

A-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

7707/1: Telling Stories
Report on the Examination

7707
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General

Students were well-prepared for this third year of the examination. Examiners noted that students coped well with the timings and that most finished all three sections. Students approached the paper in different ways, some choosing to answer sections B and C before section A. Although the suggested timings for the exam might suggest a linear approach, and the marks for each section descend, students are not penalised for approaching the exam in whichever way they choose. It should be noted, however, that some students who chose to answer section B and C first did appear to struggle to reach the higher levels when they got to section A at the end of a long exam paper. It is worth ensuring that students who wish to approach the exam in a non-linear order are well-prepared for this so that they are able to sustain their responses across all three sections.

The vast majority of students:

- answered all three sections with developed responses to their chosen questions
- understood the need to answer section A using a comparative approach
- included relevant ideas, showing knowledge of their set texts and poetry
- met the rubric expectations for all three questions.

Section A: Remembered Places

There are three marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

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

AO3 (15 marks) – Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.

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

This section is focused on the ways in which speakers and writers present places, societies, people and events with the key concepts of

- **genre**: a way of grouping texts based on expected shared conventions
- **representation**: the portrayal of events, people and circumstances through language and other meaning-making resources to create a way of seeing the world.
- **point of view**: the perspective(s) used in a text through which a version of reality is presented
- **register**: a variety of language that is associated with a particular situation of use.

Many students were able to discuss representation in thoughtful and perceptive ways, and used these to focus their analysis and comparisons. A number of students were able to explore how language is used to create these representations, and could make effective comparisons of how the speakers in text A and the writer in text B conveyed their viewpoints, with a clear understanding of how genre and mode affect their choices, and how contextual factors influence their representations .

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- selected a range of relevant language levels to make precise points about representation

- discussed relevant concepts such as schema and politeness to offer a more widely-considered evaluation of the extract
- were able to evaluate patterns in language use and representation
- used terminology precisely to aid their analysis and evaluation
- were able to develop analysis and evaluation with a clear focus on representation
- used a clear academic register to discuss their ideas
- understood the precise contexts of the two extracts and discussed relevant factors with an understanding of their influence on language use and representation
- were able to discuss features of genre and mode relating them to their specific use in the texts
- made thoughtful connections focused on representation and language use as well as genre, mode and context
- offered some thoughtful ideas about how the speakers and writer represented Parisian culture associated with food/drink and represented themselves within the text.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- selected language levels which did not help them to analyse in relation to representation
- identified features without linking these to representation
- used more general or less precise terminology, or did not discuss textual examples with a linguistic focus
- struggled to organise their ideas or develop them with clarity
- did not go beyond identifying the genre and mode of the two extracts
- did not understand the different backgrounds of the speakers in text A
- were not precise about audience or purpose, making generalised and sometimes inaccurate points about these aspects
- struggled to make valid connections between the texts or made generalised connections based on mode or genre
- were unable to focus on representations and only made comments on AO3 points
- made very basic points about representation, based on whether it was positive or negative and failed to understand the more subtle representations such as mockery and exaggeration.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas.

This question was generally answered with at least some knowledge and understanding, and students seemed to cope well with the two extracts, with most being able to make at least some valid points about each. Nearly all students were able to make some valid selection of textual examples and discuss these. There were very few level 1 marks awarded as most students were at least able to make some valid selection and use at least some general terminology.

Examiners noted that there was, on the whole, more engagement with language levels and that students demonstrated more skill in appreciating and exploring patterns – in language use, in attitudes, in representations. Students were more confident in addressing speech features and how these were used in text A to convey attitudes and representations. Particularly pleasing was the

increased focus on concepts and methods, not just on specific language feature analysis. This is a key focus of this question and students were able to apply ideas about politeness, the nature of memory and schema which benefitted their responses. In AO1 (across all sections of the paper), it is useful to think about the distinction between a concept (an idea), a method (a tool for analysis) and a feature (a specific example) when assessing AO1. So, a student could be exploring characterisation (concept), using speech and thought presentation (method) and identifying different kinds of speech verbs (feature). Students can therefore address AO1 in different ways mindful of the fact that effective answers will offer precise descriptions using established terminology.

