



A-Level **English Literature A**

7712/C Non-Examined Assessment

Report on the examination

June 2025

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Contents

The below table is interactive. You can press the control button click on the title of the question to go directly to that page.

Contents	Page
Summary	3
General Remarks	4
Guidance on Priorities	5
Genre-specific Guide to the Analysis of Methods	9
Administration	14
Further Support	15

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

- setting tasks which liberate **all** the Assessment Objectives, and which were unambiguous and focused.
- making the right choices about texts which fit together well. This year we saw many examples of texts that offered students excellent opportunities for natural links and overlap. Engaging and individual work was seen this year on: Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*; *Paradise Lost* and Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*; Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Banks' *The Wasp Factory*; Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*.
- utilising a correct style of formal, academic English.
- sticking to the 2,500-word limit.
- proof-reading their work carefully.
- making use of wider reading, especially for AO5 debate by making use of critical voices
- understanding structure and character arc.
- offering 'inside-out' contextualisation (see below: Contexts).
- demonstrating their arguments via close reference to the texts.
- understanding that a grasp of genre (drama, prose, poetry) is essential.
- maintaining a proportionate balance between the texts in AO4.
- appending a clear and useful academic bibliography.

Areas where students struggled

- setting tasks which did not liberate all of the AOs, or which were ambiguous or hazy.
 - offering texts which the student could not link convincingly. In 2025 we saw students struggle with finding natural points of contact in: Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy*; Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and King's *It*; Stoker's *Dracula* and Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Tales*. This report is not suggesting that those particular text pairings were always and will always be unsuccessful, but that in 2025 students struggled to make coherent AO4 links.
 - offering GCSE texts but struggling to convert them into A-Level standard essays. Though some students did write at the appropriate A-Level standard on *Lord of the Flies*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *An Inspector Calls* and *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, many more did not.
 - not planning the argument and selecting material/detail carefully.
 - not shaping and structuring a clear and relevant argument.
-

- exceeding the word limit and losing focus or writing very short essays of around 1,500 words which did not do justice to the complexity of the texts or task.
- writing assertive work, not making close reference to their texts.
- making assertive or wild claims about contexts (see below: Contexts).
- being unable to link poetic, dramatic and prose methods to meaning .
- not making use of the structure of their text.
- writing much more on one text than the other so AO4 was imbalanced.
- assuming that everything written after circa 1960 was 'post-modern'.
- not including a bibliography, appending an incomplete bibliography, or offering a non-academic bibliography.

General Remarks

This report should be read in conjunction with the report on 7712/1 and 7712/2A and 7712/2B.

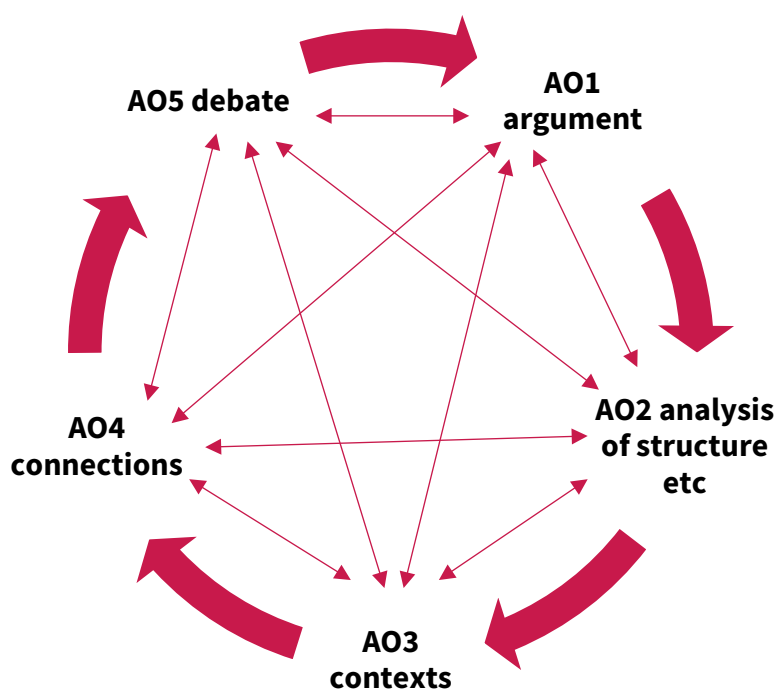
Over the life of this specification some texts have become ubiquitous. By far the most popular texts in 2025 have been popular for years: Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Stoker's *Dracula*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Alcott's *Little Women*, Collins' *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Ellis' *American Psycho*, Nabokov's *Lolita*, Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and *A View From the Bridge*, Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Charlotte Perkin Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories*, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Flynn's *Gone Girl* has a growing number of adherents as does Eugenides' *The Virgin Suicides*. Tarrt's *The Secret History*, Alderman's *The Power* and, perhaps surprisingly, Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are becoming more popular as time goes by.

