

**GCSE (9–1)**

*Teacher Guide*

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**J351**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Reading skills**

Version 2

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# Introduction

This guide has been produced to support teachers in their understanding of the skills that learners are required to demonstrate in the reading sections (Section A) of the OCR GCSE English Language examination papers:

Component 1 J351/01: Communicating information and ideas

Component 2 J351/02: Exploring effects and impact

Guidance is given on the assessment requirements for the reading sections with specific reference to the wording of the Assessment Objectives and mark scheme level descriptors. This guide can be used in conjunction with a range of support materials already available on the GCSE (9-1) English Language J351 webpage ([www.ocr.org.uk/gcseenglishlanguage](http://www.ocr.org.uk/gcseenglishlanguage)) including:

- [Unseen 20th and 21st century texts anthology](#)
- [19th century texts delivery guide](#) and lesson elements
- [Approaching 20th & 21st century literary texts delivery guide](#)

The sample assessment materials for [Component 1 J351/01](#) and [Component 2 J351/02](#) are also referred to later in this guide.



## Unseen texts

The assessment of reading skills in GCSE English Language is based entirely on unseen texts. Component 1 will include two unseen non-fiction texts: one of these will always be a 19th century non-fiction text, the other will be either a 20th or 21st century non-fiction text. Component 2 will include two unseen literary texts (prose fiction or literary non-fiction) from the 20th and/or 21st century.

### How to read an unseen text

It is important that both passages have been read thoroughly before learners start to look at the questions: learners should read the texts to gain as deep an understanding as possible of the themes and ideas before considering the related tasks in the question paper. This will help them to form their own reading of the texts, which will be particularly useful when they get to question 4, the highest tariff reading question.

Irrespective of perceived or otherwise measured ability, learners may have very varied reading speeds. They should all have a confident awareness of how long it is going to take them to read a total of about 1300 words (approximate maximum word length of the two unseen texts in each exam paper) so that they are able to plan their time in the exam accordingly. As a guideline, it is recommended that learners spend approximately 15 minutes reading and annotating the unseen texts, although, as mentioned above, some learners may need more or less time than this. When reading through the unseen texts, learners can use the guidance suggested below. This is not a 'one size fits all' recipe but it should guide learners to formulate a reading method that works best for them individually.

Learners should be considering the information given in the two texts, the ways they have been written and points of comparison between them. They could approach each text using the following bullets as guidance.

- Look carefully at the title and the introduction to the text (the contextual information given in italics before the text begins) and read steadily through to the end: consider the closing section carefully and go back to the title: see if you can make some links between the two.
- Look back through the text and note/underline/highlight any words that are unfamiliar: use the context of the text to work out what they (might) mean. (NB: a glossary will be provided for words that are generally considered as unfamiliar, but may not include all words which learners could potentially be unsure of).

- Take an initial view of what the text is about, what point(s) the writer wants to get across and some of the ways they do so.
- Read through the text again looking at the links between the sections/paragraphs and how they relate to the title and the conclusion.
- When you have read both texts, make sure you have thought about what they have in common and what there is to say about them.
- Now look at the tasks in the question paper: they will be structured to help you frame your responses. Where there are bullet points, look carefully at what they ask you to do. Go back to the texts and locate the passages that the tasks are directing you towards.
- Finally go back to question 1 and plan your answers as you work through the question paper.

Again, planning is whatever works best for each learner, but planned answers, based on a good understanding of the text tend to be significantly more successful than unplanned ones based on a hurried and potentially superficial reading.

It is essential to understand that the reading tasks in each component work in a progressive fashion, which increases in demand for skills and insight and accumulates knowledge and understanding. Each reading question builds on the one it follows.

Question 4 is the most demanding reading question both in terms of skill demand and mark tariff – the question assesses AO3 and AO4 and is worth 18 of the 40 marks for the reading section. Learners should expect that both the skills they have used and the understanding they have acquired from their previous responses will come into play here. They will need consolidation and reorganisation of their ideas, as well as additional skills and insights for this question 4 response; nevertheless a strong performance on questions 1–3 is a firm foundation for success in question 4. Further guidance on the requirements for question 4 is given later on in this guide and in the OCR Teacher Guide to Comparing and Evaluating Texts: Question 4.

# Skills and Assessment Objectives (AOs)

In GCSE English Language, reading is assessed using four Assessment Objectives, AO1-4:

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas  
Select and synthesise evidence from different texts
- 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
- AO3 Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

## AO1

AO1 is split into two strands:

- **AO1i: identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.**
- **AO1ii: select and synthesise evidence from different texts.**

AO1 is assessed in both components: in Component 1 question 1 and question 2, and in Component 2 question 1.