Examiners noted:

- Some students were able to discuss politeness theory in relation to Mike and Sophia's bold assertions that some food was 'disgusting', which offered some useful insight when managed successfully; however, some students applied Grice's maxims inaccurately. It is worth ensuring that students know when and where these concepts/theories can be effectively applied
- many more students talked about modality this year but, as with last year, this was not always applied correctly. There was some confusion about epistemic, deontic and boulomaic modality but it was pleasing to see many more students applying this to their responses. The following link includes some discussion of modality in Lesson 2, and may be helpful in helping students understand the different types of modality:
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-7706-7707-TI-IW-POV-CTT.PDF>
- there was much confusion with the onomatopoeic interjection 'eugh'; many students who were unable to identify the feature were credited for discussing the prosodic emphasis used here but there was an array of general and imprecise terms used for this feature
- there is still confusion around deixis, with any word or phrase loosely connected to time, space or person being labelled as deixis. Students would benefit from understanding how deictic language is context-bound and this would help them identify and discuss it with increased accuracy. The following link is included to help teachers and students understand deixis: <https://thedefinitearticle.aqa.org.uk/tag/deixis/>
- there is still some imprecision in students' use of semantic field - a term sometimes used very loosely for any kind of collection of words, rather than being grouped by meaning relations. Again, some students identified a 'semantic field of nouns' or a 'semantic field of pronouns'
- general terms like 'high- or low- frequency lexis were again not helpful and led to some students using valuable time making points about this which added little to their understanding of how language was being used to represent ideas, people or place.

AO3: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

For Section A

1. Factors associated with mode
2. Generic conventions including different ways of storytelling afforded by different genres
3. The influence of contextual factors (production and reception) on the negotiation and shaping of meaning.

Examiners felt that more students were able to discuss all three strands this year and were able to integrate analysis of these factors into their discussion of language levels/features more successfully, in addition/or instead of to offering an overview in the introduction. There is no set

way that students should approach the discussion of AO3 factors, but students who were able to link it to the discussion of AO1 did seem to be able to make more precise comments on the specific influence.

Examiners noted:

- students seemed more confident in discussing contextual factors in text B, talking about Lebowitz's background and intended audience, and linking this to his language use and representations
- some students did not understand the different backgrounds of Mike and Sophia (UK students) compared to Isabelle (French national who grew up in Paris), claiming that all three were tourists on holiday in Paris at the time of the conversation, or that all three were from the East Midlands
- a number of students misunderstood the target audience in text A; some really struggled to understand the internal audience here and talked about it being aimed at people who want to travel to Paris. Students would benefit from clarity in terms of audience of the texts in the anthology
- this year, a number of students talked about audience in terms of aspirers, explorers, mainstreamers and reformers; this psychometric audience profiling borrowed from media did not help students to address specific audiences for the two extracts and, since neither of them were advertisements, using these specific advertising terms was irrelevant. Students would better benefit from discussing intended audience/text receiver more specifically
- some ideas about purpose were quite vague, with students saying that both texts were to inform, without looking at their more precise purposes. Again, students would benefit from this precision
- students tended to be able to discuss context and mode more effectively than genre, often identifying the genre of the texts in the introduction and saying nothing more about it. Students would benefit from understanding how genre conventions influence speakers/writers and manifest themselves in texts.

AO4: This AO assesses students' abilities to explore connections between texts and highlight similarities and differences – in the context of discussing the representation focus of the question. It is only assessed in Question 1.

Students seemed able to take a comparative approach and cover extracts evenly. Very few students made no connections or were marked as Level 1 for this AO.

Examiners noted:

- students seemed more confident in making connections based on AO3 factors rather than linking the extracts in terms of representation
- there are still a few students discussing text A, using a connecting discourse marker, and then discussing text B, leading to fewer precise connections
- fewer students offered the most basic observations of speakers or the writer being negative or positive. Most were able to go beyond this in their discussion of representation
- students were able to discuss representations of Parisians and their water-drinking culture fairly effectively in text B, offering more perceptive ideas about mockery and exaggeration,

but struggled to go beyond the more obvious representation of food being ‘disgusting’ in text A

- some students also struggled to understand Isabelle’s differing perspective from that of Mike and Sophia. Those who were able to explore the more precise or subtle representations were able to reach the higher levels for this AO.

