



A-level

English Language and Literature

7707/1 Telling Stories

Report on the Examination

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General comments

Students were well-prepared for the examination; examiners noted that students coped well with the timings of the paper and that the vast majority managed to complete all three sections of the paper. Having said that, there are a significant number of students who do not manage to answer all three questions; thorough preparation to ensure students use the timings suggested on the examination paper would help them complete all sections of this paper. Examiners also noted that more and more students year-on-year are approaching the examination in different ways, some choosing to answer section B or C first. There is no requirement to answer the questions in the order suggested on the examination paper and students are not penalised for approaching the examination in whichever way they choose. However, it should be noted that some students who chose to answer section B or C first (particularly if they started with section C), did not leave themselves enough time to answer section A well which carries the most marks of all the questions. Some students found it harder to sustain the quality of their response at the end of a long examination, thus impacting their marks for this section if they had left it until last. If students wish to answer the questions in a different order from that suggested on the examination paper, it is worth ensuring that they are well-prepared and still adhere to the suggested timings to allow them time to develop responses well across the whole examination paper.

Most students:

- answered all three questions with developed responses to their chosen questions;
- understood the need to answer sections A using a comparative approach;
- included mostly relevant ideas, showing knowledge and understanding of the Paris anthology texts, their set text for section B, and the poetry.
- met the rubric requirements for all three sections of the examination paper.

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:

- representation
- point of view
- genre, mode and the influence of contextual factors.

In general, most students found the two extracts accessible and were able to comment in interesting ways about the written text (*Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe*) and the multi-modal text (*Inside Out and Upside Down from NOT-FOR-PARENTS: PARIS – Everything you ever wanted to know*), usually finding some connections between them. Many students were able to discuss a range of interesting ideas about representations of the Pompidou Centre and used these to focus their analysis and comparisons.

Some students were able to explore how language is used to create these representations and could make effective comparisons of how the writers in both texts convey ideas and viewpoints, with a clear understanding of how genre and mode affect their choices, and how contextual factors influence their representations.

As an overview, the most successful responses:

- allowed enough time to respond to this higher tariff question.
- led their response with comparisons of representation, eg, lifeless vs lively, purposeless vs purposeful.
- integrated all three AOs throughout their response rather than writing a compartmentalised response which focuses on AO3 factors, then language analysis and representation, then makes some connections between the texts.
- selected a range of relevant language levels rather than just selecting features from the grammar language level.
- explored patterns of language, eg, the patterns of adjectives and similes used in text A and the use of interrogatives in text B.
- used terminology precisely to aid their analysis and evaluation.
- discussed relevant concepts such as schematic and embodied knowledge to offer a more widely considered evaluation of the extracts.
- used a clear academic register to discuss their ideas.
- understood the precise genres of both texts (travel memoir for text A, children’s travel guide in text B) and were able to integrate analysis of genre features and explore how both texts sometimes subverted genre expectations (eg, the use of factual information in text A, and the use of literary features in text B).
- were able to be precise about the audiences of both texts (eg, armchair travellers, people interested in travel or fans of Bill Bryson in text A; the primary audience of children aged 7+ in text B, but also, the secondary audience of parents who would probably buy the text for their children, possibly in preparation for travelling to Paris);
- were able to discuss how the audiences of the texts impacted choices of language use and representation.
- understood the primary and secondary purposes of both texts (to entertain and share his experiences, as well as inform, in text A and to inform and also entertain in text B).
- explored how both texts were written from an outsider perspective and were produced exophorically.
- explored the mode features of both texts, rather than just in text B.
- when discussing the multi-modal aspects of text B, explored precise graphological features such as iconic and symbolic images, specific font styles, the use of speech bubbles, the use of cartoon features.
- offered some thoughtful and more perceptive ideas about representation of the Pompidou Centre, and explored in detail how representations were constructed in both texts.
- understood that three different museums were being discussed in text A and could hone in on which was being discussed, often discussing how Bryson uses the description of the Musee D’Orsay to contrast the descriptions of the Pompidou Centre and show what it is lacking.

