

AS
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE**

Paper 1: Views and Voices
Report on the Examination

7706
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General

In this third series of the AS specification, students wrote with confidence and detail on the prose and poetry texts. Even weaker responses were usually clear and organised and there was widespread evidence of students basing thoughtful interpretations on relevant details of language. Across both sections, students demonstrated secure knowledge of key concepts and seemed successfully engaged with their chosen texts.

It was pleasing to note how few scripts fell into level 1 and examiners reported that there were hardly any rubric infringements. Some students wrote very short and undeveloped answers but most were still attempting to engage with the assessment objectives. It was quite rare to find a response that failed to use terminology in its analysis of the extracts. Some students answered section B first and, whilst this is perfectly acceptable, it did lead to a few weaker and shorter responses to section A (which carries only slightly fewer marks). Overall, examiners reported that section B responses seemed slightly stronger.

The application of contextual information is not assessed on this paper but some students wrote about context at some length. Whilst this does not detract from the marks, it can lead to some students losing focus on the question and moving away from close analysis of the writers' craft. Perhaps the most commonly mis-applied term was 'exclamative' but there was also a lot of uncertainty around the use of 'spatial' and 'temporal deixis'. As in previous series, word classes were applied with mixed success, with some students seeming to be completely reliant on these, rather than a wider range of terminology. 'Semantic field' was applied very loosely at times, or lacked exemplification.

However, it was encouraging to note that the vast majority of responses were using more specific language labels as a tool of analysis. Many answers identified and explored significant patterns in the texts, with terminology being used purposefully to develop interpretations. As might be expected, the discussion of figurative language (such as personification and similes) was frequent and successful, but there was also much effective application of other patterns, such as modality, verb types and syntactic structures.

It should be noted that there were occasions when students drew on different ideas about classifying language, such as the varying approaches to labelling possessive pronouns and determiners. Separate students may therefore have used some terms in different ways but it is in the spirit of this specification that we accept a range of ideas and approaches as long as they are grounded in precise descriptive analysis.

Section A: Imagined Worlds

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (20 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply linguistic concepts and methods to prose fiction, using appropriate terminology in order to analyse narrative technique. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the extract.

Overall, this section focuses on how language choices help to shape the representations of different worlds and perspectives in prose fiction. The most successful answers integrated consideration of narrative concepts (such as point of view, genre, characterisation, as well as speech and thought representation) with detailed application of language levels. The concept of 'world building' and how writers use language to create a fictional storyworld is important here and many students thoughtfully explored ideas about fantasy, gothic or dystopian worlds. At the top levels, students were developing and evaluating interpretations by examining patterns of language use, or clusters of related features. As was the case last year, the most popular prose text was clearly *The Handmaid's Tale*, with *Dracula* being the minority choice.

As a general overview, successful responses:

- offered perceptive interpretations based on significant patterns of language use within the extract
- structured responses around interpretation rather than a chronological or 'feature-spotting' approach
- integrated comments on narrative perspective with relevant AO2 interpretations
- organised ideas into clear, coherent paragraphs
- responded to the extract in an engaged and open-minded manner
- explored several different ideas and consistently developed these.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- employed language labels that were too general (such as 'imagery' and 'tone')
- discussed contextual information, rather than answering the question
- wrote descriptively about the extract, rather than developing analysis
- used too few examples from the text
- identified features of language use without commenting on their purpose
- followed an overall structure that seemed too limited or reductive.

Question 1: *Frankenstein*

This question was concerned with the presentation of the natural world through the perspective of Victor Frankenstein as he goes to visit the site of William's murder part-way through the novel. There were many focused, secure and enjoyable responses to this question.

Successful responses:

- discussed the ways in which the natural world reflected different aspects of Victor's character
- engaged with subtle and perceptive ideas, such as the significance of the lightning being described with childlike connotations
- integrated relevant ideas from the gothic fantasy genre in a concise manner
- explored the conflicting representations of the natural world
- focused on patterns of language use, for example in the choice of metaphor, phonological devices or adjectives
- clearly understood this was a homodiegetic narrative within the novel's frame narrative structure
- considered varying reader responses to the narrative perspective of Victor.

Less successful responses:

- identified the first person narrative perspective but didn't combine this with any further comment
- focused on isolated features, particularly word classes, without meaningful discussion of their role in the text
- employed terminology (such as pathetic fallacy or foreshadowing) vaguely or inaccurately
- focused too narrowly on the description of setting, without making connections to other aspects of narrative.

Question 2: *Dracula*

This question was concerned with how the character of Renfield is presented in an extract from the diary of Dr Seward. Renfield's behaviour is strange and erratic, which readers should realise is related to the influence of Dracula.

