

Examiners' 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

H474/01 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 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:
• 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, especially audience address and positioning.	• 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 George Saunders' speech given to graduates at Syracuse University in 2013.

Text B is a fact sheet produced by a British company called 52 Lives: The School of Kindness in 2022. They are a charity who aim to create a culture of kindness. They work in primary schools and offer 'Kindness Workshops' which teach children how to spread kindness. This fact sheet is one resource they have produced to explain the science of kindness on physical and mental health.

- 1 Carefully read the **two** texts and compare the ways in which the speaker in **Text A** and the writers of **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]**

As with previous series, most candidates gave an overview of both texts in their introductions. In stronger responses, these provided perceptive and comparative comment on genre, mode, audience and purpose embedded in an understanding of original contexts of reception. These comments tended to be succinct, allowing candidates more time to engage with comparative analysis later in the response. In responses in the lower mark scheme Levels, candidates tended towards heavily descriptive comment, often returning the wording of the question with little additional comment and/or providing extensive biographical detail on Saunders and the graphology of Text B, linked to the age of the target audience.

Candidates at all levels seemed to have understood and engaged with both texts and had clearly found them relevant. The nature of Text B made it particularly accessible as the unseen text, although in less successful responses some candidates tended to comment extensively on surface features of graphology but without linking this to the use of language, e.g. by comment on text-image cohesion.

Candidates at all levels evinced, to differing degrees, a good understanding of audience address and positioning in the two texts and related this effectively to the texts' intents.

Many responses suggested that candidates had watched the video of Saunders' speech, and this enabled candidates at different levels to understand the text in its original context of reception, with many candidates making pertinent comment on Saunders' manipulation of prosody and other suprasegmental features, linking this to evidence in the text, e.g. minor sentences and the significance of the italicisation.

Candidates at different levels made perceptive comment on generic conventions and schema, both in the adherence to and the flouting of generic conventions and audience expectations.

Although few, some candidates quoted extensively from other parts of Saunders' speech not included in the given extract. Reference to other parts of the text was often important to clarify and contextualise points that candidates made, e.g. the prior anecdote about 'Ellen'. Candidates should, however, be discouraged from making lengthy reference to, and analysis of, parts of the text not given on the exam paper.

Referencing and analysing other parts of the Anthology text

The particular Anthology extract (taken from a longer speech in this instance) has been chosen carefully and deliberately to complement the foil text. Selectively referencing other parts of the text is fine if used to support analysis of the specific section given in the exam, but candidates should be actively discouraged from in-depth and lengthy analysis of memorised quotations from elsewhere in the text.

Connections and Comparisons (AO4)

Almost all responses this series had some meaningful and genuine comparison; there were few responses which dealt with the texts separately, although some responses placed in the lower mark Levels had few points of comparison or dealt with comparison glancingly in binary comment on mode and/or target audience.

Candidates should try to make sure that there is some balance in comment between the texts. In many responses, there was a marked imbalance between comment on Text A and Text B, both in terms of quantity and in terms of the quality of the points made across AOs 1, 2 and 3, almost exclusively in favour of Text A. This is likely to be reflective of the high-quality teaching candidates had clearly received on Text A, and their engagement with it. Please see Exemplar 3 for an example of this on a strong script.

Because the candidates will have studied Text A, some imbalance is to be expected; however, the question has a comparative focus with AO4 as the dominant assessment objective. Candidates are asked to respond to the specific text pairing they are given, with Text B having been carefully selected as a foil text to give scope for rich comparative exploration.

It could be helpful to consider asking candidates to try starting at least one of their comparisons with Text B before turning to Text A. In some responses, the comparative comment on Text B felt rather like an appendix to the far more thorough exploration of Text A.