As an overview, less successful responses:

- selected language levels which did not help them to analyse ideas about representation and led to vague comments about the effect of a textual example.
- identified features without linking these to representation or discussing how they shaped meaning in the texts (feature spotting).
- selected very long textual examples and did not make clear which element of the quotation to which the label used referred.
- selected only the grammar language level, labelling lots of parts of speech but with vague comments on these features which were not helpful in analysing ideas about representation.
- demonstrated a lack of precision when identifying graphological features in text B.
- relied too heavily on more basic features such as declarative sentences, without focusing in on other features within the sentence which were used to convey ideas or attitudes.
- used more general or less precise terminology (such as ‘word,’ ‘imagery’, and ‘repetition’) and did not discuss textual examples with a linguistic focus or identified a feature without exemplification from the text.
- didn’t explore patterns within the texts, focusing instead on discussing each feature in isolation.
- struggled to organise their ideas or develop them with clarity.
- did not go beyond identifying the genre and mode of the two extracts or identified these inaccurately, or offered some formulaic initial paragraphs focusing on genre, mode, audience and purpose without then relating this to language choices or representation in relation to the question focus.
- focused too heavily on AO3 factors (particularly context), at the expense of selecting and exploring language features and representations.
- identified the genre and mode of both texts without discussing these in relation to language use or representation.
- could only comment on genre features in text A and mode features in text B, leading to an uneven consideration.
- made very basic points about representation, focusing on text A being negative and text B being more positive, and failing to discuss more precise ideas about representation, eg, the representation in text B of the Pompidou Centre as a waste of money due to its faded appearance, how it had been designed for attention and novelty rather than purpose, or the representation of the changing attitudes towards the Centre in text B and how both texts focused on the busy nature of the Centre but presented this in very different ways;
- were very uneven in their consideration of representation, writing much more about this in text A.
- made only brief connections in the final paragraph rather than integrating these throughout the response.

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 AO is generally handled well for section A with the vast majority of students able to select at least a few features to discuss. Over 90% of students were awarded a mark in level 3 or above, demonstrating the ability to at least select and explain some language features using some accurate terminology. Examiners noted that, on the whole, students engaged with at least one language level and that some students demonstrated some skill in appreciating and exploring patterns – in language use, in attitudes, in representations. It was pleasing to see some students focus on concepts and methods, not just on specific language feature analysis, as this often enabled them to link features used across the text to discuss patterns. This is a key focus of this question, and successful students were able to apply ideas about schematic and embodied knowledge, as well as the concept of the ‘double journey’ and travel narrative theories 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 or representation (concept), using speech and thought presentation (method) and identifying different kinds of speech verbs (feature). Students can therefore address AO1 in different ways, but good answers will offer precise descriptions using established terminology.

Examiners noted:

- Many students did not select outside of the grammar language level, focusing only on discussing word classes or sentence types (not always accurately). It is worth noting that, in the mark scheme, the first bullet point for AO1 is ‘selects language levels’; only selecting from one language level makes it very difficult to access the higher levels and marks, even for able students.
- Some students applied Grice’s conversational maxims and face threatening acts to the written travel memoir (text A). It is worth ensuring that students know when and where these concepts/theories can be effectively applied.
- Some students labelled similes, metaphors and personification inaccurately; as so many students tend to discuss these features from the lexis and semantics language level every year, it would be worth ensuring they are secure in their knowledge of what constitutes each of these.
- 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.’ Students also used the term ‘semantic field’ when referring to just one example rather than a number of examples which contributed to the semantic field.
- Several students used the term ‘French lexis’ when referring to the proper noun used in both texts, eg Musee D-Orsay, Beaubourg.
- Several students mislabelled pronouns such as ‘everything’ as nouns.
- Many students mislabelled the verb ‘disgusted’ in text B (‘The Pompidou Centre disgusted some people when it opened in 1977.’)
- Many students seem to be confused about what constitutes a verb phrase, a noun phrase, an adverbial phrase and an adjectival phrase; it would be worth ensuring that student understand these well if they are going to discuss them as this often led to inaccurate use of terminology. A number of students also use the term ‘phrase’ as a general term to apply to any part of a sentence or even whole sentences.
- There were a significant number of students, even able ones, who mislabelled simple sentences in both extracts as minor sentences, eg, ‘Everything about it seemed wrong’ in text A and ‘Bite me!’ in text B.