For AO1, learners need to understand: 'what information is given in the passage?', 'What is it about?'

AO1 questions are traditional "search and find" or "locate and reorganise" tasks.

### AO1i

The first strand of AO1 (AO1i) is **identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas**.

This strand will be assessed in the first set of questions in both components (question 1). AO1i is assessed using short answer questions, offering low tariff marks for straightforward responses, for example, asking for points or quotes taken directly from one of the unseen texts.

Learners will need to be able to:

**identify:** retrieve data or facts: show what is explicit as directed by the task

**interpret:** read between the lines and make simple inferences, explain what is happening; show what is implied.

Precision is needed here, both in reading the question and picking the relevant word(s) or phrase(s) from the text. Learners should develop the skills to select concise, short points and quotations from the text in relation to the task, such as individual words and phrases, rather than lifting whole sentences directly from the text. Learners tend to do less well on this task because they are insufficiently selective in retrieving what is asked for in the question.

For some AO1i responses that require learners to interpret information, learners may paraphrase information from the text. In these AO1 questions, no opinions or analysis are required when paraphrasing.

### AO1ii

The second strand of AO1 (AO1ii) is **select and synthesise evidence from different texts**. AO1ii will only be assessed in Component 1, Communicating information and ideas, question 2.

For this question, learners will need to recognise and articulate the similarities or differences in an idea common to both texts, as directed by the specific question. Learners will need to develop the skills to **select** appropriate material from the texts to suit the task: the **evidence** required, of what the texts say about someone or something, will be given clearly in the question. The evidence will be both what is explicit and implicit in the texts, and learners' responses will need to demonstrate that understanding. Learners need to **synthesise** the material they've selected i.e. 'combine the elements into a whole' in order to create a response.

The task therefore becomes two-fold; first pick out what is relevant from each text (planning) and then bring the material from each text together, reorganise it in a relevant way and apply it to constructing the response.

For AO1ii responses, learners may paraphrase information from the text. In these AO1ii questions, no opinions or analysis are required when paraphrasing.

For this question, learners provide one response for a medium tariff mark.

It is tempting to try and quantify the number of points learners make to work out a response's likely mark. Do more points mean more marks? Unfortunately it doesn't work like this. Marks are awarded based on the quality of the response and the ability to synthesise appropriate ideas and evidence from both texts.

The sample assessment material for Component 1 includes a text written by Frederick Douglass about his experiences as a slave and Barak Obama's words on the death of Nelson Mandela.

The AO1ii task, question 2, asks:

*'Frederick Douglass and Nelson Mandela were both respected for their strength of character.*

*What other similarities do they share in these texts? Draw on evidence from both texts to support your answer.'*

The indicative content in the mark scheme gives six examples of shared similarities: there are more than this in the texts that would be credited as valid responses. For this task, there are three band levels. The key terms in the descriptors for each level are given in bold below:

### Level 3:

A **detailed**<sup>1</sup> response which shows a **secure**<sup>2</sup> ability to **synthesise**<sup>3</sup> appropriate ideas and evidence from both texts, showing **perceptive**<sup>4</sup> understanding of [similarities between Douglass and Mandela] including **conceptual**<sup>5</sup> ideas.

<sup>1</sup> The evidence from both texts must be sufficient to clearly differentiate.

<sup>2</sup> The learner clearly understands the task and question, and can execute what is required.

<sup>3</sup> 'Combine elements into a whole' or, as above 'locate and reorganise'.

<sup>4</sup> Shows a deep understanding of the texts in relation to the specific task, demonstrated through the points that learners select.

<sup>5</sup> Learners show they can read between the lines and infer meanings; recognising abstract ideas.

### Level 2:

A **response**<sup>1</sup> which shows **some ability**<sup>2</sup> to make **connections**<sup>3</sup> between **ideas and evidence**<sup>4</sup> in both texts, showing clear awareness of [similarities between Douglass and Mandela]. The ideas and evidence **may not be equal**<sup>5</sup> across both texts.

<sup>1</sup> We've lost the 'detailed' here but references must be clear and unambiguous.

<sup>2</sup> Some parts of the response may be more convincing than others.

<sup>3</sup> Less of the 'synthesise' now but clear and relevant similarities (in this case) need to be given.

<sup>4</sup> Less of the conceptual and abstract, more of a balance between openly stated factual information and what is implied.

<sup>5</sup> But both texts must be mentioned with an attempt to bring ideas together.