Section B: Imagined Worlds

There are three marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO1 (10 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

AO2 (10 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

AO3 (15 marks) – Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.

This section focuses on how language choices help to shape the representations of different worlds and perspectives in prose fiction with the key concepts of

- **narrator:** a fictional entity responsible for telling the story in the novel (note the general definition for a narrator on this specification is: a person responsible for writing or speaking a narrative)
- **storyworld:** the fictional world that is shaped and framed by the narrative
- **characterisation:** the range of strategies that authors and readers use to build and develop characters
- **point of view:** the perspective(s) used in a text through which a version of reality is presented
- **genre:** a way of grouping texts based on expected shared conventions
- **speech and thought presentation:** the ways in which a character’s speech and thought are shown through varying degrees of narrator control.

Many students were able to discuss their set text with at least some knowledge and very few did not make selections beyond the extract, allowing access to above level 2 for AO2. Examiners noted that students were generally more effective in applying an integrated approach to their text and far fewer responses were seen that lacked *any* linguistic analysis. *The Handmaid’s Tale* was the text most responded to, followed by *The Lovely Bones*, but a number of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* responses were also seen. Students were mostly able to discuss their extract with knowledge and understanding, and make relevant selections from elsewhere which were linked to the focus of the question. The main difference this year was that AO3 was addressed by the majority of students by exploring the use of genre conventions and the influence of context, which is a marked improvement since last year and the year before, and addresses and enhances the consideration of key concepts.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- focused closely on the question focus, evaluating *significance*
- discussed the construction of narrative point of view and how this shapes our understanding of how events/characters are represented
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant textual examples from both the extract and other points in the novel

- selected relevant language levels to best explore authorial craft and were able to evaluate patterns
- applied a range of terminology accurately and precisely
- explored in detail how meanings are shaped
- made considered and relevant use of different concepts and methods (eg types of narration, modality, representation of speech and thought)
- provided interpretations that were well supported by detailed evidence from the text and clearly linked to their selected example
- evaluated the conventions of fantasy, gothic, speculative or dystopian fiction linking these clearly to the specific question
- included relevant and thoughtful comments on the influence of contextual factors, and were able to consider interpretations of their text, again, linked to the specific question focus; some of the best responses integrated this discussion to explore the significance of writer's choices of language, characterisation etc
- were sustained and developed
- were well expressed and clearly structured.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- struggled to address the specific question focus
- made little or no comment on narrative point of view or other narrative techniques
- made general and vague references to different points in the novel, sometimes without any specific selection
- did not use precise terminology or made errors in the application of terminology
- used general labels (eg 'word', 'tone', 'imagery') rather than more precise linguistic terms
- made broad assertions, not supported by clear examples, or offered interpretations that could not be drawn from the selected quotation and were just assumptions
- did not link their discussion of textual examples to the language level/feature they had identified
- did not understand their extract fully, leading to generalisations rather than precise discussion
- did not contextualise quotations taken from different points in the novel
- did not consider generic conventions and/or contextual factors, or made general comments about these without linking them to the question focus
- were poorly expressed and lacked development.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas.

Examiners felt that, although students generally found something to say about language, this was still the section where linguistic analysis was less thorough and systematic than in sections A and C. Some students who were able to reach high level 4 or level 5 for AO1 in sections A and C dropped to level 3 for AO1 in this section.

Examiners noted:

- students were often able to select a number of language levels to explore their extract and used these to develop understanding of the character/theme/concept

- some students were able to develop their analysis with some shaping of the discussion of language levels to focus on the significance aspect of the question
- many students were able to talk about features such as metaphor, verb processes, and syntactical parallelism which helped them to explore patterns
- more students were discussing modality in a purposeful way but there was some confusion and inaccuracy, as in section A (see link given under AO1 in Section A)
- students misunderstood temporal deixis and spatial deixis, labelling any adverbs of time as temporal deixis and any location as spatial deixis. Students would benefit from clarity of understanding of these terms (see link given under AO1 for Section A)
- there was some confusion over syndetic and asyndetic listing; some students were able to apply these accurately but many could not
- some students selected one language level/feature and then discussed an entirely different feature in their explanation/analysis, eg students might select a declarative and then discuss the meaning of an adjective in that declarative without any reference back to the use of the declarative. Students need to ensure that their analysis/evaluation of language features actually links to the language feature selected. It would be fine to discuss both the declarative and the adjective but we saw several students who mismatched their selected feature and their explanation/analysis.