- There seems to be confusion about syndetic, asyndetic and polysyndetic lists with many students, even able ones, inaccurately labelling these, eg, labelling the syndetic list in text B ('...there is more space inside for the art museum, public library, cinema, performance halls, music institute and shops!') as asyndetic, labelling the polysyndetic list in text B ('... none of the sense of space and light and majestic calm') as either syndetic or asyndetic. It would be worth ensuring students are clear about the different types of lists and why they might be used so that they are able to analyse the impact of the specific list in terms of conveying attitudes and representations.
- Many students talked about modality but, as with previous years, this was not always applied correctly. There was some confusion about epistemic, deontic and boulomaic modality.
- 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/>
- 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. Students also used vague terms such as 'imagery,' 'repetition' and 'modal shading' without then being specific about the features which created these.

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, in general, successful students were able to discuss all three strands to some extent this year and were able to integrate analysis of these factors into their discussion of language levels/features successfully, in addition to/or instead of offering an overview in the introduction. Over 95% of students were able to access marks at level 3 or above, demonstrating at least some consideration of AO3 factors. The most successful students were able to analyse/evaluate how language and representation was influenced by the writer's contexts of production and reception, choice of genre and mode, leading to better integration of the AOs for this question and often affecting AO1 and 4 positively. Many students included a plan (not assessed) which showed they had a methodical way of considering mode, genre and context. 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 or representation did seem to be able to make more precise comments on the specific influence.

Examiners noted:

- Whilst many students were able to identify genre, mode, audience and purpose (often briefly in the introductory paragraph), a number were unable to go beyond this. Some students made very generalised comments on audience, particularly for text A, commenting that it was for middle-aged adults who wanted to travel to Paris. Students would benefit from clarity in terms of audience of the texts in the anthology, particularly where texts are sections from a wider text.
- Some students were able to discuss the audience of text B with confidence, linking the grotesque and unusual representation of the Pompidou Centre to children’s interests in the gore and the workings of the body.
- Whilst many students were able to discuss the mode of text B with some confidence, they were not able to develop ideas about mode when discussing text, A beyond commenting that it was written mode. Responses which were able to discuss text A as planned written mode with consideration of concepts such as literariness were able to address this strand of AO3 more effectively. Some stronger responses also considered Bryson’s use of spoken mode features such as the italics to indicate prosodic stress on the noun within the noun phrase ‘the *outside*’ and the use of parentheses to add his thought ‘asides’ as you would do in conversation.
- Much discussion of mode in text B focused on straightforward identification of interesting ‘graphology’ and the use of speech bubbles; stronger responses focused on the use of iconic and symbolic images, of specific fonts (and were able to name these), of the cartoon style, and the text-image cohesion.
- Some students were confused about the genre of text B, thinking it was an advertisement, a pamphlet or a poster. This often led to inaccurate ideas about purpose.
- Some students made AO3 the main focus of their response to the detriment of other AOs, with very brief comments on language use linked only to an AO3 factor, and very little consideration of representation.
- Some students identified the genres of the texts in the introduction and said nothing further about this strand of AO3. Students would benefit from understanding how genre conventions influence writers and manifest themselves in texts.
- This year, fewer students talked about audience in terms of aspirers, explorers, mainstreamers and reformers but it was still seen; this psychometric audience profiling borrowed from media did not help students to address specific audiences for the two extracts. Students would better benefit from discussing intended audience/text receiver more specifically.

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.

Most students seemed able to take a comparative approach and cover extracts evenly. Over 95% of students were able to access marks at level 3 or above for this AO, demonstrating their ability to make some valid connections and at least some obvious points about representation.

Examiners noted:

- Some students still made connections based only on AO3 factors rather than linking the extracts in terms of representation which limits the level they can achieve for this AO. Whilst it is not a rubric limitation, for level 4 and above, students need to analyse/evaluate how writers/speakers represent place, societies and people, and this is difficult to do where the main focus of the comparison is on AO3 factors.
- There are still some students discussing text A, using a connecting discourse marker, and then discussing text B, leading to fewer precise connections but, generally, many students seemed able to make connections throughout their response, using clear comparative discourse markers to signal their connections effectively. Students should be reminded that one of the descriptors for AO4 is the even coverage of the texts.
- Some students only made brief connections in the introduction and the conclusion, writing about the texts separately for the rest of the response.
- Some students still offered the most basic observations of the writers being negative or positive about the Pompidou Centre. Most were able to go beyond this in their discussion of representation. It is worth preparing students to look across the whole extract to identify and evaluate different, more precise, representations or changing ideas and attitudes, as evident in text B.
- Some students were able to discuss more perceptive ideas about representation, including how the writer of text A represents the designer of the Pompidou Centre through mockery and ridicule, and how he presents himself as knowledgeable and open-minded, as well as appreciative of other Parisian tourist attractions so that his representation of the Centre seems more trustworthy.