### Level 1:

A **response**<sup>1</sup> which shows **limited ability**<sup>2</sup> to **select and make connections**<sup>3</sup> between evidence from both texts showing **little awareness**<sup>4</sup> of [similarities between Douglass and Mandela]. The evidence selected is likely to focus on more **obvious, surface features** of the texts and **may be imbalanced**<sup>5</sup> across the texts.

<sup>1</sup> References and link to the question should still be clear.

<sup>2</sup> Little or nothing is entirely convincing.

<sup>3</sup> There is lifting of some points from the texts which may or may not be relevant or susceptible to demonstrating a common idea in the texts.

<sup>4</sup> The points made (most likely concrete facts) are not fully relevant to the task.

<sup>5</sup> There will be a little on both texts; more on one than the other, with basic factual information.

As shown in the above level descriptors, there are five elements to this task. It is unlikely that all of them could or would be achieved on the basis of learners making one point or giving one pair of ideas, especially as the plural, 'ideas', 'connections' etc. is repeated in the level descriptors. It might be possible to achieve this with two points, or more likely three. Five or six might stretch learners to give a thin response but it might also allow them to fulfil the above very well.

There are a total of 10 marks available for AO1 in Component 1, Communicating information and ideas: 4 marks for AO1i and 6 marks for AO1ii.

There are a total of 4 marks available for AO1 in Component 2, Exploring effects and impact: 4 marks for AO1i.

## 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.**

AO2 is assessed in both components: in Component 1 question 3 and in Component 2 questions 2 and 3.

For AO2, learners need to understand: 'how is the text written?' 'What are its effects?'

So here is the critical step forward from what the texts say: now the concern is **how** they say it. This is much like the 'how does the writer present' question in the previous GCSE English/English Language specifications except that it refers only to language and structure as no other presentational/visual features are included.

The wording of AO2 demarcates a notional hierarchy of skills:

**Comment on** is to (at least) start to 'give a view of' what has been read and how it works in the light of the task and, critically, support what is said with reference to the text.

**Explain** is 'make clear or intelligible/ give meaning/ make known in detail': in other words, learners should try to show how the text works and start to analyse with clear supporting examples.

**Analyse** is 'examine in detail'; 'break down in order to bring out the essential elements and structure'. Learners should be making linkages between the writing and its effects that are complex and detailed.

It is important that learners comment on both linguistic and structural elements of the text, as the Assessment Objective explicitly makes reference to both. As far as possible, learners should try to provide a balance between comments on language and those on structure. Critically, it is very difficult to make absolute distinctions between language and structure, though the former may be more about words and phrases; the latter more about sentences, punctuation and paragraphs. Structure is often less well represented than language. Structural elements could also include the opening of the text, (with links to) the closure, links, climax(es), repetition, comparison and so on.

In considering how the writer uses language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, learners are asked to use **relevant subject terminology** in their responses. This does not mean that learners should have a list of devices committed to memory (often by the use of a variety of mnemonics: 'aforest' for instance) that they will try to apply to any question. This approach can often lead to a distorted or partial view of task and text.

What is required is a sensitive account of the way the language and structure works to establish/clarify/ reinforce/ emphasise/ echo /support etc. the writer's themes, ideas, intentions and characters.

In the sample assessment materials for Component 1, Communicating information and ideas, learners are asked to:

*'Explore how Obama uses language and structure in this speech to present his feelings about Nelson Mandela. Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.'*

In the second paragraph we read:

*"And Nelson Mandela lived for that ideal, and he made it real. He achieved more than could be expected of any man. Today he has gone home. And we have lost one of the most influential, courageous and profoundly good human beings that any one of us will share time with on this earth. He no longer belongs to us- he belongs to the ages."*

To say that Obama here uses conjunctions to begin sentences ungrammatically, rhyme, hyperbole, enigmatic phraseology, different/varied sentence lengths, antithesis, the rule of three/ a tricolon/ asyndeton/ repetition, much emotive vocabulary, is to name but ten or more relevant subject terminologies, but learners who identify these terminologies and go no further are not meeting the requirements of the task and are therefore likely to access few marks for this question.

What is required is for learners to focus on the effects of the writing and the impact on the reader, in relation to the question. Learners may find it helpful to start with their reaction to what Obama is saying (why he admired Mandela very much) and then go on to show how that admiration is embodied and developed in the course of the speech. Who is the audience and how does he seek to appeal to them? What effects is he after? And how do examples in the text of linguistic and structural elements, such as those listed above, work in his cause? Therefore, for this sample question, the effects of 'influential, courageous and profoundly good' is what needs to be analysed, not whether we think it is tri-colon, rule of three, listing or asyndeton.



