



AS

English Literature A

7711/2 Love through the ages: prose

Report on the Examination

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Summary

Overall performance compared to last year

Performance is in line with last and previous years. The discriminators remain as outlined in the guidance and priorities section below

Areas where students excelled

- directly addressing the given view and key words to explore interpretation.
- linking methods to meaning, stressing the relevance of chosen methods to the question.
- communicating a structured argument as the best way of answering the question.
- engaging with the extract and having a clear overview of the whole text.
- using the preamble of Section A effectively.
- commenting on the writer's methods.
- commenting on shifts in perspective.
- using context as a subtle literary tool.

Areas where students struggled

- planning their work.
- keeping to the time restraint of 1 hour 30 minutes for the exam paper — there were unfinished or rushed responses to either Section A or Section B.
- having a clear understanding contexts and writing very generally about the '1900s' when writing about a range of texts.
- considering the writer at work.

The Great Gatsby was by far the most popular choice of prose texts for Section B, followed by *Wuthering Heights* and *Rebecca*. There were some very good responses that compared *Rebecca* with *Jane Eyre* for both questions in Section B.

General Remarks

This report should be read in conjunction with the report on 7711/1. It might also be relevant to consult to the report for the equivalent A level component, 7712/1.

It was evident from the marking of Papers 1 and 2 that the historicist philosophy of the Specification is positively embraced for providing clarity and coherence. Historicism sees texts not in isolation but as products of their time. As such, it encourages the exploration of the relationship between texts and the contexts in which they are written and then in which they read and interpreted, along with how they have been interpreted over the intervening time period. Key to the engagement with a historicist approach is the focus on a shared context. In both Paper 1 and Paper 2 this is the diachronic context of Love through the ages.

Importantly, this specification aims to encourage confident, independent readers who are able to 'make meaning' through both close textual analysis and a wider understanding of the contexts that might inform their literary study. Students are encouraged to pursue clear, authentic arguments with conviction.

Such responses are best rewarded by the holistic marking of five Assessment Objectives using a 25-mark scale divided into five bands. The holistic use of assessment objectives allows for a flexible mark scheme which aims to encourage independent work not limited by formulaic constraints. Holistic marking enables responses to be assessed as organic whole texts in themselves. Assessment objectives are not tracked in the marking or reported on separately in summative comments. This enables the genuine inter-relatedness of assessment objectives to be respected. The best advice to students is to concentrate on answering the question set and let the assessment objectives look after themselves. Because the quality of written expression is crucial in enabling literary skills, students should be particularly mindful of *how* they answer the question too.

Guidance on priorities

In the first few series of this examination, the emphasis of reports and subsequent training was on historicism as the underpinning philosophy of the Specification. The following areas of priority build on that foundation:

Section A: Unseen extract

It is important to remember that the unseen extract in Section A is selected and printed on the examination paper for the express purpose of relevant analysis and to give a full and detailed answer to the question. The extract will have been chosen with a clear beginning and end, to enable analysis of structure. The key words of the given view are intended as a lens through which to view the extract. Therefore, there is every reason to spend a substantial amount of this time slot analysing the details, methods and contexts embedded in the extract. So, an answer that does not fully engage with the extract is likely to be self-penalising.

As the unseen extract is from a prose text it is particularly important that the text is seen as such to enable students to comment on authorial methods.

AQA's Teaching Guide to AO2 offers a productive way into thinking about the different ways in which meaning is shaped across the three genres: prose, poetry, and drama.

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a/teach/teaching-guide-ao2>

Section B: Comparison

Comparison is essential to accessing the higher bands. It is also important to consider both similarities and differences between the two texts. Too much focus on either similarities or differences often leads to an unsubtle response. Students also need to ensure that they analyse specific aspects of the novels in the context of the whole text, with the interpretation and question focus in mind.

More successful students:

- support relevant readings with specific textual details, as appropriate in an 'open' book examination and carefully analyse the writers' narrative prose methods by linking them to meaning.
- analyse the role of point of view and structure in both prose texts, apply context in a considered way and demonstrate an awareness of the typicality of the literature of love.
- avoid narrative/descriptive approaches that lose focus on the question and its key words; describing or labelling narrative prose methods, sometimes inaccurately, with no reference to meaning or simply asserting a link to meaning; making sweeping, simplistic and inaccurate statements about context.