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
- Storyworld
- Characterisation
- Point of view
- Genre
- Speech and thought representation

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 effective in applying an integrated approach to their text and few responses were seen that lacked *any* linguistic analysis. The most common text was *The Handmaid's Tale* and the most answered question was Q6 (characters' reactions to rule-breaking), followed by Q7 (the character of

Aunt Lydia), Q2 (*Frankenstein* – characters’ ambitions), Q9 (*The Lovely Bones* – the relationship between Susie & Ray), Q8 (*The Lovely Bones* – the cornfield as a location), Q4 (*Dracula* – romantic relationships between men and women), Q5 (*Dracula* – night-time events) and Q3 (*Frankenstein* – the character of Henry Clerval). Students were mostly able to discuss their extract with at least some knowledge and understanding and make some relevant selections from elsewhere which were linked to the focus of the question. Examiners noted that AO3 was addressed by the majority of students by exploring the use of genre conventions and the influence of context to address and enhance the consideration of key concepts in relation to the question focus.

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/ideas/characters are represented.
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant textual examples from both the extract and other points in the novel.
- selected a range of 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 by writer’s craft and use of narrative techniques such as narrative structure, narrative perspective and reliability, narrative voice, analepsis/flashbacks, prolepsis/flash forwards, stream of consciousness, foreshadowing, characterisation, hamartia, pathos, indirect speech, direct speech, dramatic irony, irony, symbolism, contrast and conflict, specific sensory imagery such as visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile or gustatory, extended metaphors, hyperbole etc;
- 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 focus.
- 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 or used no linguistic description at all.
- 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 or signal where in the novel the selections came from.
- 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

As reported in previous years, examiners felt that, although students generally found something to say about language, this was still the section where this was addressed less thoroughly and systematically 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 or even lower for AO1 in this section.

- Successful students were often able to select a number of language levels to explore their extract (beyond grammar and lexis/semantics) and used these to develop understanding of the character/theme/concept, but some students were overly reliant on the language level of grammar which limited their analysis.
- Some students began by selecting language levels and discussing features, but this linguistic focus was not sustained throughout the response; or they were able to discuss language in the selections from the extract but not when discussing selections from elsewhere in the novel.
- For more able students, there is sometimes a discrepancy between the AO1 and AO2 mark where their ideas are sound, and some narrative techniques are discussed for AO2 but there is limited language analysis for AO1. Students need to be able to integrate their approach to AO1 and AO2 which will allow them access to the higher marks for both.
- There were still a small number of students who included no linguistic description or focus on language levels in this section to aid their analysis when they had included it in sections A and C. The Imagined Worlds text needs to be approached with an integrated language and literature approach, as with all other texts in this specification; examiners noted that they still saw several ‘literature’ based responses in this section.
- 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. This is included in the question stem for every section B question so students should be prepared for responding to this to be able to access the higher levels for both AO1 and AO2.
- Many students were able to talk about features such as semantic fields, use of pronouns, metaphor, verb processes, syntactical parallelism which helped them to explore patterns and access level 4 or 5.
- Some students were able to discuss modality in a purposeful way but there was some confusion and inaccuracy, as 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 (as in section A); some students were able to apply these accurately and effectively, but many could not. It is also important that students are able to evaluate their effect rather than simply identify they have been used.
- Some students selected one language level/feature and then discussed an entirely different feature in their explanation/analysis, eg they 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 several students were seen who mismatched their selected feature and their explanation/analysis. Generally, where students select and identify declaratives, there is rarely any meaningful analysis of the impact of this feature.

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/features for these selected passages/sections, and comments were often more generalised. Many students demonstrated at least some sound understanding of their chosen text and there was at least some understanding of aspects of writer's craft.

- 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 still sometimes struggled with the *significance* aspect of the question. Some students used 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 which may help them to address the significance aspect of the question.
- Almost all students were able to respond to the specific question focus and there were fewer responses where students discussed irrelevant ideas or textual examples.
- In responses to Q2, most students were able to discuss at least one other character's attitudes towards ambition, usually selecting Frankenstein to compare to Walton, with stronger responses also considering the creature's ambitions; in Q3, students could mostly discuss the presentation of Henry Clerval, if not his significance in terms of his contrast with Frankenstein.
- In Q4, most students could discuss the relationships Lucy has with her suitors, compared to Mina and Jonathan's relationship, with some stronger responses also discussing the 3 vampire women's relationship with Jonathan to contrast with Mina's relationship with him; in Q5,

students were mostly able to focus on the unusual and supernatural events at night-time, often linking these to the influence of Dracula.