It was clear from the moderation process that students who understood and embraced the historicist philosophy of the Specification generally performed well and were able to write informed, contextually sensitive essays. 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 are read and interpreted, along with how they have been interpreted over the intervening time-period. As NEA requires students to focus on two whole texts, a key skill is the ability to focus on different contexts in different time periods or to analyse the development of a context over time. NEA is the ideal forum for students to develop an appreciation and understanding of the changing traditions of English Literature.

It is encouraging when moderators can see that students have 'made meaning' through both close textual analysis and a wider understanding of the contexts that might inform their literary study.

NEA essays are first marked in the centre and are best rewarded by the holistic marking of the five Assessment Objectives (AOs) using the 25-mark scale divided into five bands. The holistic use of AOs allows for flexible marking which aims to encourage independent work not limited by formulaic constraints. Holistic marking enables responses to be assessed as organic whole texts in themselves. **Therefore, centres which track Assessment Objectives and offer individual comments and/or marks per AO tend to be less accurate in their assessments of their students' work, than those centres which mark holistically.**

Holistic marking enables the genuine inter-relatedness of assessment objectives to be respected.



Guidance on Priorities

Assessment Objectives

- AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.
- AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.
- AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.
- AO4: Explore connections across literary texts.
- AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

Because the quality of written expression is crucial in demonstrating a knowledge and understanding of literature, students should be particularly mindful of *how* they write their essays. 'Coherent, accurate, written expression', the second part of AO1, is vital in NEA. If a moderator cannot understand what the student means because of substandard written communication in AO1, then ***all*** the other AOs are in danger of being obscured. Proof-reading is an integral part of AO1. When a centre is moderated down, the most common factor is that students' substandard control of written English was ignored or not spotted by centre markers.

Breaking down what we mean by Independent Critical Study

NEA coursework is called Independent Critical Study and requires students to pursue and develop their own clear, authentic arguments in their essays.

'Independent' – Students need to construct an argument (thesis) for themselves based on their own research.

'Critical' – Using critical voices (discovered in their AO5 research) will aid this process:

The process:

- **thesis** – a premise to be maintained or proved, marked-up in the task.
- **antithesis** – a view which contradicts or contrasts the original premise.
- **synthesis** – bringing together the salient information from the theses and antitheses considered at the study stage to present a cohesive argument within the NEA essay, and, in essence, create a new thesis. The thesis may change several times over a student's coursework journey.

Task Construction

When moderators 'read' a task, they are primarily checking to see if it liberates all the assessment objectives. A task that does not liberate all the AOs will obviously make it harder for the student to reach the higher bands than a task which does liberate all the AOs. Here is an example of a good task:

Compare and contrast the ways in which John Milton and Philip Pullman present the relationships between Satan and Eve in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* (1674 version) and Mrs Coulter and Lyra in *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

Explore the significance of the quest for knowledge in both texts in the light of Serafina Pekkala's claim in Pullman's novel that 'All the history of human life has been a struggle between wisdom and stupidity.'

The Importance of Key Words in the NEA task

The moderator will scrutinise the key words in the task in exactly the same way that an examiner would check that the student had addressed all the key words in a question on the written papers.

The use of the command words 'compare and contrast' instructs the student to make connections between Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* and *The Amber Spyglass* in terms of subject matter and authorial method and invites the student to organise the response around relevant similarities and differences in the presentation of relationships in the chosen texts. As such, AO4 and AO1 are liberated.

The key word 'present' explicitly invites the student to write about the different genres of the chosen texts (poetry and prose) and, together with 'the ways in which', signals the need to discuss a range of authorial methods involved, thus enabling the student to address AO2.

The focus on specific relationships between Satan and Eve and Mrs Coulter and Lyra, and on the significance of the quest for knowledge via a direct quotation from one of characters in the texts links to how literary representations can reflect social, cultural and historical aspects of the time periods in which these texts were written and set, enabling the student to access AO3.

