



A-level

English Literature B

7717/2B Texts and Genres: Elements of political and social protest

writing

Report on the Examination

7717
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Introductory Comments

It was pleasing to see a slight rise in the entry numbers this year and good to see so many students and teachers enjoying and valuing the study of English Literature and Specification B.

This report will focus specifically on this year's examination and how students performed in terms of the questions. It will also offer some guidance to help teachers who are teaching Specification B to maximise success in the future. This is a specification where texts are linked by genre, where a tight focus on the questions asked is paramount and where nothing else is required of students but a complete and thorough knowledge of the set texts.

Examiners who mark the specification have reported seeing some excellent work across all four papers. Students who know that they have to focus exclusively on the questions set, who are not distracted by including extraneous material in their answers, and who know their texts so well that they can make good choices of supportive references, produce work that is a joy to mark. When students are engaging with the stories of their texts in terms of the specific genre, when they know their texts 'inside out' and know what they have to do in terms of question focus they clearly enter the exam confidently and produce good work at all levels of ability. It seems that many students have enjoyed their study of English Literature and teachers are to be congratulated for fostering enthusiasm. Most students seemed to have managed their time effectively between the three required answers on each paper and they understood the different skill-sets required for answering each type of question.

When students didn't perform so well, it was often because they did not know their texts very securely or because they did not focus on the questions set, sometimes because they had their own agendas or forced what they did know into the questions. In Paper 2, weaker performances were often linked to students not using their open book thoughtfully or carefully enough to select relevant sections on which to base their arguments. Several students who struggled (across all papers) failed to focus on the grammatical subject of the sentence which forms the question. Some got caught up in loose contextual discussion, and several subverted the question choosing to write about something other than what was being asked.

Knowing the text

The text and its story is the body of knowledge that English Literature students need to have. It is the foundation for assessment. All knowledge-based examination subjects have a body of knowledge that is prescribed and the text is what is prescribed for A level English Literature students. There is nothing outside the text that Specification B students have to know. So, they cannot sidestep the text and if they do not know it in a detailed way then they are seriously disadvantaged when it comes to answering questions. Students who only know bits of the text are unable to draw from it in the most productive way and those students inevitably find it difficult to access the higher mark bands where marks are awarded for ideas which are relevant, thorough and perceptive.

The key to 'knowing the text' is for students to be clear about the facts that happen in the stories they are studying and to be confident about the sequence of events in those stories. Although sequence is often troublesome in non-linear narratives, it still has to be known. Facts in stories cannot be disputed (unless the writer invites this to happen or self consciously undermines what is presented as fact as is the case of *Atonement*). For readers, the facts of the stories have to be taken seriously from beginning to the end of the text. In stories the facts are the events that are shown, the actions of the characters, what the

characters say, what happens to them, who they speak and relate to, where things happen and who lives and who dies. If students get the facts of the narrative right, they are in a good starting place and do not go off course in their thinking and writing because of a premise that has not been grasped. If students only have a hazy knowledge or only know bits of texts and a bank of quotations that they think will work for any question, then they invariably struggle. So time must be spent on helping students to know their texts in their entirety.

The stories that writers tell are fundamental to enjoyment and knowing what happens in those stories, and how events are sequenced, enables students to interpret the texts with authority and to engage in discussion about genre and authorial method in a confident and meaningful way. The stories have to come first. There is little point writing about narrative perspective if students haven't got inside the story that the narrator is telling. There is also little point in writing about 'aspects' or 'elements' of genre if students haven't grasped the actual story that is being told. It is stories which fire the imagination of readers and this is surely what English Literature primarily ought to do.

What is getting in the way of the text

Some students seem to think that it is more important to know things outside the text rather than the text itself. Those 'other' things might be external contextual material or critical and theoretical material and sometimes these take the place of writing about the text and get in the way of the answers.

