
GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMENTARY

For first teaching in 2015

Aims of the commentary

At AQA, we recognise that change to assessment strategies can be a cause of anxiety and uncertainty. To this end, we are keen to make a commitment to support change, both at launch, and in the lead-up to first teaching in 2015. A key part of this is this commentary which seeks to make the new assessment strategy transparent for teachers and students. For each question, it sets out:

- the Assessment Objective that is being assessed
- how the question has been designed to assess the Objective
- clarification from the senior examiners about what is required
- how a student has responded to the question and feedback from the examiners.

This commentary document will be developed over the life cycle of the new specification. We will make a collection of student responses available, initially from the pilot phase of development, and then from further assessment opportunities in the lead in to first teaching.

The assessment objectives

GCSE English Language Assessment Focus	What this means
AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.	Identify suggests retrieving data or facts; interpret includes working with more complex material – reading for inference and comprehension. Select and synthesise include bringing material together to create new material and summarising with understanding.
AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.	A notional hierarchy – simple descriptive statements, descriptions elaborated with reference to how they work, and linkages between writing and its results.
AO3 Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.	Comparison: of content and form. From identification of main similarities and differences through to sustained, detailed, evaluative and interwoven responses.
AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.	Requirement for a personal judgement which is informed and evidenced through references to the text. Involves a degree of summation and detachment. Taking an overview from a critical distance.
AO5 Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.	Write in different forms and for a range of purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas using structural and grammatical features.
AO6 Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.	Write accurately without compromising creativity and risk taking.

Paper 1

Explorations in creative reading and writing

The aim of this paper is to engage students in a creative text and inspire them to write creatively themselves by:

- in section A, reading an extract of text drawn from literature in order to consider how established writers use narrative and descriptive techniques to capture the interest and enjoyment of readers – the genre of the source will be literature prose fiction such as extracts from novels and short stories and focus on openings, endings, narrative perspectives and points of view, narrative or descriptive passages, character developments, atmospheric descriptions and other appropriate narrative and descriptive approaches
- in section B, writing their own creative text, inspired by the topic that they have responded to in section A to demonstrate their narrative and descriptive skills in response to a written prompt, scenario or visual image.

The paper will assess in this sequence, AO1, AO2 and AO4 for reading, and AO5 and AO6 for writing. Section A will be allocated 40 marks, and section B will be allocated 40 marks to give an equal weighting to the reading and writing tasks.

Question number	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
1	<p>Read again the first part of the source, lines 1 to 7.</p> <p>List <u>four</u> things from this part of the text about the weather in Cornwall.</p> <p>[4 marks]</p>	AO1	<p>As a lead in to the first paper, this question seeks to reassure students at the start of the examination with a low tariff, short response question. It requires students to list 4 points from the text, and refers them to numbered lines that will be at the start of the extract. This builds on the successful approach currently used on the unit 1 foundation paper, as question 1a.</p> <p>The layout of the student answer booklet supports this response by setting out four lines (a,b,c,d) for students to complete. Students can quote directly from the source, paraphrase in their own words or use a mixture of both.</p> <p>The mark scheme enumerates the possible answers which the examiner then correlates with the student's list. There will be one mark for each relevant response in the list to a total of 4 marks. The designated lines will always contain more than 4 aspects of information or ideas for students to be able to identify and gain marks.</p> <p>Give 1 mark for each point about the weather:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses must be drawn from lines 1 to 7 of the text • responses must be true statements from the extract • responses must relate to the weather • students may quote or paraphrase – each is acceptable • a paraphrased response covering more than one point should be credited for each point made. <p>Note: The indicative content must not be treated as exhaustive and reference must be made to the selected section of the text.</p>

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
2	<p>Look in detail at this extract from lines 8-17 of the source.</p> <p>The wind came in gusts, at times shaking the coach...</p> <p>How does the writer use language here to describe the effects of the weather?</p> <p>You could include the writer's choice of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words and phrases • language features and techniques • sentence forms. <p>[8 marks]</p>	AO2	<p>This takes the student forward in their reading to the next segment of text. It provides them with a specific example of text to analyse. We feel that by providing students with an example, they can concentrate on a small section of text to analyse in detail. Question 3 on paper 2, provides students with more scope to select their own examples for this type of analytical response.</p> <p>The question wording and use of supporting bullet points as a scaffold is designed to ensure that the main strand of the AO is addressed: that students should analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence them as a reader.</p> <p>It is now the case that "language" as a focus for analysis is more broadly defined to allow students to include a number of aspects from words through to sentence forms.</p> <p>This requires comment, explanation, analysis in relation to any given student's skills ability. It also requires students to use appropriate terminology in order to facilitate their answers and show their degree of skill.</p> <p>The question requires an extended written answer. This longer-form response will allow students to respond fully to the challenge of the task.</p>