The directive to 'examine' a clear viewpoint – that 'All the history of human life has been a struggle between wisdom and stupidity' – signals the need to debate this given opinion and so to engage with multiple readings and interpretations to liberate AO5.

All of the above encourages the student to 'articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology', which brings the student back to AO1.

It is useful, once again, to think of the AOs within NEA as interlinked and cyclical (see the diagram above) rather than linear and separate. To treat the AOs as interwoven, allows coursework to be an organic and fluid enterprise in which one literary discovery informs another and so on, enabling the development of an interconnected argument.

Genre-specific analysis of methods in the task

In this task, the student has elected to offer a seventeenth century epic poem and a twentieth century novel for assessment, therefore both poetic methods and prose methods are relevant. During their research, students will have had multiple opportunities to analyse Milton's epic style as well as the linguistic richness and theological and philosophical depth of *Paradise Lost*. Pullman's prose techniques and philosophical stance in *The Amber Spyglass* can also be scrutinised; during research, successful students will invariably encounter critical essays and articles and so will be able to establish an argument of their own based on the views of others. It is vital to the success of the task that students should choose aspects of methods that (a) are relevant to the task and (b) demonstrate confidence and engagement.

As with responses on the written papers, it is common for students on NEA when attempting to address AO2 to engage at the word level and then go on to mis-label word classes in the process. There is no need to label word classes, especially in a novel, but if students choose to do this as a chosen aspect of methods, then they have an obligation to do so accurately. Similarly, there is no obligation to scan poems for metre or to use letters to label rhyme schemes, but if students take this path, as well they might in a poem such as *Paradise Lost* then they must get it right. There are two crucial priorities here: (i) choosing relevant methods that are of genuine interest to students in answering the question and (ii) the need to link methods clearly to meaning so that methods are not simply identified. Effects need to be explained rather than simply asserted.

AQA's **Teaching Guide to AO2** offers a productive way into thinking about the different ways in which meaning is shaped across the three different genres.

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

A **genre-specific guide** to help with the analysis of methods in NEA is offered on page 9 of this report and centres are reminded to make use of the advisory system. If you do not have an assigned adviser, please contact eos@aqa.org.uk

Contexts

As we have seen since the inception of Specification A, general and asserted commentary about contexts were common in 2025. In particular, many tasks were set which used the term 'patriarchy'. This term often drew less successful students into making sweeping assertions about how it is presented in literature. Students and centres are reminded that if the world of a text is to be described as a *patriarchy* (many literary worlds are, indeed, patriarchies), the moderator must be shown which characters are patriarchs and what it is that they do and say that makes them patriarchal. Successful students answering, for example, on Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, could demonstrate via the internal evidence in the text that Torvald, Rank and until he reunites with Christine Linde, perhaps Krogstad are 'patriarchs'. These characters do and say patriarchal things and better students had no problem in demonstrating this feature of the text. Such successful students used the internal evidence within the text and worked outwards to a better understanding of the contexts of patriarchy in late nineteenth century Norway. This successful methodology is known as '**inside-out**' contextualisation because it starts with the evidence inside the text before looking for further evidence beyond the text.

However, less successful students thought it was enough just to assert that the world of the play was a patriarchy and, ignoring the evidence within the play, still claimed, for example, that women in the era 'could not work' when Ibsen clearly shows us Anne-Marie working in the Helmer household. Christine, having read about Torvald's new job, turns up at the Helmers' door seeking employment in the bank and Torvald offers her a job. So, clearly the internal textual evidence shows us that many women in the play can and do work. Even Nora works in secret in order to pay off her illicit loan. When a student brings ideas from beyond the text and imposes those ideas onto the text, we see an example of '**outside-in**' contextualisation which is never persuasive.

Other students happily asserted that not only *A Doll's House* but also *Little Women* set at the time of the US Civil War, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* set in the antebellum South in the 1830s or 1840s, *Madame Bovary* set primarily in Tostes and Yonville in Normandy, France in the mid 1850s, and *Crime and Punishment* set in St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1860s were all 'Victorian'. Context is far more than the allocation of UK-centric date stamps.