Even though it has been flagged up in all reports since the inception of the specification, many students are still writing loosely about contextual factors instead of writing about the text. This continues to be a particular problem when the students are writing about *Othello*, Keats, Blake, Coleridge and Wilde though wherever it occurs it is problematic. Students should be told categorically not to write generalised (and often made up) comments about any historical period - including the 21st century - and not to write about the lives of writers or literary movements. Neither should students write about critical theory in a tangential way. In the exams, there were many students who made up comments about the 16th century (and particularly women in the 16th century) and invariably such comments took students away from the text and the questions. The 16th century, of course, spans a hundred years and one play or novel can hardly be claimed to speak for an entire century - or even a bit of it, and for students to draw conclusions about 16th century society or people's attitudes from one play of Shakespeare is unwise too. One play of Shakespeare's might well - and often does - contradict what is said in another. The same Shakespeare who created Desdemona, also created Gonerill and Viola and Bianca, so it makes little sense for students to claim that in the 16th century women were all passive or submissive or dependent on or abused by men. Students need to focus on the worlds of their texts - and not make assumptions about the world (or worlds) outside of their texts and they need to think about what they are writing. For example, even within the world of *Othello*, it is surely reductive and not accurate to write about Emilia as a proto-feminist. The character who speaks out against the treatment of women is the same character who earlier is desperate to please the fantasy of her husband and the same character who later rails viciously against Bianca and her trade. Characters are often created with some complexity, some nuances; they develop and change. While evidenced context could be valid, it is always better for students to write specifically about the texts themselves and the messages within them - to show their knowledge of that which is tangible and to think carefully about what they are writing.

Answering the precise question set in all its detail

When students are in the exam, they need to focus entirely on the questions set. They need to identify precisely what is the subject of each question (the subject of the question sentence) and determine exactly what it is they need to write about: the intensity of Othello’s love (Q3 Tragedy), happiness (in Q7 Tragedy), the setting of Illyria (Q5 Comedy), love (Q2 Crime), the criminal (Q11 Crime), endings (Q8 Political), punishments (Q10 Political). They then need to think about parts of the text where happiness, for example, is focused on by the writer(s), give details of it in its narrative context and then debate it in terms of what the rest of the question asks. Although many teachers will be doing this, if they are not, it would be really profitable if teachers could construct lessons around the question subject, to ask their students: what is it that you have to focus on in this question and which parts of the text would be best to use to exemplify it.

The first sentence that students write should hit the question head on. The focus should then remain sharp with every comment relevant to the question and the last sentence should also be on task.

All questions focus on interpretation and students are asked to either ‘explore the significance of’ or say to what extent they agree with a view. Students, therefore, have to use their textual knowledge to do just that. If students only partially address questions or rewrite their own questions, they cannot achieve good marks. Answering the question is our mantra and it really is fundamental in examinations. In Specification B there are no hidden requirements, no guessing games that students have to partake in about what else might be required. When students focus sharply, keep to the task and construct a relevant argument which is grounded in the text, they do well. They do less well when they try to shoehorn in extraneous material, unrelated context and unrelated comments about aspects of genre that are not required by the question.

In this year’s exam it was noticed across all papers that some students denied the existence of a topic that is set up in the question, for example, happiness in Paper 1. To write about the absence of a topic is a most unhelpful approach for students to take. Lead Assessment Writers and all who are involved in the question paper production process have ensured that there is always material in the texts that can be used for the questions asked. Questions are not set around things that do not exist in texts. In Section C questions, given the number of texts that are available, it is naturally challenging for Assessment Writers to ensure that each text can be used for every question set, but that is what they do. What students have to do is to know their texts well and then think and respond positively. Careful thinking will help them to locate appropriate material to use for every question.

In answering the question, students also have to incorporate comments on authorial methods - how writers shape meanings. The students who produced the best responses were able to integrate AO2 comments into their writing in a seamless way. Understanding how stories are constructed is an essential part of ‘knowing’ the text and those students who demonstrated an understanding of narrative structure did well, ranging around the text for details, engaging with key events where they occur and thinking about beginnings and endings. In the best responses to the drama texts, students were able to imagine the stories as operating in real time: in the here and now. These students could work with a story that appears to be developing in real time on stage where a range of different outcomes are seemingly still possible.

So, to be clear - and apologies now for repeating what has been said before - but students must:

- know their texts and the stories being told
- answer the precise question asked in all its detail.

AO1

AO1 skills are also essential. Clear and fluent expression helps students to communicate effectively, so time spent during an A level course refining phrasing is time well spent. Students are at liberty to adopt a formal style or a lively one – sometimes the personal, almost journalistic voice works well. But however they choose to voice their thoughts, it must be clear what they mean. For all students, it is better to go for clarity in an exam situation rather than trying to use pseudo-impressive words which are often misapplied. Clarity and communication can also be aided when students have good control of their sentences. For most students it is best not to write sentences which have multiple clauses. It is also worth stressing that the very best responses are carefully sequenced. Therefore it is best for students to think and plan before writing commences. Deciding an angle, organising the points to be made in their argument and selecting which parts of the text to use, are sensible things to do.