- In Q6, students were mostly able to discuss Offred’s attitudes towards rule-breaking and compare this with Serena Joy’s attitudes, with some students able to develop wider discussion of the Commander’s attitudes and Moira’s; in Q7, most students were able to focus on the presentation of Aunt Lydia as an authority figure and tool for manipulating the handmaids to adhere to the rules of the theocratic society, with some students able to consider more subtle presentation such as her own lack of control as a victim of oppression by the regime.
- In Q8, most students were able to discuss the important events which take place in the cornfield such as Susie’s murder with stronger responses offering some evaluation of its significance as a link between Susie’s heaven and the real world and its changing representation across the novel; in Q9, most students could discuss the innocence of the relationship and link this to when Susie enters Ruth’s body to have sex with Ray later in the novel, with stronger response able to contrast the romantic encounters with Ray with the violent encounter with Mr Harvey.

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 that many students integrated at least some discussion of genre conventions. Fewer students just labelled their novel as dystopian or Gothic and, instead, considered or evaluated the writer’s use of specific conventions in relation to the question focus. Students are credited whether they discuss these explicitly or implicitly, and some 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* and *Frankenstein*. It should be noted that two of the three descriptors for AO3 in section B are focused on genre and genre conventions, so it is vital that students are prepared to focus on these in their responses.

Examiners noted:

- Students generally understood at least some of the conventions of dystopian, Gothic, Romantic and magic realism genres and the stronger responses integrated these into their discussion of specific textual examples rather than listing them in the introduction and not revisiting them within the response.
- Although examiners saw relatively few *Frankenstein* responses, some students missed the opportunity to discuss genre conventions, particularly in Q2 (characters’ ambitions), focusing almost entirely on Shelley’s own ambitions. More discussion of genre conventions such as the sublime and the gothic would have been helpful.

- In responses to *Dracula*, there were some useful discussions of Victorian attitudes towards marriage, gender roles, Mina as The New Woman vs Lucy as too sexual, and religious beliefs in response to Q4, and the Victorians' fear of the East, the fin-de-siecle notions of 'othering' and interest in the supernatural and superstitions in response to Q5. Genre conventions such as the supernatural, sublime and Gothic elements were seen in the more successful responses, along with discussion of the epistolary form.
- In response to *The Handmaid's Tale*, many students were able to score well on AO3 for both questions just by discussing the nature of Gilead's regime as this covered relevant genre conventions such as control and oppression of behaviour, speech and thought, indoctrination and removal of identity. Successful links to other dystopian works such as Orwell's *1984* or *Animal Farm*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* or Collins's *The Hunger Games* enabled students to discuss relevant genre conventions. Links to Nazi Germany, Iran, the political context in 1980s America and feminist movements were successful when discussing context of production and reception, and links to current political issues in America such as the reversal of the *Roe vs. Wade* ruling and, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan enabled students to make further relevant points about context of reception. Some students also made links to Atwood's sequel *The Testaments*, particularly when discussing Aunt Lydia in Q7.
- Many students who answered a question on *The Lovely Bones* seemed able to discuss contextual aspects such as: 1970s American suburbia, the 'othering' of Ray as exotic or unusual as the son of an immigrant in Q8, Sebald's personal experiences and how these might have influenced her choices, the context of reception of post 9/11 America, Kubler Ross's stages of grief; and critics' reactions to the novel, along with genre conventions associated with fantasy/magic realism, bildungsroman, urban gothic and the use of supernatural elements, often quoting critical reviews of the text. 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...'). 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.
- A small number of 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.
- A significant number of 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. Examiners also saw responses which only focused on genre conventions and no comment on context of production or reception. Students would benefit from being encouraged to consider and address all three strands of this AO.

Section C: Poetic Voices

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.