Following on from last year, the term 'the male gaze' from John Berger in art criticism via Laura Mulvey in film criticism was popular again in 2025. Less successful students struggled to identify the male gaze by not mentioning which males were doing the gazing, which females were being gazed at and to what effect all of this gazing had on meaning. In the genuinely Victorian *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, several students tied themselves up in knots by trying to make Sibyl Vane's suicide a result of Dorian's male gaze. More successful students adapted

the concept by saying that Basil's portrait was the product of a homo-erotic male gaze and that Dorian's admiration of the newly-completed portrait was an example of how the male gaze could be a feature of narcissism.

Tasks which made use of terms like 'societal expectations' often descended into generalisation and assertion. What exactly does the term 'societal expectations' mean in a novel like *Pride and Prejudice*? Everyone in the novel is a member of society or a sub-section of it, yet even in something as small as a family unit there are different expectations. Mrs Bennet is desperate for Elizabeth to marry Mr Collins but Mr Bennet is deadset against the idea. Elizabeth and Jane believe that considerations of love should come before money concerns but their friend and neighbour Charlotte Lucas is of a more practical and pragmatic turn of mind and marries Mr Collins for material comfort. Like the advice given above on patriarchies', students who want to write about 'societal expectations' are better served when they think about what characters say and do and what those things reveal about the world of the text. A good example can be drawn from the dozens of students writing on *Pride and Prejudice* who asserted that in Regency England, 'women could not own property'. True, the Bennet women cannot inherit Longbourn because it has an entailment on it, meaning the estate has to be kept intact and passed down through the male line. But what of Rosings and Lady Catherine de Bourgh? When Sir Lewis de Bourgh died, the property, not being entailed down the male line, was passed to a female in the form of Lady Catherine and the ultimate heir of Rosings is to be Anne de Bourgh. In Chapter 29 Austen gives Lady Catherine this speech to Charlotte and Elizabeth: "I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line. It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family."

The most successful students are led by the internal mechanics of the text, not by assumptions which they then impose on the text.

Genre-specific Guide to the Analysis of Methods in NEA (2025)

We offered the basic outline of this guide last year, but an updated version of it bears inclusion in this year's report. The specific examples mentioned below have been drawn from students' performance in 2025.

There are **three genres** students can study for NEA: drama, prose, and poetry.

Drama

When drama causes students problems, it is because it is often written about as merely an alternative form of prose. To be successful, students need to explore the dramatic methods chosen by playwrights to convey meaning: dramatic structure; stagecraft; dramatic characterisation; as well as dramatic speech and language.

Successful students consider the vital importance of **dramatic structure**, i.e. how meaning is enhanced by the organisation of events in a play; how playwrights add to the significance of certain events by the position of those events in the play's narrative; and what characters know and do not know at specific times. This year, as in 2024, moderators reported that Band 4 and Band 5 awareness of dramatic structure was signified by:

- conventions of structure in both traditional and modern drama, e.g. a classic five-act Shakespearean play includes: introduction, exposition, complication, crisis, resolution,

and dénouement; a classic three-act 'well-made play' such as Ibsen's *A Doll's House* which is still far by far the most popular drama text on NEA

- the division of the play into acts and scenes
- linearity (if it is a traditional play); 'real-time' plays such as Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*; how past events may be sequenced in a non-linear way, for example in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* of which the playwright said, 'There are two or three sorts of time in that play. One is social time, one is psychic time, the way we remember things, and the third is the sense of time created by the play and shared by the audience.' The 'flashbacks' (Miller did not like the term) fuse the present with Willy Loman's remembrance of different times from his past.
- naturalistic versus non-naturalistic dramatic effects
- the use of features such as sub-plot
- the choice of setting, i.e. taking into account 'the willing suspension of disbelief' where we know we are in a theatre; does the play show us open spaces in the 'Green World', for example as in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, does the play show us enclosed spaces (castle, home, walled city, single room etc) as in *Hamlet* or does the playwright use a combination of open and enclosed spaces such as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- the inclusion of protagonist, antagonist and catalyst
- the privileged position of beginnings and endings in terms of dramatic structure and their importance in introducing and concluding key aspects of setting, character, themes and contexts.

The most successful students considered **stagecraft** as a vital component in how meaning is made. The most successful students understood the text as incomplete in written form, a blueprint for performance that needs the directors' and actors' input and interpretation. Vital features of stagecraft include: stage directions; lighting; music/sound/sound effects; set design; costume (including disguise); play/act/scene openings and endings; entrances and exits with opening and closing lines. The most successful students were also able to write about tension/suspense/surprise/twist/comic relief. Relevant and well-chosen reference to productions students have seen is always extremely helpful.