“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

-Nelson Mandela

For AO2 questions, there are six band levels in the mark schemes. Let’s look at the key terms in each of the level descriptors:

#### Level 6:

- A **skilled analysis**<sup>1</sup> which demonstrates a **sophisticated appreciation**<sup>2</sup> of how the writer has used language and structure to **achieve effects and influence**<sup>3</sup> the reader. Candidates’ analysis of both language and structure is **consistent and detailed**<sup>4</sup>.
- Precisely–selected and integrated subject terminology deployed to enhance the response.

<sup>1</sup> A practiced ability to analyse – these skills can be taught and developed.

<sup>2</sup> A blend of polished/accomplished. Responses that sit in this band level will often show ‘flair’, in other words the best way of achieving something.

<sup>3</sup> Learners may find it easier to give the effects first and then consider how they have been achieved.

<sup>4</sup> The response is fully and aptly supported.

#### Level 5:

- **An analysis which demonstrates a perceptive understanding**<sup>1</sup> of how the writer has used language and structure to achieve effects and influence the reader. Candidates’ analysis of both language and structure is **reasonably detailed and balanced**<sup>2</sup>.
- Well–chosen subject terminology integrated into explanations

<sup>1</sup> In Level 5 we lose ‘skilled’ and have ‘perceptive understanding’ to replace ‘sophisticated appreciation’. Learners show a deep understanding of the text in relation to the specific task, demonstrated through the ideas they analyse and the features of the text that they select.

<sup>2</sup> The analysis now is ‘reasonably detailed and balanced’ ‘Reasonably’ in the sense of both ‘fairly well’ and ‘logically’.



**Level 4:**

- A **developed explanation**<sup>1</sup> which shows a **secure understanding**<sup>2</sup> of how the writer has used language and structure to achieve effects and influence the reader. Candidates comment on the effects of both language and structure, but the explanation **may not be entirely balanced**<sup>3</sup>.
- Relevant terminology should be used to develop ideas.

<sup>1</sup> So we're into the next tier of the hierarchy; 'explain' rather than 'analyse': note the emphasis here on developed: a substantial response is required.

<sup>2</sup> The response may be more straightforward and workman-like but is still doing as required with clarity and confidence.

<sup>3</sup> The work will not necessarily all be of the same quality.

**Level 3:**

- A **clear**<sup>1</sup> explanation which shows a general understanding of how the writer has used language and structure to achieve effects and influence the reader. Candidates refer to language and structure but may not give a full explanation of the effects of both.
- Some use of relevant subject terminology to support ideas.

<sup>1</sup> A 'less full' response: a shorter, less convincing version of Level 4.

**Level 2:**

- A **straightforward commentary**<sup>1</sup> which shows **some understanding**<sup>2</sup> of how the writer has used language and structure to achieve effects and influence the reader. Candidates are likely to refer **more fully to either language or structure**<sup>3</sup> and note some features **without explaining the effects**<sup>4</sup>.
- Some use of subject terminology, though it may not always be relevant

<sup>1</sup> So we are at the bottom of the hierarchy with 'comment on' i.e. say something about.

<sup>2</sup> The gist of the passage has been understood.

<sup>3</sup> Says something on the effects of language choices or on structure.

<sup>4</sup> A simple piece of device spotting: of an image, metaphor, simile, perhaps.

**Level 1:**

- A descriptive response which shows **limited awareness**<sup>1</sup> of how the writer has used language and structure to achieve effects and influence the reader
- Little or no use of subject terminology

<sup>1</sup> Descriptions or statements with little consideration of the effects; the gist of the passage may not have been understood.

There are 12 marks available for AO2 in Component 1 and 18 marks available for AO2 in Component 2: in Component 1, AO2 is assessed in question 3 and in Component 2 it is assessed in questions 2 and 3. This means that learners will need to analyse the language and structure of one of the unseen texts in Component 1, and in Component 2 they will need to analyse both unseen texts, one text in question 2 and the other text in question 3.

## AO3

### Compare writers' ideas and perspectives as well as how these are conveyed across two or more texts.

This specification will always include two unseen texts in each component and so comparison (AO3) will be assessed in both exam papers. AO3 is assessed alongside AO4 in question 4, the highest tariff reading question. Some of the material used in previous tasks can be quite legitimately used here, this especially pertinent for AO3 where the analysis developed for AO2 can be used as a basis for comparison.