Specific comments about 2B: Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing

Examiners were incredibly impressed with the quality of responses to the paper. Students frequently engaged with insight and enthusiasm to the debates set up in Section B; they considered the meanings arising from the unseen extract in original and fruitful ways; they examined the key elements of protest writing set up in Section C in thoughtful and coherent responses that showed impressive knowledge of the set texts. These students also used their texts effectively, quoting precisely to justify their ideas and exploring details. This is an open book exam, and it is therefore expected that students will use evidence regularly and know where to find key moments in the set texts that they have studied.

Students who achieved most highly were those who planned before they put pen to paper; who sustained a sharp focus on the key words employed in the question; who integrated authorial methods and the effects they created into their responses; who were selective about the moments and ideas that they explored. This is a paper about choices. Students cannot possibly write about everything related to a particular text or topic within the limits of the examination. They need to make considered and informed decisions about the questions that they select for Section B and Section C. They need to choose the moments and the poems they explore carefully rather than merely picking those that they know best regardless of relevance. They need to recognise that selecting and exploring a small number of moments precisely and in detail is far better than a scattergun approach where multiple moments are briefly alluded to but without demonstrating real understanding or depth.

A key requirement is always that students answer the question. When students subverted the question by writing about men as victims in *The Kite Runner* or discussing moments where characters were not punished in Section C, they were not engaging with the task as it had been set up. Likewise, students who adopted a narrative approach where they went little beyond identifying moments and explaining what happened were less likely to be engaging with authorial methods and therefore less likely to be moving up the mark bands.

Where students achieved highly, they were engaging in the meanings arising from the texts and the significance of well-chosen moments connected to the task. There were some exceptional responses where students explored the nuances of meaning frequently offering different interpretations or

comments on their significance. However, students should also be wary of either writing about characters as if they are ‘real’ or assuming that they are static and one-dimensional or merely representational. Those students who wrote about the narrative arc of individual characters and how they changed and evolved or could be perceived in different ways due to the unreliable narrative perspective or changes in setting and circumstances were usually achieving well.

Finally, students should always be reminded that, regardless of the need to write speedily given time constraints, the quality of their writing is essential. Handwriting needs to be legible. Writing should be accurate in terms of spelling, grammar and expression. Students should avoid unnecessarily repetitious statements. Essays should be clearly structured and paragraphed. The very best responses were not only articulate but often written in a purposeful way with a clear introduction that engaged with the task and a driven conclusion that drew ideas together or formed a sense of argument.

Section A The Unseen Extract

As in previous years, there were some incredibly impressive, fluent responses to the unseen question demonstrating students’ ability to interrogate meaning and grapple with a range of elements of the genre. This year the passage was taken from a modern novel, *The Wall*, by John Lanchester.

Where students immediately set out the narrative of the passage in their opening introduction making it clear that they understood the trajectory and what happens, they were immediately achieving well and showing clear understanding. It is often helpful for students to identify the key event/s; whether there is a particular climactic moment; what events or interactions appear to be leading towards; how the narrative of the passage concludes. Where students simply re-worded the introductory blurb or listed the elements of political and social protest writing that they intended to write about in the extract divorced from the story, they were on less secure ground. This often resulted in generalisation and assertion.

This was a rich passage with plenty for students to explore in terms of the protest genre. However, it is always worth emphasising the importance of careful, thoughtful reading of the passage as a whole before putting pen to paper. Failure to do so, often resulted in misreadings with some students claiming, for example, that the repetition of ‘Help’ was a reflection of the Defenders’ desperation or a cry for help on the part of the Others’ which was inaccurate.

It is also vital that students engage with the central question that is about the significance of the elements of political and social protest writing. Students who opened paragraphs identifying a relevant element such as xenophobia, manipulation or political corruption and then explored how this element was portrayed within the narrative were quickly achieving well. This should not mean simply picking out single lines or phrases out of context from the passage. The students who responded best explored the significance of three or four key elements in depth by examining a range of moments and building an argument around these. Those students who simply tracked through the passage offering a form of literary criticism without really engaging with the task – the significance of the elements of political and social protest writing – inevitably did not achieve as highly.

