



A-Level **Polish**

7687/2

Report on the examination

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General Overview

In the 2025 A-level Polish Paper 2 examination, 1,157 students sat the paper—an increase from 927 the previous year—demonstrating the growing popularity of the subject and the continued relevance of the texts on the specification. As in previous years, the most frequently selected works were *Tango* by Sławomir Mrożek and *Katyń* by Andrzej Wajda, both of which enabled students to explore complex moral, political, and emotional themes. There was also a noticeable increase in responses to *Panny z Wilka* and *Brzezina* by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. In contrast, there was a slight decline in number of entries for *Popiół i diament* by Jerzy Andrzejewski and *Przypadek* by Krzysztof Kieślowski.

The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged a broad range of responses, allowing students to express personal interpretations while drawing on specific textual evidence. Students generally approached the examination with thoughtfulness and maturity, and many demonstrated a genuine enthusiasm for the subject matter. While linguistic accuracy and analytical confidence varied, the overall level of engagement was consistently high. Markers noted clear improvements in planning and essay structure, particularly among those who responded directly and consistently to the set question. Personal insight and originality were increasingly evident, especially in responses that reflected critically on historical injustice, memory, or individual moral agency.

Section A: Observations on specific questions

Questions 01.1 and 01.2

Question 01.1 invited students to consider whether Artur fits the characteristics of a romantic hero, and many responded with insight and originality. A large number of students interpreted Artur as a figure of rebellion, loneliness, longing for change, or disillusioned love. Many recognised that Mrożek presents him as a parody of the romantic ideal, and their evaluations were thoughtful and well supported. Particularly noteworthy were responses that situated Artur within the broader literary tradition of Polish Romanticism, referencing figures such as Konrad—going well beyond what was expected by the mark scheme to gain the highest marks.

While some students focused more narrowly on Artur's emotional relationship with Ala and the pain of betrayal, these responses still offered meaningful interpretations, especially when linked to his inner conflict. Overall, the question prompted strong engagement, and students demonstrated both critical maturity and personal connection to the text.

Question 01.2 was the most popular choice among students and produced many thoughtful and well-structured responses. Students engaged confidently with the theme of rebellion, focusing on Artur's resistance to the chaos and anarchy embraced by his parents' generation. Many highlighted his desire to restore order through symbolic acts, such as organising a traditional wedding with Ala or confronting the family's lack of values. These examples were effectively used to show how Artur's rebellion was not against authority itself, but against the absence of structure.

Stronger responses also examined the earlier rebellion of Stomil's generation, represented by his rejection of discipline and Eleonora's embrace of emotional freedom. Students discussed how this pursuit of absolute liberty led to moral disintegration, impacting Artur's worldview and motivating his rigid stance. Where both generational rebellions were considered, essays tended to be more balanced and perceptive.

Some of the most successful responses also reflected on the cyclical nature of rebellion and how the breakdown of ideals ultimately allowed authoritarian figures like Edek to rise. Essays that focused mainly on retelling the plot without analysing the theme or addressing both generations tended to score lower for AO4. Overall, the question prompted strong engagement and critical depth.

Questions 02.1 and 02.2

Both questions on Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's *Panny z Wilka* and *Brzezina* elicited reflective and often deeply personal responses. Question 02.1, which focused on the theme of return, was interpreted in a variety of ways. Some students explored emotional disillusionment, while others highlighted how physical returns—to places such as Wilko or the forest house—mirrored inner journeys and prompted characters to re-evaluate their past. Wiktor's return to Wilko was frequently discussed in terms of memory, identity, and loss, though many students overlooked the subtle emotional transformation he undergoes by the end of the story. Responses often failed to acknowledge the quiet resolution or personal growth in Wiktor, and in some cases, essays relied heavily on previous mark schemes without offering direct evidence from the text.

In contrast, *Brzezina* was more confidently interpreted. Many students effectively showed how Stanisław experienced moments of happiness when reunited with his brother Bolesław, when spending time with Malwina, and especially during playful scenes with Ola. They also noted Bolesław's discomfort at his brother's presence, and his emotional distance. The strongest responses recognised that Stanisław's desire to live grew stronger during his stay, while Bolesław's perspective shifted, becoming more introspective by the end. These nuanced readings were supported with textual examples and contributed to mature, insightful essays.

Question 02.2, which explored the significance of the past, was chosen by fewer students, but often led to highly original and reflective responses. Marking this question was particularly rewarding, as many students demonstrated psychological depth and creativity in their interpretations of both *Panny z Wilka* and *Brzezina*. In stronger essays, Wiktor's return was viewed not simply as nostalgic, but as an escape—from love, happiness, and emotional truth. Students explored his fear of facing the present and his inner emptiness, while some identified a subtle emotional shift in him by the end, suggesting the beginning of self-awareness or closure.