Student response:

Du Maurier demonstrates how boring the day is through her careful use of adjectives such as 'cold' and 'grey' both of these have connotations of lifeless experiences which may be what Du Maurier is trying to create. Du Maurier's use of pathetic fallacy suggested a mysterious and negative day is upon us by using 'the weather had changed overnight', this shows the atmosphere is changing, becoming darker and more cynical. The short syntax at the start of the opening emphasises the simplicity of that statement in an attempt to show the basis of the day in a way to engage the reader from the start. The personification of the mist suggests even natural elements are negative in this area as it has 'cloaking them in mist', this would shroud and hinder people which is a mean thing to do. As well as this 'cloaking' suggests they need to be concealed possibly making them mysterious and therefore we treat them with suspicion.

The second short sentence creates a tense atmosphere and a sense of anticipation as 'it would be dark by four' suggesting the dark holds something unexpected which will cause the reader to believe the day will continue to evolve and become very dramatic when it is dark. Du Maurier creates the day as omnipotent and intrusive as she uses the verb 'penetrated' which suggests there is no escape from the menacing day.

Examiner's comments:

The command word is 'how' and emphasis is placed on 'effects' to help keep the question clear and unambiguous, as well as point students to consider the effect on the reader.

The skills section of the mark scheme clearly describes different levels of attainment/ability working up through the levels. Each level has an overarching statement concerning *understanding/awareness of language*. This is reinforced by the content-related descriptor section which exemplifies different levels of possible student response related to the level to which the exemplification is attached. So the indicative content is not arbitrary – it is focused, specific and useful for examiners, teachers and students.

Lower levels reward descriptive statements, middle levels reward elaboration with reference to how they work, and highest levels reward linkage between use of language and effects on the reader that can be complex and detailed.

For example, at the top of the levels (Level 4) comments are perceptive and detailed:

- Shows detailed and perceptive understanding of language
- Analyses the effects of the writer's choices of language
- Selects a judicious range of relevant quotations
- Uses sophisticated subject terminology accurately.

Here, the candidate shows perceptive and detailed understanding of language and uses a range of relevant quotations to merit a mark in Level 4.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
3	<p>You now need to think about the whole of the source.</p> <p>This text is from the opening of a novel.</p> <p>How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?</p> <p>You could write about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning • how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops • any other structural features that interest you. <p>[8 marks]</p>	AO2	<p>The question requires an extended written response. This longer-form answer style will allow students to respond fully to the question. It asks the student to consider the whole source. The question provides a relevant context for the student, in this case informing them that the extract is from the opening of a novel. The bullet points provide a helpful guide and prompt the student to concentrate on how the writer leads the reader through the text. The final bullet point intentionally prompts students to go beyond the guide in the previous two, and bring in any features that they feel are relevant to the task. In this sense, we have looked to build on the analysis in Q2 that rewards references to structure at punctuation and sentence level, in order to now look at structure as a sequence of paragraphs and the writer's influence on the reader as part of a reading experience.</p> <p>Possible areas for students to develop understanding in could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sequence through a passage • movement from big to small – ideas or perspectives • taking an outside to inward perspective, or vice versa • introductions and developments • reiterations • repetitions, threads, patterns or motifs • summaries and conclusions • shifts of focus • narrative perspective • connections and links across paragraphs • internal cohesion and topic sentences.

Student response:

The writer focuses the reader's attention on the weather as the very start of the novel. This will set the scene for the reader before introducing any characters. The writer constantly reminds the reader how bad the weather is, at the start with the descriptive words emphasising the surroundings. And then in the middle where the writer starts writing about the people in the coach, when the woman says "she remarked for at least the twentieth time that it was the dirtiest night she ever remembered".

The writer develops from talking about the weather to talking about the coach driver and the coach traveling. She still references to the weather throughout the description of the coach driver. For example "in a faint attempt to gain shelter from his shoulders", the word shelter references to rain which she talks about in the first paragraph. Also "between the numb fingers of the driver" references to the "cold grey day in late November" in the first paragraph. From talking about the driver, the writer moves on to talk about the passengers in the coach.

Examiner's comments:

The passage for consideration is the whole text. The command word 'How' signals comment/explanation/analysis; the word 'structured' focuses the AO and the word 'interest' offers further guidance to what the question requires. This is achieved with simple, concise wording. In this way we will make the question accessible to students of all abilities.