Successful responses:

- commented thoughtfully on the influence of the narrative perspective (a fictional diary from a medical professional)
- considered different reader responses to Renfield at this point
- closely analysed Renfield's direct speech within the extract, as well as Seward's narrative portrayal of him
- offered interesting and relevant interpretations of particular language choices, such as the verb 'swooned', or the use of modal verbs.

Less successful responses:

- used labels such as 'declarative', 'noun' and 'pronoun' with little sense of purpose within the analysis
- labelled word classes inaccurately (particularly in the phrase 'perpetually violent')
- included contextual information which led to a lack of focus on the question.

Question 3: *The Handmaid's Tale*

This question was concerned with the presentation of the dystopian fantasy world of Gilead through the perspective of Offred as she describes the Wall. This was by far the most popular text choice again, with a wide variety of responses.

Successful responses:

- discussed the significance of the way in which Offred names things, particularly the capitalisation of the 'Wall'
- explored perceptive ideas about the choice of figurative language, such as patterns relating to children or colours or food, or even the symbolism of the 'question mark' simile
- commented intelligently on the combination of the everyday and the horrifying within Offred's narrative perspective
- linked significant patterns within the language to an analysis of the narrative perspective, such as the anaphora of 'The heads...' revealing Offred's compulsion to examine the grim details
- understood the limited and unreliable nature of Offred's narration, indicated by features such as modality
- developed valid ideas in relation to dystopian themes, including objectification, state terrorism and military surveillance
- focused on significant grammatical choices and how these shaped the narrative perspective, e.g. the use of short, simple sentences, passive voice, or the present progressive.

Less successful responses:

- showed some misunderstanding of the novel which undermined their analysis (e.g. thinking that the Wall was a boundary of Gilead, or that Gilead was a person)
- focused too narrowly on the description of the Wall, without connecting this to the narrator's perspective on Gilead
- used terminology in vague and inaccurate ways, particularly labels such as 'asyndetic listing' and 'semantic field'
- were too limited and general in their application of terminology.

Question 4: *The Lovely Bones*

This question was concerned with the presentation of Susie's thoughts as she remembers childhood experiences, particularly bath-time, with her mother.

Successful responses:

- explored the complexities of the narrative voice, for example the way in which the viewpoint of the younger Susie is filtered through her older, supernatural perspective
- focused on different aspects of Susie's relationships with other people and what this revealed about her
- structured answers around relevant interpretations, rather than isolated features, or a chronological approach
- commented on subtle aspects of the narration, like the focalisation through her mother's thoughts towards the end of the extract
- developed thoughtful ideas about the significance of metaphorical language choices, e.g. the hearts 'giving in', the mother fighting 'tooth and nail' or the water making them 'drunk'

- understood Sebald's use of motifs and symbols, especially the repeated references to liquids and the related interpretations.

Less successful responses:

- struggled to stay focused on the presentation of Susie's thoughts
- showed some uncertainty in selecting helpful quotations
- made sweeping and unhelpful assertions about gender roles
- used terminology only sporadically – and without direct connection to the analysis
- tended to adopt a descriptive approach.

Section B: Poetic Voices

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (15 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply linguistic concepts and methods to poetry, using appropriate terminology in order to analyse poetic technique, the construction of the poetic voice and the presentation of time, place, people and events. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the given poems.

AO4 (10 marks) – Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods.

This focuses on students' ability to make links between poems, explore similarities and differences and look at both poems evenly.

Overall, the responses in section B applied terminology more successfully than in section A, perhaps due to the more overtly crafted nature of poetry. Students offered many varied, engaged interpretations of the poems and, in the main, remembered to keep focused on the poetic voices. It was also pleasing to see students meaningfully considering the formal and phonological aspects of the poems, alongside discussion of figurative language.

As in previous series, there were far more answers on Duffy than any other, with Heaney a clear second, followed by Browning and then Donne. However, all questions allowed students to demonstrate their learning and skills clearly, as measured against the Assessment Objectives.

The major source of difficulty, as before, seemed to be the comparative element. This was the weakest area for quite a number of responses, with some taking the approach of one poem, then the other, and some using comparative phrasing even when there was no clear connection being

made. Most of the more effective answers structured their analysis by thoughtful connections between the poems, whether these were thematic, or linguistic, or both.

Examiners reported that there was a lot of detailed linguistic knowledge applied purposefully, with students showing they were able to select different language levels in order to engage productively with interpretations of the poems. In contrast, there were still some common issues, particularly around the vague and inaccurate use of ‘oxymoron’, ‘temporal deixis’ and ‘iambic pentameter’.