AO2: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Maintaining a focus and selecting appropriate detail
2. An ability to interpret
3. Analysis of narrative techniques and authorial craft.

The majority of students were able to select at least one other relevant part of their novel to comment on. There was not always selection and analysis of language levels for these selected passages/sections, and comments were often more generalised. There was at least some understanding of aspects of writer's craft. It was encouraging to see students' genuine engagement with their set text.

Examiners noted:

- some students struggled to select the most relevant other parts of their novel to answer the question; students should be encouraged to know their set text thoroughly to make this selection easier and more precise in examination conditions, and to understand their given extract within the context of their novel. That said, many were able to use other parts of the text to illuminate their evaluation of their extract and to develop their line of argument
- students are still sometimes struggling with the *significance* aspect of the question. More students this year were using the word 'significance' in as many points as possible but, in some cases, were not actually explaining/evaluating the significance. It might be helpful to encourage students, after discussing the what, where and how, to consider *why* a writer has chosen to portray a character/theme/concept/location in this specific way
- students sometimes missed the specific focus of the question, eg in Q4, many students discussed the importance of Mina rather than her journals, which hindered their ability to answer the question and reach the higher levels.

AO3: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Features of the extract and the wider novel associated with the fantasy genre
2. Genre conventions
3. The influence of contextual factors (production and reception) on the negotiation and shaping of meaning.

Examiners were pleased to see how many more students were able to integrate at least some discussion of genre conventions this year. Far fewer students were just labelling their novel as dystopian or Gothic and, instead, considering or evaluating the writer's use of specific conventions. Students are credited whether they discuss these explicitly or implicitly, and many students were able to achieve a higher level on this AO than on AO1 and 2. Many students were also able to consider relevant contextual influences and the reception of their novel. These were addressed particularly well in responses to *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Examiners noted:

- students who answered a question on *The Lovely Bones* this year seemed to better able to discuss contextual aspects such as: expectations of men and women during the 1970s; 1970s American suburbia; Sebald's personal experiences and how these might have influenced her choices; critics' reactions to the novel; and genre conventions associated with fantasy/magic realism and the use of supernatural elements. It would benefit all students studying this text to consider these kinds of genre features and contextual factors.
- some students still struggled to discuss genre conventions; there is no need to label every point on genre conventions with a signposting comment ('this is a common convention of...'), and some of the best responses weaved the discussion of conventions more implicitly into their analysis; however, for students who might struggle to do this, signposting the conventions may help them to ensure they are included
- some students focused their response almost entirely on a discussion of context and genre; while this often resulted in higher marks for AO3, this was sometimes at the expense of AO1 and 2; while it is pleasing to see more focus on this AO, students would benefit from practising the coverage of all three AOs to ensure they are able to access the higher levels across them all
- some students were able to discuss relevant contextual aspects but did not make any references to genre; it is worth noting that the first two bullet points of this AO are focused on genre features/conventions and, by limiting their discussion to context, they are limiting their mark for this AO in this section.

Section C: Poetic Voices

This section focuses on the construction of a distinctive poetic voice. The key concepts are

- **identity:** a speaker's sense of who s/he is
- **poetic voice:** the way in which the speaker's sense of identity is projected through language choices so as to give the impression of a distinct persona with a personal history and a set of beliefs and values
- **point of view:** the perspective(s) used in a text through which a version of reality is presented
- **genre:** a way of grouping texts based on expected shared conventions
- **register:** a variety of language that is associated with a particular situation of use.

