

AQA Literature Exam Guidance

Securing top grades made easy 😊

Literature Mark Scheme Levels

Guidance:

Level 1: No sense of writer. Is largely descriptive or regurgitates the narrative/text

Level 2: Beginning to see a point of view. Point and Evidence style. Beginning to see the ideas of the writer e.g. gloomy, sad, fresh

Level 3: A sense of the writer doing things on purpose. Awareness of themes and ideas but the response is content based, rather than making connections between the writer and context and the text.

Level 4: Conscious connections being made – explaining effect and linking to purpose. Abstract explanations of what the text is about and how they know.

Level 5: The difference between a Level 4-5 is the reading and interpretation. A thoughtful approach is evident in Level 5.

Level 6: Uses the text as an illustration of their conceptual understanding and has a clear point of view. Analytical, with method, examples, exploration and clear sense of purpose

AQA believe that more levels will be added after this year and they will include 'sophisticated,' 'refined' and 'exemplary.'

Context Guidance:

- Context can be broad and only carries 15% weighting
- Readership over time and how audiences change and respond to text could be considered i.e. how an Elizabethan/Renaissance audience might respond to Juliet challenging female stereotypes
- Genre is context and should be taken full advantage of i.e. 'Tragedy was a favoured genre during the Renaissance because it fed in to the culture of war, death and misfortune – perhaps this is why the tragic hero Romeo was so appealing to Renaissance audiences...'

- Or: ‘there are many comedy moments embedded in to the tragedy of R&J, which appealed to the Renaissance audience because it gave light relief from the culture of war, death and misfortune...’

- Personal voice and experience can also demonstrate contextual awareness: ‘As a young girl being raised in a small rural village, I myself understand Juliet’s desperate need for more action and passion in her life’ etc etc

- When discussing themes you can also get context in. For example, when discussing the theme of parent/child you can mention that children were expected to grow up very quickly to marry/participate in war etc or you could mention patriarchal society and the father governing the family
- Reference to Penny Dreadfuls for J&H would be an interesting contextual frame. Broad links are encouraged

Subject Terminology:

- Students need to sound like English students. This not only includes identifying techniques such as similes, metaphors, pathetic fallacy etc but is embedded in to their response phrasing.
- Example: portrays, represents, alludes, symbolises, connotes, anchors, stereotypically, conventionally , audience, reader, writer, play, genre etc
- Punctuation (and the exploration and analysis of it) can also be included as subject terminology, as well as hitting structural points, so win/win!

Structure:

- This includes the structure of the whole play/novel, structure of specific acts/scenes/chapters, the structure of specific quotes and the way punctuation structures the language
- Structure can also be included when looking at themes, for example: The theme of power starts and ends here...

Language:

- Extracts are provided for all texts except Modern Text and poetry anthology comparison
 - Extracts should be analysed fully and then reference to a scene before and after the extract included to show reference to the whole text
- Detailed reference to the text, rather than an accurate quote is fine
- Quotes from key moments is recommended

Question Wording and Focus:

- The writer is always the focus of the question, not the character or themes:

“How does Shakespeare present Lady Macbeth...”



Must refer to the writer frequently

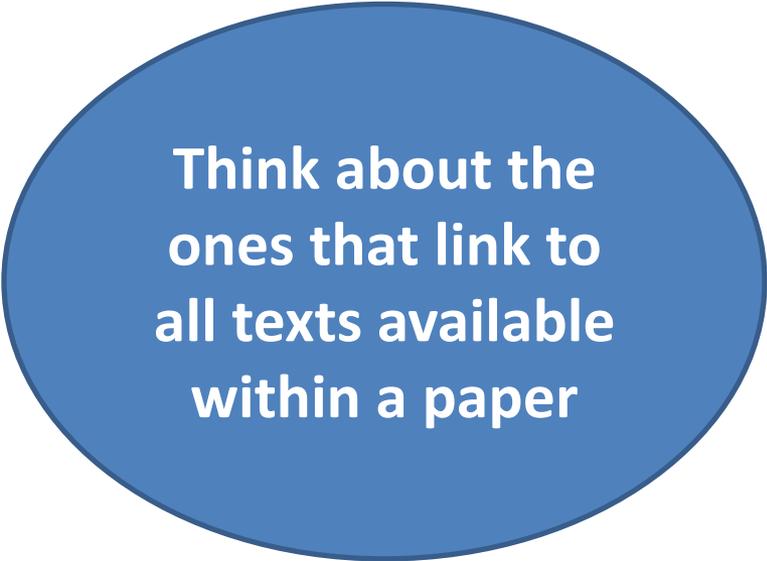
- Sometimes the wording is trickier and the writer is referred to in the bullet points:

Is Mrs. Johnstone a good mother? You should consider:

- How Russell presents Mrs. Johnstone
- How other characters view Mrs. Johnstone

Possible Question Themes:

- **Power**
- Family Relationships
- Women
- Class
- Money
- **Outsiders**
- **Responsibility**
- **Romantic Love**
- Science



Think about the ones that link to all texts available within a paper

Modern Text:

- No extract for this text, so MUST memorise quotes. Recommended to largely use the stage directions where possible: easier to remember and can get more analysis out of it i.e. The Birling's furniture and the pink lighting
- Quotes linked to characters and themes are recommended to best show understanding

Poetry:

- 25% of marks awarded for making comparisons across texts
- Use the given poems for the basis of most analysis – must use and abuse it
- Text to Whole Responses can be unbalanced, as long as both are analysed...