This Assessment Objective focuses on comparison; in this context, 'compare' includes and subsumes 'contrast'. Responses that fail to compare, even inferentially, will not gain many, if any, of the marks available for AO3 in each exam. There is plenty of advice on techniques and methods for achieving effective comparison: again, it is a question of what works for each individual learner. Some useful techniques are provided in the GCSE (9-1) English Literature J352 [Comparing Texts Delivery Guide](#). The activities and Learner Resources on pages 13 and 35 - 43, in particular, focus on the GCSE English Language J351 sample assessment materials and the comparison of the unseen texts from Component 2, *Unreliable Memoirs* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

Learners will need to develop the skills to compare ideas and perspectives in both of the unseen texts in each exam paper. We have covered ideas previously, but what about perspectives?

The writer's **perspective** is the writer's viewpoint, or way of looking at the material s/he is using. It is about the relationship between the writer, the material and their craft. For example, in the sample assessment material for Component 2, the writers of the two unseen texts (an extract from Clive James' autobiography, *Unreliable Memoirs* and an extract from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*) have different perspectives on the teachers they describe: James takes what appears to be a very serious view which is, in fact, wittily mocking, whereas Muriel Spark takes a view which appears to be light-heartedly satirical but is, in fact, serious condemnation.

As mentioned above, AO3 is assessed in question 4, where it is intended that learners will use a comparison of both texts to facilitate their evaluation of the ideas within them. The question 4 task will remind learners of the need to compare the texts: the third bullet point in question 4 is linked to AO3 and the focus is on a comparison of the ideas in the texts in light of the specific task. The comparison could include similarities or differences in ideas. If we look at the sample assessment materials for Component 1, for example, both Douglass and Obama (through Mandela) show the importance of fighting for what you believe in in order to 'make things right'; the Douglass text suggests that this 'fighting' is physical; that violence led to resolution, whereas in the Obama text, the struggle is presented as more ideological, based on ideas and beliefs. This may lead learners onto the different, potentially biased, perspectives of the writers and their purpose for producing the texts.



There are six band levels in the mark schemes for AO3. The key terms in each of the level descriptors are given below:

#### Level 6:

- A **detailed, interwoven**<sup>1</sup> comparison which **explores**<sup>2</sup> writers' ideas and perspectives and how they are conveyed.

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is on a detailed account of the texts which effectively compares (and contrasts) throughout.

<sup>2</sup> The learner's metaphorical journey through the texts and their response to them in comparative format. There is a strong suggestion that learners at this level and above can see more than one or two ideas and perspectives.

#### Level 5:

- A **sustained**<sup>1</sup> comparison of writers' ideas and perspectives and how they are conveyed.

<sup>1</sup> Consistent and detailed.

#### Level 4:

- A **developed**<sup>1</sup> comparison of writers' ideas and perspectives and **how they are conveyed**<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This suggests a more straightforward format for comparison than above which is, nonetheless, fit for purpose and consistent.

<sup>2</sup> Communicated: this could include some AO2 elements that are developed and used as the basis for comparison; here, as in all the levels, the plural refers to the perspectives in both texts, rather than one or the other.

#### Level 3:

- A **clear**<sup>1</sup> comparison of writers' ideas and perspectives which **begins to consider**<sup>2</sup> how they are conveyed.

<sup>1</sup> May use a simple, straightforward comparative format.

<sup>2</sup> The response provides some suggestion of how ideas and perspectives are communicated in the texts.

#### Level 2:

- A response which **identifies**<sup>1</sup> main points of comparison between writers' ideas and perspectives.

<sup>1</sup> 'Sees' some points of comparison between the texts but goes no further.

#### Level 1:

- A response which **makes simple points**<sup>1</sup> of comparison between writers' ideas and perspectives.

<sup>1</sup> As in Level 2, sees some simple points of comparison, these will be more obvious, surface level comparisons.

## AO4

### Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

As mentioned previously, the reading questions in each component increase in knowledge, understanding and skills until learners get to question 4, the final and highest tariff reading question. The focus of this question is on AO4 and the concept of critical evaluation, but remember it also assesses AO3: for this question, the comparison of ideas and perspectives in the two texts should be used to facilitate the learners' critical evaluation of both texts. Although some of the material used in previous tasks can be quite legitimately used here, it needs significant reorganisation and refocusing to provide relevance in a different format.

For AO4, the emphasis is on critical evaluation. This requires learners to make judgements about the texts, in light of the given task, and to provide a personal response, which is informed and evidenced through references to the text. Personal opinions that are unconsidered and unsupported by the text are not considered as judgements and so it is very important that learners refer to both texts in their response. The idea of a critical evaluation also involves a degree of summation and detachment; learners show that they can step back and give their overall assessment of the texts in relation to the task. This critical evaluation is therefore a challenging requirement: it suggests both engagement and involvement but also taking an overview from a critical distance, whilst remembering to use as textual references that are apt, convincing and persuasive to support the points made. In this context, textual references can refer to both quotes and paraphrase.