There are two marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

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

AO2 (10 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

Over half of the responses for this section were on Duffy, followed by Heaney, then Browning, then Donne. The most popular Duffy question was 15, thoughts about memories; the most popular Browning question was 12, attitudes towards death; the most popular Heaney question was 17, a child's perspective; the split between the two Donne questions was fairly even. Most students were able to make relevant selections from another poem and showed at least some knowledge and understanding of their poems. Most students seemed able to consider the construction of poetic voice in a more sustained and productive way this year.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- focused on the specific question
- selected a range of language levels and offered detailed evaluation of specific features
- applied a range of accurate and precise terminology
- selected one other poem which was relevant to the question focus rather than as a comparative text
- did not compare their poems, analysing each in thorough detail
- maintained focus on the construction of poetic voice throughout discussion of both poems
- offered sustained analysis/evaluation of aspects of writer's craft
- when selecting features such as rhyme or metre, were able to develop clear interpretations on how this contributed to how meanings are shaped
- discussed phonological features with perceptive ideas about the effects created
- made thoughtful and judicious selections of details to discuss in each poem
- offered thoughtful and developed interpretations of textual details
- sustained a clear and sophisticated academic style.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- did not sustain focus on the specific question, often making comments which were not relevant to the question focus
- tended to describe each of their poems, narrating throughout rather than analysing
- were unable to select many language levels, and discussed very few linguistic features
- made some selections from their poems but did not have a linguistic focus in their discussion of these
- compared their poems, hindering the development of analysis
- did not select a poem in addition to the named poem, or selected a poem which did not allow them to write clearly about the question focus
- did not focus on poetic voice, or the construction of this
- did not discuss writer's craft, instead making broad comments on what quotations showed
- made assertions about rhyme or metre with no explanation of how they contribute to meaning
- labelled phonological features, eg alliteration, without discussion of their effect
- lacked coherence in expression, leading to muddled and imprecise development of ideas.

AO1: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Selection and analysis at appropriate language levels
2. Use of concepts, methods and terminology
3. Expression and presentation of ideas.

Generally, students were able to make selections of language levels and discuss features in this section more successfully than in other sections, often achieving a higher mark/level for this AO than in sections B and C. Students often used precise terminology to help them focus in specific linguistic details.

Examiners noted:

- on the whole, students' knowledge and understanding of language features was stronger in this section; students would benefit in applying this knowledge to sections A and B
- sometimes, students used a list-like approach where they labelled terms but did not offer any analysis of these. It seemed that students were more confident in using linguistic terminology in this section but sometimes did so at the expense of discussing how meaning is created from the use of these features
- a number of students commented on the assonance within a particular example when it was not clear that there was any obvious assonance present or the claims for its effects were over-stated
- plosives, fricative and sibilance were often correctly identified but did not always aid analysis. Sometimes students were spotting these kinds of phonological features at the expense of closer analysis of meaning
- more students discussed the structure of their poems, commenting on rhyme and metre, caesura and enjambment; however, students need to practise developing their ideas about how these features contribute to meaning as we still saw some students simply labelling the rhyme scheme or metre, or saying that there was caesura or enjambment, and making little comment on how these contribute to the meanings created, or offering a general comment such as 'it makes the poem flow'.

AO2: This AO assesses 3 distinct strands:

1. Maintaining a focus and selecting appropriate detail
2. An ability to interpret
3. Analysis of construction of poetic voice and authorial craft.

In this section, we saw a vast number of students who were able to select another poem relevant to their question and were able to show understanding of how their chosen poet created meanings, at least in a straightforward way, and often with more thoughtful and developed interpretations.

Examiners noted:

- some students are still offering biographical details, or giving an extended commentary of the social and historical context of the time the poems were written. This is not always helpful and AO3 is not assessed on this section. Sometimes, a comment on one of these aspects aids the analysis of a specific feature and can be developed as part of the evaluation, however, most of the time, this detracts from the close and focused analysis that students need to develop at the end of a long examination

- some students are still answering this question with a comparative approach. AO4 is not assessed on this section, and it often leads to less development of ideas and interpretations. It also hinders students' selection of the most relevant points to discuss, as they are trying to make their selection fit into a comparison. It was noted that some students who take this approach are relying on a pre-prepared comparison of two poems, rather than selecting their second poem with a focus on the specific question
- some students were still unsure about poetic voice and would benefit from more focus on this in their consideration of poems in preparation for the examination.

A breakdown of all Assessment Objectives for this specification together with details of key concepts for the sections of each paper can be found in the *English Language and Literature: Companion Guide* on the AQA website.

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-7706-7707-COMP-GUIDE.PDF>

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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.