Candidates need to do more than 'make' connections to achieve beyond Level 2 for AO4 as 'explore' is a descriptor for AO3 upwards. Successful responses explored at least three main connections throughout their response, and usually more. Comparative topic sentences often provided a steer for candidates' essay structures. In less successful responses, these were sometimes vague and not fulfilled. Sometimes, examiners saw comparisons which had to be inferred because of similarity of AO1 or AO2/AO3 comment, but without an explicit comparison being made, e.g. via comparative discourse markers. It would be helpful to advise candidates that this approach could lead to AO4 not being given, because it is left to the examiner to decide if a connection has been attempted.

The strongest responses, as in previous series, responded with agility and nuance to the specific text pairing rather than taking a systematic comparative pre-planned survey (e.g. '[...] one is spoken, one is written', '[...] one is for adults, one is for children'). 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. In stronger responses, there was usually clear evidence of careful planning at the start of the script.

Candidates explored connections based on concepts and methods, thematic concerns, and contextual connections; all are valid approaches. Candidates should be advised against making all their comparisons based on one AO1 area (for example word classes) as this tends to restrict the range of connections and the ability to evince discernment in AO1 selection.

Some candidates began their responses with lengthy descriptive AO4 comparisons, often based on contextual features. The length of some of these introductions sometimes left less room for comment on AO1 and AO2 and this approach can be self-limiting. The same is true of conclusions which act as a comparative summary but without introducing new material. Candidates might be better advised to use this time for planning a range of clear comparisons which allow scope for rich comment across AOs 1, 2 and 3.

Successful points of comparison included:

- both speaker and writer accommodate their different audiences
- both reference age and ageing
- both use questions for effect
- both use direct address/audience positioning
- both use inclusive pronouns
- both manipulate syntax for effect, e.g. minor sentences/anaphora
- both address their audiences' face needs
- both use types of figurative language
- both use humour (or light-hearted comment)
- both attempts to mitigate social distance/hierarchy
- both use specialist lexicons/intertextual references
- both state authoritative sources
- both use different types of repetition
- both conform to/deviate from their generic conventions/ schemas
- both use modality, but in different ways
- both use asides or parenthetical comment
- both reference human evolution in relation to kindness
- both interpret complex ideas for their young audiences.

Parallel comparison of concepts



Attempted parallel application of concepts, for example Accommodation and convergence/divergence can be a rich connection, but only if there is a meaningful point of similarity or difference to explore. Creating a connection based on something which is *not* present in a text (e.g. '[...] the writer of Text B does not use convergence' but without comment on different methods used instead) is unlikely to give a candidate scope for making rich comment.

Guidance for practice foil texts



The OCR Teacher Guide for the Anthology gives guidance on finding 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.

Exemplar 1

		Both texts share the same subject matter surrounding the topic of kindness and its importance in society. Text A's Graduation speech from the library of congress award winner in 2023 George Saunders, exemplifies the notion of his personal regrets regarding kindness to encourage the audience listening to live more respectful lives. This pre-prepared spoken speech ranges from its primary audience of the Syracuse graduates to an international audience after this speech was recorded and gained its popularity extensive popularity. Likewise Text B's fact sheet from '52 lives' aims to amplify the purpose of kindness to one another and its further impact on our health, utilising ^{its} the multimedia format to display its evidence in an informative but easily comprehensible way to their main audience of children in primary schools.
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Exemplar 1 is an example of a focused introduction. The candidate makes meaningful AO3 comment which goes well beyond returning information from the question. The AO4 comparisons are explicit and there is clear awareness of both mode and contexts of reception.

Concepts, methods, terminology and written expression (AO1)

Most responses evinced secure written expression, with a range of different academic essay voices and this was pleasing to see. Where written expression was less secure, this was often because a candidate had attempted a more elevated academic register over which they did not have secure control. In stronger responses, candidates were able to select from a more extensive lexical repertoire to explore nuances in the creation of meaning, for example commenting on Saunders' 'humility', 'self-deprecation' or use of 'incongruity', or 'semiotics' and 'didacticism' in Text B.