The question 4 tasks will provide learners with a particular take on both texts; it will most likely be couched as a statement with a 'how far'/'to what extent' rider for the learners to exercise evaluation. Whether learners agree, disagree or to some extent agree etc. with the given statement doesn't matter nearly as much as the quality of the argument and the evidence and judgements which support it.

In the Component 1 sample assessment materials, the question 4 task is:

'These texts are powerful because they show the importance of having strong personal beliefs.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what you learn about the importance of having freedom and strong personal beliefs (AO4)
- explain the impact of these ideas on you as a reader (AO4)
- compare the ways ideas about freedom and personal beliefs are presented. (AO3)

When approaching these types of tasks, the first essential requirement is to have a good understanding what the task says, and then to look at the three bullet points which follow it. Learners should ensure that they have addressed all three bullet points in their response as these directly relate to the relative mark weightings of AO3 and AO4 for the question: 6 marks for AO3 and 12 marks for AO4. If learners follow the bullet points, their response will align with these weightings. How the learners choose to structure their response to include all three bullet points is up to them, they could respond to the points in order, address each point discretely or integrate all three. Any approach is valid but it is important that all three points are covered.

The first and second bullet points are linked to AO4 and they require learners to show an understanding of what the writers are saying (about freedom and personal beliefs, about the portrayal of school as challenging etc.), in other words, 'what ideas are the texts presenting in relation to the task?' Learners should consider the writers' viewpoints, bias and different interpretations of the texts. This may include some elements of language analysis to support points, but it is not an in depth look at the use of language and structure as in the AO2 questions. The focus of AO4 should be on an evaluation of viewpoints/perspectives/ ideas and of the learner's own interpretation in light of the specific task. The response always needs to be rooted in the texts: learners need to ensure that they are writing about the texts and not their own unsupported views and opinions.

There are six band levels in the mark schemes for AO4. The key terms in each of the level descriptors are given below:

#### Level 6:

- A **sustained critical**<sup>1</sup> evaluation demonstrating a perceptive and **considered**<sup>2</sup> response to the statement and a **full** explanation of the impact of the texts on the reader.
- Comments are supported by **apt, skilfully selected and integrated** textual references.

<sup>1</sup> Learners look critically, and in detail, at both texts in light of the task: they more than likely weigh up alternative perspectives/ interpretations. The response is likely to be more lucid and systematic in the way it deals with the material.

<sup>2</sup> Attentive; contemplates a range of ideas/elements in the texts in order to reach a conclusion.

#### Level 5:

- An **informed critical evaluation**<sup>1</sup> showing a **thoughtful response**<sup>2</sup> to the statement and **clear consideration of the impact**<sup>3</sup> of the texts on the reader.
- Comments are supported by persuasive textual references.

<sup>1</sup> Fully addresses the tasks with a balanced consideration of both texts.

<sup>2</sup> Learners provide personal readings/judgments that are well supported and consistently relevant.

<sup>3</sup> Impact is securely addressed but perhaps not in as much detail as it could be – compare with 'full explanation' in Level 6.

#### Level 4:

- A response with **developed evaluative comments**<sup>1</sup> addressing the statement and **some comments**<sup>2</sup> about the impact on the reader.
- Comments are supported by **well-chosen**<sup>3</sup> textual references

<sup>1</sup> Shows a good understanding of the task and judgments on the texts are well supported.

<sup>2</sup> The response considers the impact on the reader, but may not be consistent or fully explained.

<sup>3</sup> Relevant and sensible in relation to the task.

#### Level 3:

- A response with **clear evaluative comments**<sup>1</sup> and **some** awareness of the impact on the reader.
- Comments are supported by **appropriate**<sup>2</sup> textual references.

<sup>1</sup> The task has been understood and there is a clear attempt to address all elements.

<sup>2</sup> These may not be fully explained.

#### Level 2:

- A response with **straightforward evaluative comments**<sup>1</sup> and **a little awareness** of the impact on the reader.
- Comments are supported by **some appropriate**<sup>2</sup> textual references.

<sup>1</sup> All in all, the task has been understood but is likely not to be fully or clearly addressed.

<sup>2</sup> Some references may be irrelevant; relevant references are likely not to be fully explained.

#### Level 1:

- A **limited description**<sup>1</sup> of content.
- Comments are supported by **copying or paraphrase**<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There is little, if any, attempt to evaluate the texts in light of the task.