Text to Whole Examples

- Point, Compare, Point Compare (ab, ab) is the ideal structure of response, but the following are also acceptable:

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
ab	ab	ab	ab
ab	b	a	a
ab	b	a	b
ab	ab	ab	ab
ab	a	b	b

It's ok if 75% of the response is only on one of the poems

Poetry Comparison

- This is deliberately at the end of the paper and is only worth 8 marks out of 168 (comparative marks can also be picked up in Language papers) so students not responding to it only miss 8 marks.
- However, for top sets, successfully responding to this question will massively set them apart and boost them towards the higher levels
- Students can write a bullet point list for this question if they are running out of time and will still pick up marks
- Examiner Guidance: The bulk of what they write should be on the 2nd poem question

Teaching and Revision Ideas

- **Context through images**
- **Fortnightly revision lessons** (student-led) are key in recap and recall strengthening
- **Last man standing** based on correct quotations recited
- **Comprehension:** students cross out all of the words they do NOT understand in a piece of text. This ensures they only focus on language they can confidently and correctly analyse. This helps to build exam confidence when faced with unseen extracts
- **Planning, Planning, Planning:** Thorough, detailed plans of how they would respond to an exam question is nearly as effective as actually responding – get them to do this as starters and plenaries.
- **Buttons and shapes** to build abstract thinking and demonstrate textual understanding

Student Response	Comment on AOs
Students write a partial response to an exam-style question	They comment on how they have hit/met the relevant AOs

<http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk> has a selection of poems and resources for helping students to memorise poems and key quotations

www.thugnotes.com despite the humour and slang, the analysis section that follows the summary is advanced and often insightful

www.gcsebitesize.com

www.sparknotes.com

Book a computer room and give them an hour to research and revise

- **WAGOLL and WABOLL.** Modelling good and bad responses for all texts is crucial. Lots of teachers are actually sitting the timed responses with their students to provide the WAGOLL and to fully understand the demands of the exam.
- Give students a list of **key words** from an extract and ask them to analyse them. Then give them the whole text and ask them if the word meaning and **analysis has now changed based on its new context** – helps build language analysis confidence and grabs sneaky context points in the exam 😊

AQA GCSE Eng Lit Paper 1: Macbeth Scheme Model Responses

These response focuses on the passage in the sample paper produced by AQA.

Sample Response Grade 4/5 (C)

Lady Macbeth is presented as a powerful woman in this scene because of the way that she uses language and her evil intent. One of her first references is to a 'raven' which is symbolic of a bird of death. This is significant because it shows she is not afraid, she accepts death, and this shows her power as a not just a woman but as Macbeth's wife. She also shows power because she refers to 'my battlements' which is an odd use of the word for a female in this situation because surely it is Macbeth's castle. This is important because as the play continues to develop, we see that Lady Macbeth is in fact the more powerful of the two characters. It is interesting as well that as this speech develops, Lady Macbeth begins to become even darker in her fascination with evil spirits. She invites them to 'take my milk for gall' which implies that she wants to be stripped of any kind of maternal instinct that she possesses. This is interesting because in a sense, with Duncan coming to her castle, and as a hostess, she has an almost maternal role in protecting him. Therefore, in the way that she asks to be stripped of this element of her personality, it is almost as if she's preparing herself for an evil act. This links back to earlier in the passage when she says 'unsex me here': she no longer wants to be a woman and this is because she associates being female with weakness. In order to be cruel, she thinks she has to embody male traits.

Commentary

There is a clear engagement with the question and the topic in this extract from a response. The response is tightly focused on the language – which we can see from the number of embedded quotations – and making confident inferences that show the candidates understanding of language and meaning. There are also glimpses here of developing thematic consideration which would suggest that, with development, this response could easily progress to a grade 6/7.

Sample Response Grade 8/9 (A*)

Lady Macbeth is identified as a contradictory and complex woman in the extract from the play. On the one hand she invokes the idea of the raven, a bringer of death, to foreshadow the horrendous act that it about to be committed under 'my' battlements. At the same time, she invokes images of femininity referring to her 'woman's breasts' and her 'milk'. At the heart of this paradox is the sense that actually Lady Macbeth is not just powerful in the regal sense, as she soon comes to be, but also that she somehow transcends spheres of existence. While she exists in the physical world as Macbeth's wife, albeit in many senses more powerful than he is, she appears to exist in the supernatural world. This is certainly true when she invites the 'spirits' to consume her with 'direst cruelty'. So, in turn, what we are witnessing in this scene, is indeed a powerful woman. Yet not in a sense in which power is restricted to strength and confidence, but in the way that her power comes to control the polarity between good and evil. It is almost as if Lady Macbeth stands at the junction between the two, able to place

herself at any point along the continuum as the situation demands. Her invocation of the 'dunkest smoke of hell' is further compounds the idea of a character not just intent on inflicting suffering, but who actually commands evil itself. In turn, Lady Macbeth is not just a powerful woman, but a force; one that transcends the physical and the spiritual.

Commentary

This is a highly sophisticated and conceptualized extract that shows a real confidence in addressing the concept of power and character. Importantly, the candidate has engaged with the idea that power can mean different things and this is key to achieving in the top bands. By taking this approach, the candidate opens up a whole variety of possible interpretations, which in this case, lead into a discussion about how Lady Macbeth transcends various spheres of existence, and hence derives a greater existential power. Equally, the way in which language is addressed is confident and sophisticated. This extract would justify an award in the top band.