There was a pleasing range of comment recognising both texts' mode and genre, especially (as outlined also under AO3) in recognising deviation from/adherence to generic conventions and schema. Most candidates made comment on the use of pronouns and questions in both texts, for example, with varying degrees of nuance in the consequent AO2 and AO3 linkages. Many candidates identified 'our' as a pronoun rather than as a possessive determiner.

In responses in the lower mark scheme Levels, some candidates continued to employ AO1 which evinced little or no progression from GCSE Level study. In the very low mark ranges, there were sometimes no subject-specialist concepts and methods at all. Candidates can, of course, use

terminology learned at KS3 and KS4 to good effect and many candidates did so, for example in relation to the use of figurative language on this paper. If AO1 concepts and methods, however, are limited exclusively to these features (e.g. rhetorical questions, repetition, facts and statistics, Aristotle's *Pisteis*) candidates are unlikely to be consistently evincing the application of 'relevant concepts and methods' at an appropriate Level for the mid and higher Levels of the mark scheme. AO1 identification of this type tended also to be linked to more routine AO3 and AO2 linkage.

There was more use of concepts in this series' responses, possibly because both texts lent themselves well to comment about audience positioning, address, tone and tenor. It may also be that last year's Sara Safari text had allowed candidates practice on a similar planned, didactic speech.

Some candidates attempted to apply Accommodation Theory in direct parallel across both texts. While this was effective for comment on Saunders' use of colloquialism (where candidates made some pertinent comment on potential downward convergence), some candidates attempted to apply directly parallel comment on downward convergence to Text B, when really their comment was about the shaping of the text for a young audience. It might be helpful for future series to ask candidates to consider the concept of 'base register' when considering comment of this kind. In some responses, candidates made extensive comment on lexical or semantic 'fields' of kindness, when their comment was really about the texts' subject matter.

A small number of candidates are still using AO1 terminology assertively, without exemplification, or with extended quotations which make it difficult to verify the accuracy of specific identification. This can be easily resolved by candidates exemplifying their AO1 identification clearly, or by making unambiguous and specific reference to where it can be found in the text and underlining the precise part(s) of longer quotations for clarity.

Naming academic theorists

It is not necessary for a candidate to name a specific academic theorist or researcher when commenting on concepts and research: it is sufficient that they demonstrate understanding of the concept/theory in application to the text they are analysing. So, for example, a candidate might discuss Facework and would not be penalised for not naming Goffman.

Successful AO1 application included:

- the use of different types of questions, rhetorical/hypophora
- different features of rhetoric, e.g. triples, anaphora, direct address
- use of pronouns for different purposes and effects, e.g. affiliation, direct address
- audience positioning
- colloquialism, often tied effectively to Bernstein's Codes
- Holmes, code-switching and register
- Giles, Accommodation, especially convergence
- Fairclough, Synthetic Personalisation
- Goffman, Face
- Brown and Levinson, Politeness
- Fairclough, types of power and power asymmetry
- use of figurative language
- pseudo-dialogic features
- syntactic structures, e.g. minor constructions, epistrophe, anaphora, asides, parenthesis
- tone and tenor
- self-deprecation
- use of anecdote.

Understanding of the significance and influence of contexts (AO3)

In this series, as in previous series, stronger responses demonstrated contextual 'understanding' (Levels 4-6) and less successful responses tended towards contextual 'awareness' (Levels 1-3). Candidates who tended towards more binary comment on mode and adherence to genre conventions tended to demonstrate awareness, whereas candidates who made more nuanced comment on aspects of genre and context evinced understanding. Across both texts, candidates who were able to conceptualise the texts in their real-world contexts made more perceptive AO3 comment and there was some interesting and engaged comment on tone and tenor across both texts, often linked to pseudo-dialogic features of language and structure linked to audience.