The student is aware of development from weather, to the coach driver, and then the coach itself. There is some awareness of how the weather relates to the driver with the reference to him "in a faint attempt to gain shelter from his shoulders".

This response shows some understanding of structure, with some relevant examples and attempt to comment on effect. It merits a mark in Level 2.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
4	<p>Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, from line 18 to the end.</p> <p>A student, having read this section of the text said: “The writer brings the very different characters to life for the reader. It is as if you are inside the coach with them.”</p> <p>To what extent do you agree?</p> <p>In your response, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write about your own impressions of the characters • evaluate how the writer has created these impressions • support your opinions with quotations from the text. <p>[20 marks]</p>	AO4	<p>The question requires students to critically evaluate the extent to which the writer has been successful in creating characters within a specified section of the text. The question requires a judgement to be made by the student as a reader and requires them to support their ideas through textual references. The statement prompts the reader to take a view about the writer’s intended impact and influence on them, and in doing so requires consideration of form and purpose – in particular, the extent to which the writer successfully draws the reader into the world of the text.</p> <p>As the final reading question on the paper, this requires the student to make an extended response. It seeks to help the student in two ways – by focusing on a specific section of text towards the end of the extract, and by providing a statement for them to consider.</p> <p>As the Assessment Objective makes clear, this is about a personal judgement which is informed and evidenced through references to the text. It needs to involve a degree of summation and detachment, as well as the student maintaining a critical distance. We feel that by providing a statement for them to make a judgement about, and to what extent they may agree, partially agree, or not agree at all, that we are more helpfully pointing them towards remaining detached, and with a sense of critical distance.</p> <p>The bullet points provide further clarity, reminding students to consider their own impression, evaluate the statement and how it relates to the effect the descriptions have on them, whilst also reminding them about the importance of making their judgement evidence based.</p> <p>We will commit to using a similar strategy to point students to make critical evaluations, but the focus for any statement will be specific to the merit of the particular text selected for assessment in the series.</p>

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
			<p>It is interesting to note the challenge in evaluating a literature text in relation either to its intended effect on a reader, or purpose to entertain, or manipulation of form, structure and language – all things that the question is able to elicit from the student. Here, the emphasis in the opening statement is the phrase “very different ways” in order to provide the most perceptive readers with an opportunity to evaluate how each of the characters is developed in different ways, and to speculate on reasons why, or speculate on the different effects they may have on the reader.</p> <p>In this way we are confident that the challenge of this question, and the evaluative focus of any critical response provides a degree of synoptic assessment. The student can only achieve at the top of the mark bands if they are able to bring together all of their reading skills from inference, through analysis to evaluation.</p>

Student response:

To a large extent, I agree with the reader.

I think because the writer had described the characteristics. The weather also helps as I feel that each character's view as they saw the weather allows us to empathise with their feelings. For example, the fact that all the passengers "huddled together" for warmth, exclaiming in unison" shows that they are all cold and frightened for they "huddled together". They must all be terrified and are feeling and thinking the same. They are "exclaiming in unison". The use of the word "exclaiming" just shows us how scared they must be, and how terrified because of the weather. By them all being together and acting as one, I feel as if I am there too, with them.

As Mary Yellan sits in the "opposite corner" from the others implies that she feels secluded and alone but she sits where rain fell through a crack in the roof. I am sympathetic towards her and feels as though I want to go and comfort her in some way. Especially because her eyes were "fixed" on the window and she seemed to be hoping "with desperate interest that some ray of light would break the heavy blanket of sky". The use of the descriptive phrase "desperate interest" shows that she is hoping with all her might that something will happen and stop herself and the others on the coach, feeling discombobulated. Normally blankets make you feel protected and warm, but in this case, she was hoping that "some ray of light would break the heavy blanket". This blanket was smothering and suffocating them and she sought a saviour, the Sun. Reading this, I think and want the same as she does. I feel as though I too am on the coach, seeking protection.

Examiner's comments:

The reading source utilises line numbers. Command words are set out in two forms – the question: To what extent do you agree? And the bullet points: consider, evaluate, support. The question clearly states which part of the text is to be considered; clearly indicates the focus on characters and clearly indicates the evaluative/judgemental requirement in relation to the AO.

This question is intended to be the most challenging reading question of this paper. The question has the capacity to elicit perceptive evaluation showing both involvement in, and objectification of, the text and, for less able students, limited, simple comments which, nevertheless offer some level of considered and supported opinions and show at least a limited ability to approach judgements. The mark scheme supports discrimination as described above.

As the final reading question on this paper, this signals the end of the assessment journey and as such requires the student to be synoptic in bringing together their learning from the two-year course and the reading skills that they have developed.