As has been stated above, if students respond to the question and the text in front of them, they will achieve well. There is no need for extraneous context or any expectation, particularly with an unseen passage that could be set at any historical period including an imagined future one, that they bring in contextual factors beyond that of the genre they are writing about. However, several students were hamstrung by including large passages of writing about modern politics and who the blond baby

politician' could be. Whilst occasional references to context can be useful if they inform or enhance the literary argument, whole paragraphs about contemporary politics where students move a long way away from the extract itself are distracting and result in a lack of focus on the question set that is always about the writing in this specific extract.

It is also crucial that students engage with authorial methods, and they are explicitly reminded to do this through the question set: Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways the author has shaped meanings. Specification B has always valued analysis of more complex authorial methods such as the use of voices, setting, structural features and form over word level analysis. In this passage, the narrative perspective was key to fully understanding the extract. The passage is told from the biased point of view of Kavanagh, a defender on the wall who is simultaneously disdainful and cynical about the politician and his speech whilst also feeling tempted by the idea of the power he represents and appears at least partly influenced by his rhetoric. Those students who recognised and commented on this internal conflict and demonstrated a comprehension of the often-mocking tone or the way in which Kavanagh's views of the politician shifted over the course of the extract, were immediately achieving well. Narrative perspective and voices (or voicelessness) are a central aspect of the protest genre as is seen in many of the set texts such as *Harvest*, *The Kite Runner* and *A Handmaid's Tale* so we would expect students to be able to engage with this feature. It is therefore perhaps worth using some teaching time to explicitly consider the impact of perspective on meaning.

Perhaps more than any other question, it is vital that students approach the extract without preconceptions about what they will find. They need to respond to the text in front of them rather than other passages they may have read or based on the issues they have explored in their set texts. For example, there were several students who wanted to discuss the misogynistic nature of the society and the representation of women. This is not a central issue in this passage and many failed to acknowledge that there is a female character, Hifa, who is also being rewarded.

Finally, it is always worth reminding students of the importance of getting to the end of the passage, particularly as this extract was relatively short. In this case, students who commented on the structural repetition of the speech at the end and the way this adds to the impression of the words seeming performative or disingenuous achieved well. However, there were also many students who did not get this far and tended only to focus on the first half of the extract, thereby missing some of the central elements that appeared later and in the narrative arc.

In summary, students achieved best where they read the passage meticulously before writing; where they responded thoughtfully to the extract unencumbered by preconceived ideas; where they considered the impact of the narrative perspective; where they constructed a clear argument around elements of the genre in each paragraph; where they avoided extraneous context and focused on the narrative in front of them.

Section B

There were some superb responses to Section B, and it was clear that many students had genuinely enjoyed their studies of these texts, had passionate views about them and, as a result, wrote with assurance. The best essays were produced by students who responded to the debate set up by the question. They often wrote a brief plan first to ensure that their responses were focused and purposeful. They often began with a concise introduction establishing the debate or an argument related to the task

that was then explored in the main essay. They frequently concluded with a purposeful evaluation that was not merely a repetition of the points that they had already made but created a clear argument.

Where students struggled it was often due to a lack of textual knowledge. In some cases, they were restricted to only writing about the openings of the narratives due to lack of knowledge of later events, for example, or were unable to connect the moments they discussed to a wider understanding of the narrative. Making sensible and well thought out choices was vital, and this ultimately comes from knowledge of the text.

Question 2 on Blake continued to be the most popular choice on the paper for students. The task asked students to consider whether being in a state of innocence leads to joy and happiness. There were some excellent, analytical responses to this question with some students showing a real sophistication to their argument particularly in the way they engaged with *Songs of Innocence and Experience* as a collection. As with many questions, choice is crucial when writing on Blake – not all poems will be useful for all questions. Students should be encouraged to take their time in considering and selecting the most helpful poems to write about to respond to this specific task. Where students achieved less well it was often because they made poor choices about the poems to select or because they subverted the question. Several students wrote about the way in which experience led to misery (which was not the question) whilst several others drifted into lengthy discussions about the church and religion in a way that was removed from the question. The students who responded best retained a sharp focus on the task with many insightfully arguing that innocence often led to vulnerability that resulted in innocent figures being corrupted or abused as in 'The Chimney Sweeper' poems or 'The Little Black Boy'. The best responses were from students who integrated analysis of authorial methods into their responses commenting on the use of different voices, rhyme schemes, rhythm and imagery. However, in some cases, ideas particularly related to rhythm and rhyme were bolted on at the ends of paragraphs in a way that did not inform the argument being made. In some cases, there was also a great deal of extraneous context and sweeping assertions about both Blake's religious views and Georgian society (although many students are still labelling Blake as Victorian). Whilst occasionally context is useful to inform an argument, whole sections about chimney sweeping and the industrial revolution rarely add much to a response and often draw students away from the texts themselves, which must be central. The very best student responses demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the poems and students who produced such responses were often able to refer to a number of aptly chosen poems with confidence. Those students who restricted themselves to writing about only one or two short poems such as 'Infant Sorrow' and 'Infant Joy' and did not go beyond that did not necessarily give themselves scope to create a thorough discussion.