The majority of responses for this section were on Duffy, followed by Heaney, then Browning, then Donne. The most popular Duffy question was Q15 (youthful experiences); the most popular Heaney question was 17 (feelings about suffering); the two Browning questions were answered fairly evenly; and the most popular Donne question was 10 (speaker’s views on love). Most students were able to make relevant selections the named poem and from another poem and showed at least some knowledge and understanding of their poems. The most successful students were able to consider the construction of poetic voice in a sustained and productive way.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- sustained focus the specific question.
- selected a range of language levels and offered detailed evaluation of specific features and patterns.
- 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 in relation to the question focus; this approach allowed students to select the most relevant language levels and really explore the writer’s methods, better recognising and evaluating patterns across each poem.
- 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 precise about this and 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 going off on tangents which were not relevant to the question focus.
- tended to describe each of their poems, narrating what happens throughout rather than analysing.
- were unable to select many language levels, focusing mainly on grammar, 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; this could not be credited as AO4 is not assessed in this section and often meant that students were trying to find points of comparison rather than focusing on the way the question focus is presented in each of the poems.
- 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, instead describing what the writer/poet says and thinks.
- 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.
- included lots of contextual information about the poet’s life or time they were writing in; this could not be credited as AO3 is not assessed in section C and took students’ time and focus away from the analysis of the poems.
- focused on the reader or text receiver, discussing our sympathy for the poetic voice; this is not relevant and AO3 is not assessed.
- included lengthy introductions or conclusions which added nothing and couldn’t be credited for either of the AOs.

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 the other sections, particularly in section B. Students often used more precise terminology to help them focus on 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 section B in particular.
- 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.
- Many students, even more able ones, focused on a limited range of language levels with many selecting from the grammar language level with some features from lexis/semantics.
- A number of students commented on the assonance/consonance 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.
- Many students discussed phonaesthetics and, where this was handled successfully, used this to make insightful points about meaning or the poetic voice.
- Plosives, fricatives and sibilance were often correctly identified but not used to aid analysis. Sometimes students were spotting these kinds of phonological features at the expense of closer analysis of meaning.

- Some students used general terms such as *imagery*, *tone* and *repetition* without being specific about the linguistic feature used.
- Many students discussed the structure of their poems, commenting on rhyme and metre, volta, caesura and enjambment; however, students need to know how to quote these and practise developing their ideas about how these features contribute to meaning as examiners 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 speaker’s ideas 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

Most students selected 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. There were some impressive responses to all four poets and all eight questions, particularly where the second poem enabled students to offer open-minded and perceptive ideas about the question focus.

Examiners noted:

- Some students are still answering this question with a comparative approach. AO4 is not assessed on this section, and it often leads to weaker 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.
- 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.
- Many students were able to discuss poetic voice in some detail, with stronger responses analysing how this is constructed through writer’s craft. However, some students were still unsure about poetic voice (particularly when responding to the Donne or Heaney questions, often just referring to what Donne or Heaney say and think) and would benefit from more focus on this in their consideration of poems in preparation for the examination, particularly the different layers of the poetic voice, to allow students to explore this more effectively.
- When responding to Donne, stronger responses engaged the metaphysical nature of the poems and most students were able to select relevant second poems for both questions; weaker students do struggle with this poet, often describing the poems rather than analysing them, and struggling to get a sense of the poetic voice as separate from Donne as a poet.

- When responding to Browning, the focus on the construction of poetic voice seemed to be particularly successful when students chose poems with a clear persona (for Q12 – the speaker’s sense of self-importance) and, even where the poems used Browning’s voice (for Q13 – attitudes towards loss), they were still able to discuss how his attitudes and feelings were created.
- When responding to Duffy, students were generally able to select relevant other poems and discuss these in relation to the question focus. Some students answering Q14 (curiosity) struggled to maintain the focus on this aspect and ended up offering more general interpretations or ideas about the named poem and their selected poem. A significant number of students answering Q15 (youthful experiences) struggled with who the poetic voice was in *Before You were Mine* and whose youthful experiences were being presented.
- When responding to Heaney, there was some successful evaluation of feelings about locations seen in stronger responses to Q16; in weaker responses, students described how the locations were presented rather than focusing on feelings towards them. For Q17 (feelings about suffering), students were generally able to explore the poetic voice’s feelings in the named poem; many selected *Mid-Term Break* as the second poem and explored Heaney’s more personal suffering in this poem.
- Students studying any of the poets would benefit from a clear focus on analysing the ‘voice’ in all of the poems and exactly how this is created by the poet’s use of linguistic and literary features.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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