As a general overview, successful responses:

- focused on the question and discussed the construction and effects of poetic voice
- supported ideas by exploring patterns of language use in relevant quotations
- applied terminology accurately and precisely and explored in detail how meanings are shaped
- made considered and relevant use of different language levels
- made thoughtful and relevant comments on the poets’ use of formal and phonological elements
- offered analysis that was perceptive and open-minded to different interpretations
- made detailed comparisons between the poems and covered both poems evenly
- produced well expressed, clearly structured answers.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- identified isolated features from the poems with little focus on poetic voice or the theme of the question
- used the phrasing of comparison without really making valid connections
- did not use precise terminology and/or made errors in its application
- feature spotted, with very limited exploration of meaning
- dwelt at length on stanza length or rhyme scheme with little of purpose to say
- made few or overly vague or simple connections
- produced very brief responses with only a few superficially relevant ideas.

Question 5: John Donne

This question was concerned with how the speakers present their feelings of love in the poems.

Successful responses:

- explored contrasts of viewpoint effectively, commenting in detail on the different and shifting tones of the two voices
- developed relevant interpretations of extended metaphor and semantic fields in both poems
- demonstrated an understanding of subtle meanings through discussion of irony, paradox and sexual innuendo
- were inventive and flexible in the ways they connected the poems.

Less successful responses:

- covered the poems unevenly, most commonly treating ‘The Triple Fool’ too briefly
- failed to connect the poems
- applied only a few terms in vague and inaccurate ways.

Question 6: Robert Browning

This question was concerned with the speakers' attitudes towards their lovers. Both poems have distinctive and dramatic poetic voices and many students clearly enjoyed analysing these intriguing and disturbed characters.

Successful responses:

- kept focused on comparing and contrasting the poetic voices, structuring their answer clearly around connections
- explored aspects of spoken voice in both poems, such as the significance of ellipsis, parenthesis, interrogatives and interjections
- analysed significant patterns across both poems, for example the references to hell, the repetition of certain key verbs (like 'fix'), the person deixis and the use of exclamatory sentences
- engaged meaningfully with the situations of both speakers, commenting on the bitter isolation in 'Cristina' and the vengeful excitement in 'The Laboratory'.

Less successful responses:

- allowed contextual, background information to distract from their answer
- struggled to focus on connections between the two poems
- used 'iambic pentameter' for any discussion of meter
- included sections which forgot to apply terminology.

Question 7: Carol Ann Duffy

This question was concerned with how Duffy presents speakers' attitudes towards time. The topic provided a clear basis for connections between the two poems. As stated before, it was easily the most popular question in this section of the exam.

Successful responses:

- explored how the semantic fields of death, the use of tense and personification revealed different attitudes to time in both poems
- connected the poems purposefully through their use of viewpoint (such as the differing use of second person in the poems)
- offered alternate readings, seeing that interpretations need not be fixed and using textual support well for these different suggestions
- were able to apply detailed and precise terminology successfully, e.g. different types of modality and deixis
- remembered to consider the significance of relevant structural and phonological features in the poems
- explored different attitudes towards time as a clear way to structure the response, for example, a sense of regret, negativity towards the past or future, the sense of entrapment.

Less successful responses:

- dwelt too long on one or two limited details from the poems
- struggled to make more than one or two connections
- lost focus on the question
- showed a lack of precision with sentence moods and terms like 'temporal deixis'.

Question 8: Seamus Heaney

This question was concerned with the presentation of childhood experiences in the two poems. Students made many interesting connections between the poems and seemed to enjoy interpreting the varied symbolism of the poetry. Perhaps surprisingly, few engaged with the allusions to classical mythology in 'Personal Helicon'.

Successful responses:

- combined detailed discussion of language features with a clear focus on the essay question, such as the modification of noun phrases, or the use of alliteration, in 'Personal Helicon' to convey enjoyment of things an adult would probably find unpleasant
- analysed the differing uses of nature in the two poems to present attitudes to childhood experiences, developing thoughtful interpretations of the extended metaphors in both
- understood the interlaying of child and adult viewpoint in both poems and the self-reflexive nature of both
- engaged with the importance of childhood experience to the artistic process
- employed phonoaesthetics with conviction and relevance (e.g. the plosive consonants near the start of 'Hailstones' to suggest the trauma of this experience or the use of half-rhyme in the same poem to suggest disappointment).

Less successful responses:

- dealt with one poem and then the other, at the expense of meaningful connections
- relied too much on biographical information in their interpretations of the poems
- applied terminology inaccurately, e.g. labelling 'trapped sky' as an oxymoron
- sometimes slipped into narrative description of the poems.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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