It was incredibly pleasing to see several centres choosing to study Harrison's poetry. Students responded incredibly well to this task and there were some excellent responses that ranged across the poems with students often engaging insightfully with Harrison's use of voice, structure and imagery. Where students achieved less well, it was often because they subverted the question – the question was about the working class being the 'good guys' and several students wrote about the villainy of the elite instead of the working class as victims. The best responses were from students who were able to recognise and examine the ambiguity of Harrison's representation of the working class as 'good guys' fighting against oppression or as loyal and unified whilst also potentially being mocked, stereotyped or criticised for their behaviours. It was often those students who recognised the nuances in Harrison's work who achieved most highly.

Question 4 was on *The Kite Runner* and asked students to consider whether women were victims of male power. Many students wrote incredibly enthusiastically on this topic exploring several characters and the

different ways in which they were subject to male power often drawing on the narrative voice of Amir and the relative silence of female voices to support their discussions. Where students achieved less well, it was as a result of subverting the question: some, for example, tried to argue that men were also victims or that the true victim was Afghanistan. In some cases, large amounts of context about Afghanistan and sweeping statements about patriarchal societies got in the way of students engaging directly with the text and task. Students achieved their best when they focused on the task and selected apt moments from the narrative to explore in detail.

Harvest continues to become an increasingly popular text choice for centres and it was pleasing to see so many students writing in engaging and thoughtful ways on this novel. This question asked students to consider the extent to which women are presented as powerless victims. Many students wrote effectively about a range of characters often using Mistress Beldam to construct a debate. In the best responses, students recognised the nuanced nature of characters exploring the way in which, for example, Kitty Gosse was both a powerless victim given the manner in which she is taken and tortured, and also a powerful and respected force within the village, who has some hold over Thirsk. Students should always be mindful that characters are rarely created in black and white terms and they often evolve over the course of a narrative. Those students who recognise these ambiguities, shifts and different ways of reading characters often achieve more highly than those who simply read them as symbols, representational types or one-dimensional entities.

There were almost no responses to *Hard Times* or *Henry IV Part I* in section B although examiners did see a handful appear in Section C.

Question 8 was on *A Doll's House* and asked students to consider the extent to which the ending is ultimately optimistic and hopeful. There were some excellent responses on this text particularly where students examined the effects of dramatic methods in the climactic final scene of the drama. The best responses often went beyond a discussion of Nora and explored the impact of Nora's decision on Torvald; the ending of Mrs Linde's and Krogstad's narrative; the macabre conclusion of Dr Ranke's story; the possible ramification for the children who might then repeat the cycle of entrapment endured by Nora. It is always worth reminding students that there can be a number of different endings within a text as is the case for a range of characters here with the stories of more peripheral characters concluding before the final scene. Where students achieved less well, it was often as a result of failing to engage with the subject of the question – the ending. Many students spent a considerable portion of their answer discussing the beginning of the play and the macaroons or Torvald's belittling language as a way of proving that Nora was right to leave. However, in doing so they were not responding to the task as it is set up in this question and so struggled to be relevant (a key marker of band 3).

Question 9 on *The Handmaid's Tale* asked students to consider whether stories of individual courage are more memorable than the oppression of the Gilead regime. Many students wrote well about a range of individual stories including Moira, Offred and Ofglen often including insightful comments on the narrative voice. Some of the best student responses also drew on the *Historical Notes* and considered the way in which these stories are undermined here and thus less memorable. Students struggled when they lost sight of the task, either failing to mention the oppressive nature of the Gilead regime or commenting on the stories of courage in terms of rebellion or characterisation without relating this to why they might be memorable.