This response shows evidence that all of the criteria for Level 3 has been achieved, with some additional evaluative and perceptive comments into Level 4.

The student sets out a clear view of the statement at the start of the response. A good point is made about the weather, with a quoted example, and the way it creates empathy between the reader and characters. The focus on the word "exclaiming" shows a closer level of analysis. The final statement brings the response back to the question and helps to keep it specific to the task.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
5	<p>You are going to enter a creative writing competition. Your entry will be judged by a panel of people of your own age.</p> <p>Either: Write a description suggested by this picture (visual image provided).</p> <p>Or: Write the opening part of a story about a place that is severely affected by the weather.</p> <p>(24 marks for content and organisation 16 marks for technical accuracy)</p> <p>[40 Marks]</p>	AO5/6	<p>This question addresses all of the elements of both AO5 and AO6.</p> <p>This question will always follow the same format in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it will provide a context for the students with notional audience, form and purpose • it will provide a choice from two prompts • it will use bold text to set out the task • it will always provide at least one visual and one written stimulus • it will focus on description, and or narrative writing in keeping with the identity of the paper • it will always be related to the theme of the reading stimulus. <p>The choice of task will randomly change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sometimes a choice of description or narration tasks • sometimes a choice of two description tasks • sometimes a choice of two narration tasks. <p>This task meets the requirement for content across the specification in that 24 marks equate to a weighting of 15%, whilst the requirement for technical accuracy at 16 marks equates to a weighting of 10%. This is balanced with the same weightings across Paper 2 Question 5 so that both writing tasks are equally weighted to give a total writing weighting of 50% across the specification.</p> <p>As a task, either the description or story provides scope for the student to develop content and organisation into their writing in a way that will create impact on the specified audience – in this case, a judging panel and the spur of a competition entry. In addition, as set out in the section B rubric, students are instructed to ‘write in full sentences’. This points students towards writing in Standard English and the importance of maintaining control of their writing.</p>

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
			<p>We appreciate that producing an extended piece of writing under examination conditions can be challenging and needs a degree of stimulus for each student to have enough content and ideas to write about. We didn't want to introduce more reading material to do this and instead, have designed the paper so that the reading source that has to be studied, acts as a bridge or stimulus for the writing task. We believe that this follows good writing practice.</p> <p>As part of our stakeholder engagement, NFER, on reviewing the specification state: "The AQA specification for English Language is innovative, combining reading and writing in each of the two papers. This is effective as the reading texts serve a double purpose: as the basis for comprehension questions and as supporting text for the writing tasks. Those set in the AQA English Language papers are in line with the assessment of writing in the high performing jurisdictions studied."</p> <p>As a creative piece of writing, the task is set within the context of a competition, and thereby provides a sense of audience and purpose. That the piece will be judged, and that the student is being asked to write creatively. The form is outlined as a description or short story. In order to ensure range here, the designated audience, purpose and form for this task on this paper will differ from the one set for Q5 on paper 2 in each series.</p>

Student response:

The train came to a jolting standstill as I peered out of the steam covered window of the train. Rain cascaded down the window, droplets racing to reach the bottom, merging to form a single trail of brown tinged liquid. The exterior of the vehicle was being subjected to the endless battering of the coastal waves reaching high above the cliff who's edge we teetered on. The train swayed in sympathy with the fierce will of the sea, but the sound of metal screeching against metal stirred cries out of children all along the carriage. Sparks erupted dramatically from the lights that ran all the way down the aisle of the train, causing a symphony of screams to sound. I sighed at the hopeless situation tucking my hair behind my ear in quiet contemplation. I meditated on the likelihood of my reaching the isolated and far off manner which was my destination.

My umbrella languished lazily against the seat beside me; I doubled the protection it would offer against the torrential rain and howling winds. People clambered for the train to continue along its slow procession, others demanded refunds, the braver among them argued for compensation.

I rose, picking up my basket from the soft, dry, inviting seat on which it rested retrieved my umbrella and made for a back exit. The wooden panelled, varnished oak door, sliding it backwards and descreetly slipping outside. Closing the door behind me, I wrapped by cloak around me, securing the clasp around my neck and pulling the warm, velvet hood forward as far as possible to shroud my face. I instantly came under assault from the ebrasive weather, the gusts of icy wind nearly knocking me of balance, as powerful and numbing as if they were breathed from the bellows of the arctic itself.

Looking to my left I judged my chances of making it if I jumped off the precarious joining of the two carriages, I thought I could make it. I threw my umbrella and basket to the ground with a thud. They landed just inside the railway tracks, I would have leap further. Suddenly the train began to move, hurtling forward with a lurch, and I heard someone exclaim that a girl was about to jump, please would someone save her from the sinful destination she would surely reach if she was not stopped!