Stronger responses recognised the ways in which both texts adhere to or deviate from their generic conventions/schema, referencing for example Saunders' code-switching into a more informal register and the pseudo-dialogic features of Text B, e.g. parenthetical comment and the use of questions. In some stronger responses, candidates recognised the seeming discordance of Text B's complexity at points with the purported primary school age target audience and made nuanced comment on its potentially layered audience of school staff and parents as well as older primary-age children.

As per previous sections, candidates had clearly been very well prepared on Text A and most candidates had a good understanding of Saunders' purpose and the context of the speech. In a few responses, candidates referred to Saunders as a graduand himself - but these were relatively rare.

In responses at all levels, there was a clear awareness of the spoken and co-present nature of the speech and of Saunders' intents. More nuanced comment recognised Saunders' relationship with the graduands and his careful use of language and structure to recognise Face needs and mitigate social power asymmetry in relation to both academic position and age.

In responses in the lower mark ranges, AO3 linkages tended to include binary comment on mode, genre and self-presentation for example '[...] this rhetorical question is to make the listeners [sometimes 'readers'] think' or 'Saunders quotes Hayden Carruth to make himself seem educated'.

Per previous AO sections, there was often a marked imbalance between AO3 contextual comment on Text A and Text B, possibly because candidates had been so well prepared for Text A and had much rich comment to make about it.

In stronger responses, candidates recognised the didactic intent of the writer of Text B, with perceptive comment on how the writer links science to kindness and the promotion of a person's own wellbeing. In responses in the upper Levels, candidates recognised how the tangible, physical benefits of kindness outlined in Text B contrasted with the ethical and moral considerations of Saunders in Text A. They often linked this to the age of the target audiences at the beginnings and ends of their relative academic journeys and their different levels of understanding and life experience. Responses in the lower Levels tended towards more binary comment on target audience, often linked to the graphology of the fact sheet but with limited comment on the use of language to create meaning.

In relation to Text A, there was some perceptive comment on the demographic of Syracuse graduates in terms of social privilege and wealth, linked effectively to why this demographic might be well served by a timely reminder about kindness and shared humanity before embarking on careers. In relation to Text B, a small number of candidates made salient comment on the need for promoting kindness in schools in the context of post-COVID lockdowns, secondary socialisation, and children's mental health.

Exemplar 2

		message to his audience. He recalls moments when at he watched others spinning and responded 'generously, Kennedy. Mildly.' This trio of adverbs is used for emphasis, and a common element of the speech genre which that this text is in. However, Saunders subverts subverts the genre expectations of a convocation speech by using some informal language such as 'it's a little corny'. The adjective suggests an informality, which is atypical of an this type of speech; perhaps he wants to connect more closely with his audience.
		Contextually, this may be important as he is an educator at this particular university and therefore may have taught some students who are in the audience. We may also give res also give reason that for his use of the second person pronoun 'you' to directly address them.

In Exemplar 2, with the whole script placed at the top of Level 5, the candidate makes perceptive comment on Saunders' subversion of genre conventions then links this to specific language features and features of context in terms of his audience. Stronger responses tended to then go on to discuss how and why Saunders uses more affiliative language features to mitigate the power asymmetry and to make his didactic intent more palatable in context for the age and education level of the target audience.

Analysis of ways meanings are shaped (AO2)

The amount of AO2 comment continues to be a distinguishing feature of stronger responses. Answers in the lower Levels of the mark scheme tend to be weighted towards AO3 contextual comment, with sparser AO2 exploration of how meaning is shaped in both texts.

AO2 is the least weighted assessment objective, however this weighting is not great. It is helpful to remind candidates that the first part of the question asks them to '[...] compare the ways in which [the

texts] *use language to convey meaning*'. Candidates are explicitly guided here to analyse the use of language and its effects. Mid to higher Level responses include AO2 analysis alongside AO3 contextual comment approximately equally. In responses in the higher Levels of the mark scheme, AO2 and AO3 comment tends to be integrated and consistently symbiotic.