Section C

It was pleasing to see that there were very few rubric infringements on Section C and that most students managed their time well to ensure that they covered both their second two texts effectively. Students do not have to cover the two texts equally, but should ensure that they cover both in reasonable depth. These questions were about the significance of a particular aspect of the protest genre. Students who considered the possible meanings arising from key moments in the texts and explored the significance of the topic in terms of structure, plot, characterisation, symbolism, genre or meaning invariably did well as they were explicitly engaging with the task. Where students simply identified examples but did not go much beyond this, they were less likely to move up the marking bands. This is an open book exam, and it is also worth reminding students that they need to be using details from the set texts consistently.

Question 10 on punishment proved slightly more popular with students than question 11. It is vital that for both these questions, students begin by identifying a clear example. Where students skirted around the issue or talked generally about punishments in a nebulous way, they struggled to pin down their ideas or get at significance. The best responses clearly identified an example of punishment, zoomed in on a key episode/s in the narrative and then discussed the significance of these punishments in oppressing victims or in generating sympathy or fear etc. In some cases, students wrote about lack of punishment or where individuals escaped retribution. The question is specifically about punishment and therefore in discussing its absence, students were not engaging with the task in a relevant way.

Much of what has been written about question 10 above can be applied to question 11 that was on manipulation. With this task, students were given a short statement to help guide them in terms of what manipulation is or the different forms it may take within the texts they had studied. There were some incredibly insightful responses here with students exploring the different forms of manipulation from the individual as evident in Torvald's treatment of Nora in *A Doll's House* to manipulation on a wider social scale as evident in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Students who produced the best responses identified clear examples that they then explored in depth. These examples were well supported and students engaged thoughtfully and purposefully with the possible meanings that arise from these moments.

When writing about often lengthy texts in only a short period of time (potentially less than 30 minutes), the choices students make are vital. There is no expectation that students will cover the whole narrative in this short time frame. Those students who took the time to plan their responses, making careful decisions about the most salient moments and examples to explore and then did so in depth invariably achieved well. Moreover, in homing in on key moments students were then able to not only be more precise in their responses rather than generalising about the narrative as a whole, but engaged in authorial methods by commenting on the structural placement of the event, the perspective from which it was told, the use of dramatic methods or imagery in this particular episode or poem. The very best student responses were also able to recognise that a single example or moment can have multiple significances and these students were thus able to interrogate meaning and explore the nuances of their chosen example.

Students did not achieve so highly when they adopted a broad brushstroke approach. When they did this they failed to pin down the significance of key moments or they lost sight of the key word in the task. In some cases, students provided so many examples that it gave them little capacity to explore these in any meaningful way. By contrast, those who made thoughtful, selected choices that were examined in detail with apt textual evidence and those who maintained a clear focus on the task were quickly moving up the mark bands.

Finally, it is also worth reminding centres that there is no expectation that students will make direct comparisons or contrasts between the two texts they write about. Where students attempted to do this, such as finding the same form of punishment and its consequences in both Blake and *Harvest*, it often resulted in forced or convoluted arguments that lost coherence. Students are better off focusing on one text and then moving on to the second text rather than attempting an integrated approach that can result in a loss of clarity and focus.

Looking forward

The purpose of this report is to focus specifically on what happened in this year's examination, but for teachers new to report reading, new to teaching, new to Specification B and those preparing for teaching in September, it is important for you to go to the AQA website (Go to 'subjects' - select 'English' - select 'AS and Level Lit B') and Centre Services (use the tile for teacher support and then the filters) and look at all training materials and previous reports to help you to understand how best to support your students.

Students are at their best when they take ownership of their writing, when they have the confidence to think and respond independently and when they are not constrained by thinking they have to include material regardless of the question.

The best responses seen were by students who looked at questions independently and creatively, focused on the key words and stayed on task throughout. Such responses were a joy to read.

As teachers prepare of the 2025 examinations they might like to give the following quick tips to their students:

- Know your texts thoroughly
- Focus on all the words of the question set, and base your argument on the subject of the question
- Root your arguments in details of the story itself
- Do not write about critical theory or critical views in a detached way
- Do not write about imagined 16th century audiences and their values
- Do not write about worlds or society outside of the text
- Think before you write anything
- Make sure that your first sentence is relevant to the question - and that you never veer from it.

NB: Please look out for the Autumn courses which will be available in the new term.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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