I leapt before anyone could stop me throwing myself forward as far as I could will myself. The gravelled grown grated my skin and the coastal salt stung like venom. I watched my belongings become churned debris by the unstoppable wheels of the train, a sickening crunch like bone as it rolled over my few possessions. With the train departed, I was left with no shelter and was almost swallowed by a consuming wave, which frothed at the edges like a rabid dog. Thoroughly drenched and almost completely disheartened, I stood, unstable on my weakened limbs, and trudged through the sludge of the sodden banks to a mud path, marked by a weather beaten sign post.

"Larkly manor 10 miles" pointed the smug directions. I waded my way in the direction of this aloot manor, my face numb with cold and lashes frozen to my face. Clenching my fist around my dripping skirt, I moved relentlessly on, making slow process with the weight of my sodden fabrics, pulling me down like a ball and preventing me from reaching my distant goal, the never ending journey narrowing my insides, pushing me to cry out as the hail began to fall like invisible dagger and mist shrouded all in front of me like the devils cloak.

Examiner's comments:

The choice of visual stimulus or task is designed to appeal to all students. It must be stressed that the outcome of this question is a piece of creative writing that will be rewarded against a common, skills-based mark scheme regardless of the starting prompt. The choice of an optional prompt in this question is a valid one, it recognises that not all students will respond to a single prompt in the same way and ensures that they are not disproportionately penalised. Some students may more easily access a written prompt for creative writing and some more easily access a visual prompt. In all cases the success of the response is based on a common skills-based mark scheme.

Here, in this response, in relation to AO5, it merits a mark in Level 4. It is convincing and crafted. Organisation is developed and improves.

In relation to AO6, it is judged to be all Level 3: sentences and spelling mostly secure and accurate. Some Level 4: sentence forms for effect and extensive vocabulary.

Paper 2

Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

The aim of this paper is to develop students' insights into how writers have particular viewpoints and perspectives on issues or themes that are important to the way we think and live our lives. It will encourage students to demonstrate their skills by:

- in section A, reading two linked sources from different time periods and genres in order to consider how each presents a perspective or viewpoint to influence the reader – choice of genre for the sources will be non-fiction and literary non-fiction such as high quality journalism, articles, reports, essays, travel writing, accounts, sketches, letters, diaries, reports, autobiography and biographical passages or other appropriate non-fiction and literary non-fiction forms
- in section B, producing a written text to a specified audience, purpose and form in which they give their own perspective on the theme that has been introduced to them in section A.

The paper will assess in this sequence, AO1, AO2 and AO3 for reading, and AO5 and AO6 for writing. Section A will be allocated 40 marks, and section B will be allocated 40 marks to give an equal weighting to the reading and writing tasks.

The paper will assess in this sequence, AO1, AO2 and AO4 for reading, and AO5 and AO6 for writing. Section A will be allocated 40 marks, and section B will be allocated 40 marks to give an equal weighting to the reading and writing tasks.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
1	<p>Read again Source 1, from lines 1 to 15.</p> <p>Find four statements below which are TRUE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tick the ones that you think are true.• Make a maximum of two ticks. <p>[4 marks]</p>	AO1	<p>As a lead in to the second paper, this question seeks to build on the first question on paper 1, this time using true/false statements to provide a thinking scaffold for students, as well as help them to manage their time appropriately for a low tariff question.</p> <p>The layout of the student answer booklet supports this response by setting out eight statements, only four of which are true based on a reading of the text. Again, numbered lines at the start of the extract provide a helpful way for the student to break the reading up into manageable chunks.</p>

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
2	<p>You need to refer to source A and source B for this question.</p> <p>Use details from both sources. Write a summary of the differences between Eddie and Henry.</p> <p>[8 marks]</p>	AO1	<p>The need to focus on the whole of both sources signals the degree of increasing independence required by students. As such, this question builds on the previous assessment of AO1 in question 1, requiring students to synthesise information and ideas – both explicit and implicit. In addition, the summarising task looks to act as a forward pointer to P2 Q4. It is designed to help students prepare skills for comparison, but in a more straightforward and defined way at this stage in the paper.</p> <p>A student might prepare for this by text marking differences (or similarities on other occasions), or listing them for themselves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • things I learn about Eddie • things I learn about Henry. <p>Then, in writing the summary, the student has the flexibility to intertwine differences, or more simply begin with Eddie, and saying, through a connecting statement (for example: On the other hand, or In contrast) how Henry is different.</p> <p>AO1 Content is set out as four bullet points that provide a framework for responses such as ‘Eddie is a typical, contemporary teenager living at home whereas Henry lived in a different century away from home at boarding school.’ Further to this, skills descriptors are set out in four levels with Level 4 requiring ‘detailed understanding of differences between the boys’ whereas Level 1 ‘shows simple awareness of differences’. Within each level there are a set of content descriptors acting as indicative content for example:</p> <p>‘Eddie is a typical modern teenager who is cheeky and speaks to his father in a ‘mocking voice’ emphasising their close relationship and good humour with each other. Henry however is distant and formal with his father addressing him in a respectful tone, ‘my dear Father’ emphasising the difference in status between them.’</p> <p>The reliability of the mark scheme rests on: its consistency throughout the papers; the hierarchical nature of its demand (through the grid); the close connection between its key words and the AOs being addressed, and the straightforward nature of its design.</p>