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

- the effect of the use of different questions (hypophora/rhetorical)
- the intent and impact of different syntactical features, e.g. anaphora/epistrophe/minor constructions/syndeton and asyndeton/simple sentences. How these are used for pacing and to reinforce the speaker's/writer's message
- how the speaker's/writers' use of anecdotes and real-world examples contributes to meaning
- how humour and affiliative pronouns are used for self-deprecation and to create a sense of collective experience and agency
- direct address and audience positioning in relation to the meaning created/ speaker and writer's intent/tone and tenor
- the use of illustrative points from confessional personal experience in Text A and the actual images in Text B to create text-image cohesion
- how figurative language is employed in both texts for different effects, the metaphor of the 'telescope' in Text A and the simile of the 'pebble' in Text B
- the impact of parenthetical comment in both texts, its humorous intent in Text A and practical glossing for a young audience in Text B
- pseudo-dialogic features in both texts and the impact of this on audience address and positioning
- the use of modality/modal verbs, e.g. 'can', 'might' and how the writers use these to convey degrees of certainty and obligation
- how both texts use references to human evolution, but for different purposes
- lexical choices including use of colloquialism, elevated register and subject-specific lexis.

Exemplar 3

		Though both texts underlie the theme of kindness
		to their audiences, text A's spoken speech does not
		conform to the conventional graduation speech
		and highlights ^{importance of} kindness as opposed to career success
		and also academic achievements, whilst text B's

fact sheet does follow the conventional schema of a fact sheet through the use of multi media to evoke the benefits of kindness. Text A's spoken speech opens with the gentle humour 'although it's a little corny' establishing a relatable and inviting atmosphere to the listeners. Saunders continues with the fragmented speech 'when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering and I responded... sensibly, Reservedly, Mildly'. The ~~change~~ contrast in tone mimics the impact, ~~a~~ 'failures of kindness' ~~have~~ can have on someone, ~~additionally~~ and the abruptness in the triplet 'Sensibly, Reservedly, Mildly' echoes ~~the~~ his emotional numbness to 'this particular moment today'. The speaker purposefully utilises the personal monosyllabism 'in front of me' coupled with the single ~~no~~ polysyllabic 'suffering' to draw a parallel contrast between himself and the 'new kid' who joined their class, who was obviously shy and got teased. Contrastingly, text B's fact sheet opens with ~~the eye~~ This self regret and reflection on his past is purposefully utilised to provoke an emotional reaction from the listeners and by incorporating the relatable and familiar occurrence of a new kid in school ~~sets~~ ~~an~~ a relatable atmosphere which multiple people may have experienced, probing the audience to self reflect themselves. Contrastingly, text B's fact sheet opens with the eye catching illustration of 'THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS' capitalised to capture the readers enthusiasm. This large graphic font is

		accompanied by the scientific images of test tubes which are also scattered towards the ending, to re-iterate the purpose of kindness on our health. The fact sheet continues with the graphics of love hearts to symbolise the profound nature of respect with the conical flasks to echo the benefits of health gained. The writer has incorporated the simplistic headings 'kindness can reduce stress' 'kindness can relieve pain' in order to cater for children who will be most likely reading this sheet, by utilising the short and repetitive nature of the bubbles drawn with factual information is reflective of Giles accommodation theory to adapt the difficult and confusing themes of science and health in an easily understandable way. Similarly, Saunders also
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In Exemplar 3, (given an overall mark in Level 5) the candidate skilfully interweaves AO1, AO2 and AO3 identification and comment in a mature, academic register in analysis of Text A. The candidate works hard to apply their knowledge to Text B, with some effective comment on Accommodation, but tends towards comment on graphology with less reference to the writer's methods. The comment on Text B is also much briefer, and then the candidate returns to analysis of Text A for the rest of the comparative point. Candidates have never seen Text B before, this is understood, but it might be helpful to encourage candidates to have an eye to the balance of comment across both texts. This candidate clearly has an extensive AO1 repertoire and could, perhaps, have applied some of this skill and knowledge to Text B in more agile and insightful ways.

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