In *Brzezina*, Stanisław's retreat was interpreted as an escape from death and loneliness, and his brief moments of joy—with Malwina, Ola, and his brother—were contrasted with Bolesław's emotional detachment. The strongest responses also examined Bolesław's inner struggle, reading his distance as a refusal to process grief, re-engage with life, or accept the possibility that his wife may have been unfaithful before her death. These interpretations added complexity to his character and were often supported with detailed references to the text.

Although a few students confused events or characters—often due to reliance on film versions—most were able to identify symbolic elements of space and memory and showed a strong grasp of how the past shapes identity and emotional experience.

Questions 03.1 and 03.2

Although Andrzejewski's *Popiół i diament* was among the least frequently chosen texts this year, the responses showed a commendable level of engagement and insight. The lower number of entries may reflect the length of the novel, and the limited availability of accessible teaching resources compared to other set texts. Nonetheless, many students responded with maturity, especially in their analysis of post-war Poland and the psychological complexity of its characters.

In response to Question 03.1, which asked students to analyse and evaluate the post-war reality in Poland, stronger essays explored the disillusionment and moral confusion of the time, using a range of characters to illustrate the impact of shifting ideologies and trauma. Students often reflected on how individuals like Maciek, Kossecki, Szczuka, or Drewnowski represented different reactions to the collapse of wartime ideals and the uncertainty of the new political order. Essays that incorporated historical context, such as the transition of power in 1945, often demonstrated deeper understanding. Weaker responses tended to focus only on Maciek and Andrzej, sometimes reflecting knowledge of the film rather than the novel.

Question 03.2, which considered whether the characters had lost their morality and humanity due to war, prompted more narrative-based responses. Students mostly focused on Maciek and Andrzej, but many also referred to Antoni Kossecki, Jerzy Schretter, or Alek. While several essays identified examples of moral compromise or emotional disconnection, some lacked analytical depth and relied on retelling. The strongest responses recognised how war blurred moral boundaries and how survival often required internal conflict, detachment, or sacrifice. When students connected these personal struggles with broader reflections on humanity and post-war trauma, their arguments gained strength and coherence.

Section B: Observations on specific questions

Questions 04.1 and 04.2

Question 04.1, which asked how Witek's father's final words – "*Nic nie musisz...*" – influenced his life and the consequences that followed, was attempted by a small number of students but often led to thoughtful and original responses. Students who engaged deeply with this question offered nuanced interpretations of how these words echoed across Witek's three life paths, shaping his sense of agency, internal conflict, and interaction with opposing ideologies. Stronger essays explored the philosophical and existential dimensions of the film, showing how Witek's choices—and the circumstances he encountered—were both guided and burdened by the ambiguity of his father's message.

Lower-scoring responses tended to summarise the three storylines without critical analysis or clear connection to the father's words. Many lacked specific examples or failed to evaluate the consequences of Witek's decisions in context. Nevertheless, this question inspired some of

the most reflective writing, allowing students to engage with complex ideas of fate, responsibility, and personal freedom.

Question 04.2, based on the quote *“Nie ma czegoś takiego jak przypadek”*, was chosen more frequently than 04.1 and encouraged a range of thoughtful and well-developed interpretations. Many students explored the role of coincidence, choice, and external influences in shaping Witek’s life across the three scenarios. While some essays focused mainly on the differences in Witek’s paths, stronger responses reflected on how his values—such as family loyalty, personal integrity, or political neutrality—evolved depending on the circumstances he faced.

Some students recognised that Kieślowski avoids passing judgement, instead presenting Witek as a figure shaped by his environment and the unpredictability of life. These interpretations often highlighted the film’s philosophical depth and its reflection of broader social and historical uncertainty. A recurring issue in weaker responses was the assumption that Witek dies in all three versions of the film, which seemed to stem from online summaries rather than close viewing. This question reminded students of the importance of analysing film with the same critical attention given to literature—looking carefully at character development, narrative structure, and directorial choices.

Questions 05.1 and 05.2

Question 05.1 prompted some of the most emotionally resonant and thoughtful responses. Many students explored how the film presents the concealment of truth as more damaging than the crime itself, often focusing on Jerzy’s internal conflict and his ultimate decision to take his own life. Stronger essays analysed how his silence reflects the psychological burden of living under a lie and how this mirrors the broader trauma of post-war Polish society. Weaker responses, however, sometimes failed to fully grasp Jerzy’s situation, resulting in limited evaluation and analysis.

The majority of students presented Agnieszka’s fight for truth with clarity and sensitivity, recognising the depth of her personal sacrifice and the risks she took to honour her brother’s memory. Generalowa was often interpreted as a figure of moral strength and dignity, with students highlighting her refusal to surrender to the Nazi’s threats. While most responses showed empathy and thematic awareness, some lacked precise cinematic analysis, and a few contained factual inaccuracies—such as misattributing the Katyń massacre to the Nazis or confusing character identities.

Some students approached Question 05.2 with impressive insight, offering reflective and emotionally mature interpretations of what it means to be brave in the face of fear. Their essays revealed a deep understanding of the film’s characters and the difficult moral choices they faced. Stronger responses explored the idea that courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to act despite it. Many students analysed Andrzej’s composure before execution as a quiet form of heroism, grounded in his sense of duty to his family and country. Others observed how he overcame fear to comfort his wife in their final moments, highlighting his emotional strength.