Student response:

Eddie is quite academic and so is Henry but Eddie doesn't seem to try particularly hard. 'He's irritatingly good at it' and 'he is too busy killing things, while talking on Skype! This suggests he wants to do well and does do well, without trying very hard, and is living in comfort.

Whereas Henry is having a very uncomfortable time at boarding school, 'our bread is nearly black', suggesting they have very scarce or low quality food but Henry works hard and looks after himself unlike Eddie. Henry also does not have his father's support as Eddie does. Eddie just ignores his father as he comes into the room but Henry is pleading to see his father at all. 'If God permit me to live as long,' this shows that Henry is basically saying how desperate he is! This contrasts with Eddie, who doesn't realise how lucky he is!

Examiner's comments:

The question requires students to write an extended response. The requirement to write "new material" is addressed in three ways:

- by the student bringing together the differences into a new, single form – prior to this the information and ideas as originally set out in separate texts about Henry and Eddie are not seen as differences
- the student's own content to inform the summary
- the designated new form to the writing – in this case a summary.

Both sources are considered by students in relation to a given aspect of each – in this case the boys; the characteristics of Eddie from one and Henry from the other. Showing understanding of the differences in their characters requires interpretation of explicit and implicit information and ideas. When students summarise these differences in a piece of continuous prose writing, they bring together material from different sources (synthesis) into something new (the summary).

In this case, there is a detailed understanding of the differences between the two boys, with a touch of perception of Eddie, plus range of quotations from both texts: Level 4.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
3	<p>You now need to refer only to source B, the letter by Henry written to his father.</p> <p>How does Henry use language to try to influence his father?</p> <p>[12 marks]</p>	AQ1	<p>In that this question again assesses language and structure, we have looked to develop reading progression through AO2 in the way previous to this, P1 Q2 provides a specific example for analysis, and P2 Q3 now requires students to self-select examples of their own to analyse. It remains true to our principles to take the candidate on an assessment journey through the two paper format, proceeding from dependence on a provided example for analysis, to independent choice and selection.</p> <p>This question requires comment, explanation, analysis in relation to any given candidate's skills ability. It also requires students to use appropriate terminology in order to facilitate their answers and show their degree of skill. Again as with P1 Q2 this question requires an extended written answer. This longer-form response will allow students to respond fully to the challenge of the task.</p>

Student response:

He uses proper nouns such as “August”, “October” and Xmas’ as well as “Cotherstone” and ‘Islington’ to create a sense of time and place and emphasise to his father the length of time they have been apart and the distance between them. He adds to this with the use of other phrases linked to time and separation such as ‘It is now two years’ and ‘since I left you’ to create an emotive appeal on his father, and also creates a real sense of his isolation and homesickness. In addition to the proper nouns, Henry also capitalises other words such as ‘Letter’ and ‘Friend’ as though to inflate their importance and point out to his father how much he is need. He also uses this device later in the letter when he is pointing out the faults of the academy ‘Barley Meal’ and ‘Beds’ to highlight his hardship.

Henry uses direct address to his father which suggests familiarity, “you will not let ...”, ‘you will let me come home’ and shows how his future is in the hands of his father, but this is also contrasted with a much more distant and formal mode of address, ‘my dear Father’. This phrase is repeated in a number of places as an emotional tool to try and reinforce that his father is ‘dear’ to him – though the distance and time lapse of them being together suggests to the reader this may not be so – and is a deliberate choice by Henry to appeal to his father.

The formal tone is continued in complex phrases such as ‘If you recollect’, ‘pray don’t mention’, ‘I assure you’ and ‘would be obliged’ which are like persuasive, rhetorical devices designed to make the letter a very polite and respectful request. In some ways, these seem to emphasise the distance between them. This contrasts to the simple use of ‘unhappy’ – a childlike word – and ‘good’, ‘kind’, ‘Friend’ which are applied to Mr Halmer. These simple adjectives seem to suggest that these simple things are all that Henry wants.

