



ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

GCE English Literature

Specification B

Guidance Notes: Exploring AO3

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ENGLISH LITERATURE SPECIFICATION B

Exploring AO3

Show detailed understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meaning

This AO continues to be a problem in LTB1 and to some extent LTB4, when candidates have to comment on the language, form and structure of prose. When AO3 is tested in LTB2 and LTB5 it is less of a problem because candidates seem happy to write about language, form and structure when the text is poetry.

In LTB1 the requirement to address AO3 can be signalled in a variety of ways:

- Write about the ways Bronte tells the story in this chapter.
- Compare the style of Appendix I with the style of Appendix II.
- How does Gardam structure her story and use language in a way that interests the reader?
- (What do you learn of Joseph's character and attitudes) and how is he presented?
- What do you find interesting about the way this chapter is told?

Candidates need to be familiar with all the ways this question is asked; it is clearly useful to look back over past question papers.

This AO carries 10 of the 35 marks so candidates need to make a number of different points (probably a side and a half or two sides of writing). Many candidates try to answer this question without brief quotation and/or close reference; it is virtually impossible to score good marks if quotations/ references are not used.

So what is required in the answer?

- The candidates should focus on how the prose text is constructed.
- How do the chapters begin and end?
- How are given chapters connected to other parts of the novel?
- Is it worth commenting on the types of sentences?
- Is there anything to say about syntax or syntactical patterns?
- Lexical features or figurative language might be discussed.
- Focus also needs to be placed on narrative perspective.
- Is the novel first or third person?
- Are there several narrators?
- Are narrative frames used?
- How reliable is the narrator?
- Is there authorial intrusion?
- Is the reader informed or misinformed?

- How is time used in the novel?
- Are flashbacks employed or time shifts?
- How does the author control suspense and tension?
- How much of the chapter is descriptive narrative and how much is dialogue?
- Why is dialogue used?

What is important in the candidates' answers is that there isn't simply a logging of features. Comment must be made on how language and structure shape meanings and how the reader is affected.

Two examples from January 2003 and some possible content from the mark scheme

Wuthering Heights

2a(ii) What do you find interesting in the way that chapter 16 is told?

AO3 understanding of how language contributes to meanings (e.g. use of reporting, descriptive style, Heathcliff's violent language, use of Satanic references, biblical references, use of violent verbs, contrast of speech patterns, use of contrast and figurative language, etc.)

Clear discussion of how Bronte uses other presentational features (e.g. importance of narrative framework, use of dialogue, direct method of introducing character and setting, accumulation of detail, dramatic recreation of events, chronological order, etc.)

A Clockwork Orange

5a How does Burgess create interest in the way Alex describes his return to society (in chapter 1 Part III)?

AO3 understanding of how Burgess uses language (use of Alex's emotive vocabulary, use of Alex's colourful words, use of platitudes, use of Nadsat, simple repetition, children's discourse features, diminutive endings of words, repetitions, boyish enthusiasm, etc.)

Clear discussion of some points about other narrative devices (story told chronologically but retrospectively, like a report to the reader – description of event, reflection upon it, commentary, neat pattern, use of first person narrator – victim, contrast of register, dialogue to dramatise, use of Alex's reflection, use of contrast, opening and closing of chapter, etc.)

Much of this comment on AO3 also applies to LTB4. In the coursework, however, candidates must take care to integrate their AO3 material and not simply bolt on a paragraph about language. If tasks are constructed with a focus on AO3 or AO5 candidates often find the AO requirement easier to embrace.