Question key words

Questions in Section A will always begin: Examine the view that...'. 'Examine' here encourages thorough attention to the given view and to the unseen extract. Both 'how' and 'examine' are prompts to analyse within a clear, coherent argument. This is a higher-order skill that allows access to the upper reaches of the mark scheme.

Likewise, Section B questions will always begin with an opinion, often referred to as 'the given view', followed with 'By comparing two prose texts, explore the extent to which you agree with this statement'. The key word of 'comparing' clearly requires students to make comparisons between two of the selected prose texts.

Discussion of one text would be a rubric infringement, whereas an unbalanced response that heavily considers one text would struggle to move out of Band 2. The key words of 'explore' and 'extent' allow for students to analyse the two texts in relation to the given view and to develop their argument.

Individual questions

Question 1

Examine the view that Sophie is presented as more worried than excited by her developing relationship with Tancredi.

Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response.

What students did well

- engaging with the extract and having a clear overview of the whole text.
- using the preamble effectively.
- commenting on the third person narrative and Hazzard's use of free indirect discourse.
- commenting on the shift in perspective in the narrative.
- commenting on the dynamics of the dialogue and the significance of body language.
- using context as a subtle literary tool.

Common misunderstandings

- comprehending Sophie's behaviour and considering Tancredi a predator.
- not having a clear understanding of the contexts of the extract and writing very generally about contexts e.g. the '1900s'.
- less successful responses offered interpretation of what was happening in the extract rather than exploring the ways in which the character's ambivalence was presented
- forgetting that it is an extract from a novel.
- seeing the task as a literary criticism exercise and feature-spotting throughout their response.
- neglecting to consider the writer at work.

Question 2

'In literature, women are often presented as passive lovers who rarely take charge.'

By comparing **two** prose texts, explore the extent to which you agree with this statement.

What students did well

- planned their response
- could differentiate between passive women and passive lovers.
- compared the function of unreliable narrators.
- dealt with all the key words in the question.
- were equally well-prepared on both prose texts.
- writing a conceptualised and nuanced argument.

- closely analysed authorial methods.
- wrote about characters' arc and development through a prose text and used this as a way into writing about structure.
- understood that characters are constructs of a writer.
- understood 'agency' and wrote about it accurately.

Common misunderstandings

- neglecting to address both parts of the question and either focused on women who are presented as 'passive lovers' or women who 'rarely take charge'.
- focused on passive female characters instead of women who are passive lovers
- attempting to enforce a context or not having a deep enough understanding of the social and historical contexts.
- looked too much at how texts differ overlooking what connects them. Unhelpful comparison with poetry and drama texts when the focus of the paper is prose.
- lacked awareness of authorial methods - particularly free indirect discourse
- did not plan their response.
- did not write equally about the texts.
- wrote very generally about the texts without fully engaging with the question.

Question 3

'In literature, love is presented as full of risk.'

By comparing **two** prose texts, explore this view.

What students did well

- understood the question and dealt with the key words, 'love' and 'full of risk', effectively
- planned their response
- wrote a conceptualised and nuanced argument
- closely analysed authorial methods
- wrote about characters narrative arc and development through a prose text and used this as a way into writing about structure
- understood that characters are a construct of a writer
- understood 'agency' and writing about it accurately.

Common misunderstandings

- less successful students wrote very generally about the idea of risk and risk-taking behaviour, rather than considering how love itself can be full of risk
- attempting to enforce a context or not having a deep enough understanding of the social and historical contexts.
- looked too much at how texts differ overlooking what connects them.
- unhelpful comparison with poetry and drama texts when the focus of the paper is prose
- lacked awareness of authorial methods – particularly free indirect discourse
- did not plan their response
- did not write equally about the texts
- wrote very generally about the texts without fully engaging with the question.

Further support

Mark ranges and award of grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [results statistics](#) page of our website.

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