<sup>2</sup> Learners may go no further than lifting evidence from the texts. There will be limited, if any, exploration of the significance of the reference.

There are 12 marks available for AO4 in both Component 1 and Component 2. These form part of the 18 marks that are available for question 4 in each component.

## Exemplar Response

Below is an authentic learner response to question 4 which is based on the sample assessment materials for Component 2 Exploring effects and impact. This response is a top Level 6 for both AO3 and AO4, and in fact goes beyond the expectations for this level; however, the response helps to illustrate how these types of tasks can be addressed, the balance of judgment and evaluation of both texts and a way of integrating the bullet points to meet the assessment objectives.

'In these texts school is presented as a challenging place for the pupils.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss your impressions of the pupils' various experiences at school
- explain what you find unusual about their school environment
- compare the ways the writers present the pupils' experiences of school

Support your response with quotations from both texts.

[40 marks]

In both extracts, despite the similarities and differences in writing styles, the school experiences and environments described seem to present a number of challenges to the pupils.

Even though academic education is generally considered to be the primary goal of school attendance, the pupils in both extracts find making progress a challenge. Clive James recalls his deterioration from 'coming third in the class' to 'coping with physics and chemistry' until only 'Jazz' the English teacher prevents his 'morale from collapsing completely'. The weary reflection on Mr. Ryan's 'accident' is followed by a tone of despair when Mary Luke returns to 'ruin science' and conduct experiments that would be 'the last [he] would ever understand'. Ineffective learning characterises the experience of Miss Jean Brodie's lessons too as she dismissively states 'Qualifying examination or no qualifying examination', revealing that the progress of her pupils comes secondary to her own diverse brand of education which jumps with rapid fire between ancient Rome and 'answering in complete sentences'. Her own admission that she 'must try to remember this rule' reminds the reader that there are no guarantees her pupils will be supported in moving forward.

A helpless lack of control is another aspect of pupils' experiences portrayed in these extracts. Sparks presents Miss Brodie's pupils as the victims of her wilful diversion from the curriculum. The sly deceit, in which she makes her students complicit, involves the crafty presence of a long division sum on the board and her directing them to 'keep your books propped up', on both occasions 'in case of intrusions'. The unapologetic way in which she tells the new girls 'you will get used to our ways' reinforces the idea that her pupils are merely her audience, in some ways just puppets in her own theatrical performance. Similarly, the young Clive James is represented a victim of the 'accident in the laboratory', a 'chronic shortage of teachers' and Jazz's 'way of getting results'. He exists in a purely reactive state, 'worriedly' and 'carefully' going about his science work with no real confidence and 'able to parse any sentence' on command, like a performing monkey. In both extracts, the pupils seem voiceless, simply reduced to obeying the eccentric instruction handed down to them.

Furthermore, there is a palpable sense of trauma experienced by the pupils in both extracts. Clive James has a personal crisis due to his losing his best friend and subsequently comparing himself to Carnaby's height development and 'natural authority' whilst he stayed 'obstinately small' and 'nobody looked up to [him] any longer'. By contrast it is the terror of Miss Jean Brodie's personal attention that causes damaging humiliation to her students as when poor Mary is dismissed as 'Stupid as ever'. Eunice does not fare much better as she is corrected on her expression and it is little wonder that later Sparks creates a stony silence in which 'nobody answered' the teacher's next inquiry about the window. Undoubtedly her students are afraid of her.

There are unusual aspects to the environments presented by both Sparks and James, suggesting pupils do not have an easy time.

The science laboratories, as described by Clive James, are dangerous and volatile where inept teachers have easy access to 'the school's entire supply of potassium' and give wild commands to 'Make a Bunsen burner'. The unsettling interior is set against the playground, usually a scene of laughter and recreation, here barely 'passed for a playground'. This effect of this exterior is compounded by the 'dense smoke', transforming the pupils' leisure area into a no man's land. Similarly depressing is the claustrophobic atmosphere of Miss Brodie's classroom, where she exerts control and isolates her territory by ensuring doors are kept shut and windows are a 'perfectly adequate' six inches open.

Both environments place a high value on performance, albeit dysfunctional. There is a sense from Clive James' pining for friendship that he must mark himself out in some way and as he cannot compete with the 'early maturity' of boys like Carnaby, he finds he becomes 'worth knowing' by his good exam performance. He is willing to sacrifice popularity for an identity as 'teacher's pet' in those 'dreadful days' of school life. By contrast, the dramatic environment of Miss Brodie's class is all geared towards the teacher as she sets her scene for 'gladiators' and 'slaves'. Even her subtle undermining of the headmistress is a performance, including her shutting of the door 'with utmost meaning'. This self-indulgent performance does contrast with Clive James' description of his own performances which a survival strategy.