Anna was frequently discussed as a brave and determined figure, especially in her bravery to

leave Andrzej and accept her faith as a wife of the Polish soldier. Stronger responses highlighted also her refusal of Popov's proposal despite the risk of arrest. Agnieszka was also recognised for her resistance in recording the true date of her brother's death, despite the consequences. Weaker responses often lacked depth of analysis, focusing on plot summary or containing factual errors from the film.

Assessment Objective AO3

In the majority of responses marked this year, the use of Polish demonstrated a reasonable to good command of grammar, vocabulary, and register. Most students were able to express their ideas clearly and coherently, though linguistic accuracy varied across the cohort. Grammatical issues were the most frequently observed, particularly in areas such as noun and adjective declension, agreement in gender and person, and word order. For example, constructions such as *"Kobiety byli zestresowani"* or *"Witek to była osoba, który..."* illustrate recurring difficulties with gender and relative pronouns.

Spelling errors were also widespread and often accompanied by the omission of Polish diacritics, which significantly affected the accuracy and overall impression of the language. In some cases, this led to confusion or hindered clarity, as seen in phrases such as: *"kłamstwo katyńskie była zrobiona przez soviety"*, *"Nazi i Ruscy kłamali o zbrodni"*, *"W filmie Przypadek jesteśmy przedstawieni"*, or *"W Katynie jest widoćnie pokazany wpływ kłamstwo dla bohaterów"*. These examples reveal not only spelling and grammar issues but also limited control over case endings and syntax.

A number of students also relied on literal translations from English, which occasionally produced unnatural or awkward expressions in Polish. An example of this was *"Anna ciągle miała to z tyłu głowy"*, a direct calque of the English idiom *"to have something at the back of one's mind,"* which is not idiomatic in Polish.

Common inaccuracies included forms such as *"W moim opini"* or *"Może być zrozumiane"*. The incorrect use of capitalisation was another persistent issue—names of characters, places, and nations were frequently written in lowercase. In some scripts, Polish spelling conventions were disregarded entirely, with diacritical signs omitted throughout the essay. This was particularly noticeable among heritage speakers writing phonetically or transferring English spelling rules to Polish, resulting in forms such as *"offerta"* instead of *"oferta"*, *"Nazis"* instead of *"naziści"*, or *"officera"* in place of *"oficera"*. At times, a single Polish word contained multiple errors, which in a few cases affected overall intelligibility. One common issue was the incorrect use of case endings in plural forms, such as *"generał mówił żołnierzq"* instead of *"żołnierzom"*.

Despite these challenges, a number of students achieved high levels of linguistic performance. Their essays featured a wide-ranging and accurate vocabulary, precise idiomatic phrasing, and control of complex grammatical structures. Particularly commendable were instances of advanced features such as present participles, evaluative stems, and cohesive discourse markers. These responses not only demonstrated technical fluency but also contributed to a highly effective and stylistically mature argument. Overall, most students were awarded AO3 scores within the 11–13 range, indicating reasonable to good control of language, though with further scope for development in orthography, formal register, and idiomatic precision.

Assessment Objective AO4

Students' responses this year reflected a broad spectrum of knowledge and understanding, with marks ranging from the lower to the highest bands. At the top end (17–20 marks), students demonstrated a perceptive and well-informed grasp of the prescribed texts and films, which they used effectively to support and develop thoughtful, critical arguments. These responses were typically well structured and purposeful, progressing logically through clear stages: establishing a point, expressing a viewpoint, selecting appropriate evidence, analysing its significance, and arriving at a nuanced interpretation or conclusion.

A number of essays, however, remained in the lower mark bands (5–8 marks), often due to a limited focus on analysis and evaluation. In such responses, students tended to summarise or retell aspects of the plot without engaging in deeper exploration of themes, character development, or direct relevance to the question. In some instances, responses omitted reference to the set text or film altogether, which inevitably limited the marks for content.

There was, nevertheless, an encouraging trend this year toward more deliberate and thoughtful preparation. Many students clearly benefited from guided planning and familiarity with the assessment objectives. Those who had reviewed previous mark schemes and examiners' reports were generally better equipped to interpret the question's demands and structure their essays accordingly. Such preparation often translated into clearer argumentation and more confident critical engagement. By contrast, responses that had not been adapted to the specific question sometimes relied on pre-learned or previously written material, which may have aligned only partially—or not at all—with the question set.

Some students omitted to indicate which question they were answering or responded to more questions than required. There were also a few cases in which responses were based on texts or films outside the specification or reflected more personal reflection than textual analysis. Where students had not engaged deeply with the source material, responses remained general or descriptive, and lacked the textual grounding necessary for higher-level evaluation. Going forward, encouraging students to focus on evidence-based argument, explicitly rooted in the chosen work, will continue to be an essential element of effective exam preparation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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