Henry also uses simple descriptive to point out the faults of his school, ‘nearly black,’ ‘worst Barley Meal’, ‘stuffed with chaff’. However, he goes on to use a rather hyperbolic simile ‘used more like Bears ... Christians’ to try and convince his father they are being treated inhumanely. Additionally, the letter employs a semantic field of religion referring to ‘church’, ‘If God permit me’. Henry seems to be using this as an influence on his father, perhaps reminding his father to act in the way his religion tells him to. Henry again uses hyperbole in the dramatic phrase ‘if God permit me to live as long’ aiming to convince his a father his life is at risk in the school.

Examiner’s comments:

The question requires students to explain how the writer has used language to achieve certain effects and influence the reader. In this case, the student as a reader of the source is being assessed on their ability to analyse how the language used would influence the father – the intended reader of the letter.

The whole question requires comment, explanation, and analysis in relation to any given student’s skills ability. It also requires students to use appropriate terminology in order to develop their responses.

Here, the response is consistently level 4. The response demonstrates a range of subject terminology, all appropriately supported, with perceptive comments on effect and detail. A developed understanding of a range of language features.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
4	<p>For this question, you need to refer to the whole of source A together with source B, the father's letter to a family friend.</p> <p>Compare how the two writers convey their different attitudes to parenting and education</p> <p>In your answer, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare their different attitudes • compare the methods they use to convey their attitudes • support your ideas with quotations from both texts. <p>[16 marks]</p>	AO3	<p>This extended-form answer will enable students to compare the different attitudes or viewpoints, perspectives and ideas as an umbrella term to capture what a writer is writing about and how they present it to the reader – either their intended reader in the time period in which it is written or the candidate as reader of the source. The scope of the question will always provide the candidate, at all levels of ability, to consider in their comparison how the writers use form, structure and language – referenced in the bullet point as 'methods'.</p> <p>As the final reading question on this paper, this signals the end of the assessment journey and as such requires the student to be synoptic in bringing together their learning from the two-year course and the reading skills that they have developed. Questions which require students to consider how writers present their viewpoints will always require them to apply additional reading skills to AO3 that is specifically targeted and weighted for this response. For example, aspects of AO1, AO2 and AO4 – reading skills that the candidate has as part of their 'reading toolkit'.</p>

Student response:

Jay Rayner clearly has a much closer relationship with his son than Henry's father in Source 2. There is a physical closeness in that Jay and his son live in the same house and share everyday life and concerns, whereas Henry lives away from his father at boarding school and rarely comes home, "It is now two years come October since I left you at Islington." This means that Henry's father has no real idea of Henry's everyday life and concerns apart from the occasional letter.

Jay Rayner clearly empathises with his son's concerns, including homework and decides to "share a little solidarity" by attempting his maths homework. While Henry's father has to rely on the intervention of a friend to find out more about Henry's problems and asks him to "ascertain whether you think it would be advisable for me to send for them home."

Jay Rayner writes in an informal tone which matches his relaxed and more modern approach to parenting. He talks about children, such as his who "take the mickey" out of their parents. Henry's father uses a much more formal tone with his choice of language, "induced to write to you", "excuse the liberty I take" which reflects the language of the time the letter was written. The letter was not even written to his son, but to a friend.

Both fathers seem to value education but have different approaches to their sons' learning.

Jay Rayner uses humour to convey his own moderate academic achievement. He confessed that his "grades lined up like a line of Pac-Men doing a conga". He also uses humour to express his pride at his son's educational achievement in Maths when he describes him as being "irritatingly good at it." Irritatingly reflects Jay's wonder at his son's natural talent while he struggles.

Henry's father is very concerned about his son's education, particularly his spelling "I see several words wrong-spelt." This is ironic as the father has made grammatical mistakes himself "several words wrong-spelt". He is unaware of his educational weaknesses whereas Jay Rayner makes a joke.

Examiner's comments:

Here both aspects of AO3 are addressed in the way that students compare the different viewpoints and attitudes each writer has to being a parent. AO3 is addressed through the command word: How and the emphasis in the question on them "conveying" their attitudes to the reader. The word 'convey' encapsulates a number of concepts – from ways and methods of writing, through to consideration of form, structure and purpose. All of these are reinforced by the supporting bullet points:

- compare their different attitudes
- compare the methods they use to convey their attitudes
- support your ideas with quotations from both texts.

In this response, there is judicious range of quotations. It compares in a perceptive way and with some analysis of methods: Level 4.

