing and were shaped by a clear sense of form, mode, and audience. Some candidates explicitly identified target publications in their introductions – for example, positioning a travel piece as intended for *The Guardian* or shaping a speech for a parliamentary or educational audience. Candidate work such as a speech addressing mental health support in schools, or the opening to a podcast on gender identity, were both purposeful and stylistically convincing, rooted in clearly identified contexts of reception.

By contrast, less successful work tended to lack a defined genre or mode. Blogs, for instance, sometimes drifted towards generalised personal reflection without clear shaping for a specific platform or audience. Blogs can, of course, be highly effective vehicles for candidates to explore issues important to them – this session saw engaging pieces on topics ranging from body image and LGBTQ+ identity to sustainability in the fashion industry – but candidates need to establish where such a blog might appear and who their target readership would be.

As in previous sessions, the most successful Task 2 writing often emerged from candidates' own interests, expertise, or lived experience. Autobiographical or reflective pieces – such as a personal account of hiking in Yosemite or an insider's perspective on farming challenges in rural Britain – were often among the most authentic and engaging work. Moderators continue to note that candidates sometimes underestimate the power of their own stories. Lived experience, carefully selected and shaped, can yield highly effective non-fiction writing across a range of forms.

Journalistic articles remained popular, as did opinion pieces. Reviews of films, albums, or exhibitions were also common, with varying degrees of success. Stronger reviews were clearly shaped for a specific outlet and mediated through the writer's own critical perspective. By contrast, reviews that simply summarised researched material without authorial shaping tended to struggle to demonstrate the 'flair', 'originality', and 'creativity' descriptors required for higher band AO5 marks. As highlighted in previous Principal Moderator Reports, centres may find it useful to revisit guidance on this form to help candidates avoid producing work that is too narrowly informative.

There were again some examples where candidates attempted non-fiction forms that were problematic, often due to confusion between a transcript and a script. A transcript is a verbatim record of spoken language, complete with hesitations, overlaps, and other non-fluency features; it is not a crafted piece of original writing. Some candidates produced what they described as a 'script' of, for example, an interview with a celebrity, but which was in fact a transcript containing spontaneous features. Centres should make sure that candidates selecting spoken forms understand that a Task 2 speech, lecture, or podcast is a script – written to be delivered – rather than a record of unscripted dialogue.

Similarly, candidates should be clear on the boundaries between non-fiction and creative writing. A diary presented as personal non-fiction – for instance, a reflective piece on a candidate's own experiences over a summer spent volunteering – can be an effective Task 2 submission if a publication context is imagined. However, a fictional diary, as if written by an historical figure, is not suitable for this task as it constitutes creative writing rather than non-fiction.

At its best, Task 2 enables candidates to draw on their study of style models, their understanding of audience and purpose, and their own authentic voice to produce work that is engaging, crafted, and genuinely 'original' within the conventions of non-fiction writing. Moderators were pleased to report that many candidates this session approached the task in this spirit, producing work that was both a pleasure to read and a clear demonstration of the skills required at this level.

Administration.

Please make sure that all work is received by moderators or uploaded to Submit for Assessment (SfA) by the due date of 15th May.

If centres submit work for this component via Submit for Assessment please make sure that all elements of the work, including fully completed CCS, are included.

Work sent as hard copies to moderators should be securely fastened by treasury tag or staple, rather than being placed in plastic wallets.

There should be evidence of internal standardisation. This is best achieved by the inclusion of some teacher dialogue on scripts preferably using different coloured pens.

Marginal annotation and summative comments by assessors are very important at moderation to chart the development of assessment decisions and should be as detailed as possible.

Please do not send the Candidate Authentication Forms to the moderator. These should be completed and retained in centre as part of your records.

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- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
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