Rather than an optimistic projection within the school environment, there is an unusual sense of doom associated with the future in both extracts. Clive James, although recalling his youth as an adult, remarks sarcastically that his English study with Jazz was 'invaluable training' and resignedly acknowledges his awareness that his experiments 'would be the last I would ever understand'. This, although pathetic, does appear less sinister than the prophetic declaration by Miss Brodie to her students 'you will receive the fruits of my prime', and to the new girls 'you will get used to our ways', suggesting that the experience of Miss Brodie's pupils will live long in the memory, or 'all your days' as she states.

Each of these writers makes distinct choices of genre and style that craft the presentation of the pupils' experiences.

Muriel Sparks third person narrative allows for a diverse range of voices: headmistress, Miss Brodie, pupils and the narrator. This use of dialogue crafts a dramatic quality to the writing, contrasting the simplistic speech of the headmistress who hopes 'you've all had a nice summer holiday' with Miss Brodie's 'innate sense of these things'. Thus the pupils' experiences are brought to life, much like Miss Brodie's own performance of the Roman Colloseum. The autobiographical, first person reflections of James provide an alternative narrative viewpoint as he, the adult, recounts with wit and humour the series of disasters amongst his experiences. The irony and sarcasm used to prepare the reader for the explosion with 'Certainly you had to be more careful than he was' is contrasted with the genuine shock of his student self who imagines Mr Ryan 'lit by garish flames'. This too, however, is touched with mockery as in the simile 'ancient Greek God'. His movement from understatement to overstatement throughout this extract demonstrates a stylistic choice possible within this genre to reflect the past and present engagement with the event.

Within each extract, there is a strong sense of the authors' characterisation of eccentricity within pupils' experience: Clive James' Mary Luke and Sparks' Miss Brodie. The very name choice for Clive James' antiquated science teacher forewarns the reader of the character's unconventionality. We share with the pupils incomprehension to this oddly named creature from another time, even foreign, compacted by the distinct speaking style, "Magnesioff off oxidoff..." etc. Similarly befuddling is Spark's characterisation of Miss Brodie by dialogue, abruptly changing topic such as "Hail Caesar!" which is dizzily followed by "Who opened the window?" The simile describing her 'in her brown dress like a gladiator', while delivering this dialogue, is further evidence of Spark's evocative fictional style, placing the reader alongside the bemused pupils in the classroom.

## Assessment Preparation

The assessment of reading skills is worth 50% of GCSE English Language and so the reading section (Section A) is worth 40 marks out of the total 80 marks for each component.

For each component, learners should consider spending about an hour of the two hour exam time on the reading section, in addition to the time they spend reading both unseen texts, so that they have enough time to plan their answers, select appropriate evidence from the texts and respond to the four sets of reading questions.

Learners should be encouraged to respond to the questions in order, particularly questions 2-4, as the questions are formulated in such a way as to build upon the previous as learners progress through the paper, both in terms of skill demand and knowledge/understanding.

Throughout the GCSE English Language course, learners should be given plenty of opportunity to apply and practise the skills discussed in this guide. This should be conducted through frequent exposure to 'unseen' texts so that learners can build their confidence in demonstrating their skills in relation to texts which are unfamiliar to them. For learners that are following both a GCSE English Language and a GCSE English Literature course, these skills can also be developed using the set texts they are studying as part of the Literature course.

Learners should become familiar with the range of texts that they could encounter in the GCSE English Language J351 exams: in Component 1, Communicating information and ideas, learners will encounter two non-fiction texts. This could include journalism, travel writing, letters, speeches, biography, for example. One of the texts in Component 1 will always be a 19th century non-fiction text, the other will be a more modern non-fiction text from either the 20th or 21st century. In Component 2, Exploring effects and impact, learners will encounter two literary texts. This could include prose fiction or autobiographical texts, for example. These texts will be taken from either the 20th and/or 21st century. Both of the unseen texts in each component will have a clear thematic link. The theme will be one which learners should be able to easily identify and understand. When learners read through the unseen texts, they should try to identify this theme and to consider the ideas and perspectives presented in both texts in relation to the theme.

It is recommended that learners read the questions carefully and plan their responses before they begin to answer the questions, particularly for the higher tariff ones. This will help to give learners the space to think about the ideas/points they want to get across, what examples/quotes from the texts they will use to support their points, and how they will organise their response. This should help them to ensure that their responses are relevant to the questions.





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