Question	Question wording	AO	Design rationale
5	<p>'Homework has no value. Some students get it done for them; some don't do it at all. Students should be relaxing in their free time.'</p> <p>Write an article for a broadsheet newspaper in which you explain your point of view on this statement.</p> <p>(24 marks for content and organisation, 16 marks for technical accuracy)</p> <p>[40 marks]</p>	AO5/6	<p>As with Paper 1, Question 5, the reading sources act as potential support for students to write about their own viewpoint. There are two components to the task: a provocative statement followed by a requirement to write in a form, for an audience, and with a purpose. The nature of this form, audience and purpose will differ from that set on Paper 1 in order that students can show ability to write to a range of provided contexts.</p> <p>Reading and writing assessments both need to have an equal weighting of 50%. We appreciate that producing an extended piece of writing under examination conditions can be challenging and needs a degree of stimulus for each student to have enough content and ideas to write about. We didn't want to introduce more reading material to do this and instead, have designed the paper so that the reading source that has to be studied, acts as a bridge or stimulus for the writing task. We believe that this follows good writing practice.</p>

Student response:

Why? Why do schools think they have the right to dictate every waking moment of my life? I am a name; not a number!

There is an argument that says homework helps to create an independence of thought. School is a social institution, a bee hive with lots of little drones and workers buzzing about the place. If we encounter a problem, we consult a teacher or, at the very least, we ask our friends. There is always someone on hand to help. At home, the theory is that we continue this education but independently. We learn to think for ourselves. That's the theory. In reality, of course, we just log on to a revision web site, or interact with our peers through social networking and find out the answer that way. It's the modern day equivalent of borrowing your mate's homework. There's no such thing as independence if we choose otherwise.

Homework improves our academic achievement and leads to better results. On that fateful day in August, as we queue like lab rats at the factory of expectation, we are given the keys to our future. We are launched into the world with our golden ticket, a handful of qualifications that we achieved because we worked hard at home as well as at school and fulfilled our potential. Well, hello? I work hard at school. I'm entitled to a life when I go home. I'm not a troublemaker. I don't cause problems and I want to do well. I really do. It's just that sometimes, just sometimes, I'd like to draw breath.

If I'm honest, I don't actually mind doing homework. My main issue is that's there's just too much of it. Mr Left never talks to Mrs Right. They both set essays that have to be in the next day and it just can't be done. Please, Mr Left, give me the weekend. Then I can do Mrs Right's Maths homework for tomorrow and devote my weekend to your History assignment. I promise I'll do it. Just give me enough time.

My other issue is that most of it is a pointless exercise. Homework for homework's sake. If there's a purpose, fine. But please don't just make it up for the sake of it. Just because your subject appears on my homework timetable for a Wednesday night doesn't mean you have to set something meaningless for me to do.

There's more to me than educational qualifications. I like to play badminton; go pony trekking with my family in the woods near our house; practise my clarinet. I even help out at the old people's home in town for my Duke of Edinburgh Award when I have the time. I want to be a rounded person, not just a walking encyclopaedia with a head stuffed full of facts. Why do schools think they have the right to dictate every waking moment of my life? I am a name; not a number!

Examiner's comments:

This task meets the requirement for content across the specification in that 24 marks equate to a weighting of 15%, whilst the requirement for technical accuracy at 16 marks equates to a weighting of 10%. This is balanced with the same weightings across Paper 1 Question 5 so that both writing tasks are equally weighted to give a total writing weighting of 50% across the specification.

As a task, the positioning statement provides scope for the student to develop content and organisation into their writing in a way that will create impact on the specified audience – in this case, the readership of a broadsheet newspaper and in the form of an article for it. Crucially, we are looking to allow the student to write about their own point of view. This is in effect the purpose for the writing – which is deliberately flexible to allow the student to write argumentatively, discursively, informatively or any other appropriately selected purpose relevant to the topic and task. This takes us beyond the current situation of potential predictability where students are coached in set writing types such as argue, persuade and advise. It introduces instead additional challenge and demand by allowing a greater range of purposes within the constraints of the task and the students' writing ability. In addition, as set out in the Section B rubric, students are instructed to 'write in full sentences'. This points students towards writing in Standard English and the importance of maintaining control of their writing.

Here, the response is convincing and communication is compelling: Level 4

AO5 – Tone, style and register assuredly matched to purpose, form and audience
Sustained crafting of linguistic devices

AO6 – Full range of appropriate sentence form for effect
Consistently secure and accurate sentence demarcation and range of punctuation
High level of accuracy in spelling including ambitious vocabulary

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