The most successful students considered the range of strategies used by playwrights to create and develop characters. This year these features of **dramatic characterisation** included:

- how characters are established
- how characters are subsequently presented - their physical appearance or suggestions about this
- how they interact with others; what others say and think about them
- the design and function of minor characters

Most importantly, the most successful students fully understood that language is the map of a character's mind, especially in soliloquy. Playwrights seek to give their characters personal vocabulary and syntactic patterns that project a certain way of seeing the world, which can either fit with or subvert stereotypes, i.e. Lear's frequent references to animals in Shakespeare's *King Lear* or Jez Butterworth's creation of a unique idiolect for Johnny 'Rooster' Byron when in *Jerusalem* he calls on his 'berserkers' to rise 'snout by jowl'.

Following on from dramatic characterisation, and dovetailing neatly with it, is the consideration of **dramatic speech and language**. In 2025 the most successful students considered the ways in which playwrights organise speech and language across a **whole play** via:

- dialogue
- use of monologues
- soliloquy
- asides
- Shakespearean conventions of verse and prose.

The most successful students were also able to consider and debate, for example, whether certain characters such as Martin Dysart in Shaffer's *Equus* were constructed to act as a spokesperson for the playwright.

Prose

Of course, there is some cross-over between drama and prose and many of the considerations of drama (above) can be applied equally to prose, for example whether a character may be a vehicle for the author's views. Clearly, the idea of language being the map of a character's mind is as applicable to prose as it is to drama, as is the privileged position of beginnings and especially endings due to what John Fowles, author of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, famously calls 'the tyranny of the final chapter'. In 2025, as ever, students who understood the crucial importance of the need to explore how writers use narrative structure, time and place, characterisation and point of view to shape meaning in their prose texts performed far better in NEA than those who did not.

In 2025, successful students understood **point of view and narrative perspective** by being able to consider the (frequently shifting) perspectives through which prose narrative is presented. It is not just that some prose texts such as the increasingly popular novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn have different narrators, it is also that characters are developed and changed by writers over the course of a text. Writers give their constructs 'character arcs' linked deliberately and self-consciously to the structure of the text so that, for example, by the middle and end of Sarah Walter's *Fingersmith* we may have formed significantly different impressions of Maud, Sue and Mrs Sucksby to those we had in Part One of the novel. Some of the methods used by writers to present narrative perspectives include:

- different types of narration, e.g. first-person, second-person and third-person. Omniscient third-person narrative often privileges the perspective of a given character such as Oliver in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Many first-person narratives utilise a single voice such as in *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*. Some first-person fiction utilises multiple narrators each bringing their unique perspective to the events of the text as is the case with Fowles' *The Collector*, which is initially narrated from Clegg's perspective, then from Miranda's via her diary fragments before chillingly returning to Clegg's voice in the final section. The most successful students were not only able to consider the idea of the reliable versus the unreliable narrator but also were able to discover changes to the patterns of characters' speech at different times in the novel.

- the use of the subjective narrator who draws attention to the novel's artifice as in Nabokov's first-person *Lolita* and Fowles' seemingly objective but intrusive third-person narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

The most successful students were able to explore how the events in a story are organised by analysing **narrative structure** including features like:

- simple chronology, framed narratives, use of flashbacks, cyclical structure, shifts in time and place, foreshadowing, analeptic / proleptic narrative, stream of consciousness.
- episodic novel, epistolary structure, autobiographical or diary form
- organisation by features such as volumes, chapters, and sections. The most successful students were able to direct the moderator to relevant sections of the texts by using signposts, i.e. 'in Chapter 40 of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth tells Jane the truth about Wickham ...'. Without the signpost to Chapter 40, the phrase 'the truth about Wickham' would be confusing because Elizabeth's 'truth' about Wickham changes as the novel progresses. Her 'truth about Wickham' in Chapter 16 is that he had planned on entering the clergy, rather than the militia, but was unable to do so because he lacked the necessary funds due to Darcy exploiting a loophole in his father's will to keep all the money for himself. Centres and students may consider these signposting issues to be comparatively insignificant, but they are not: signposting indicates that the student understands structure, a key ingredient in making meaning.

The most successful students consider the importance of the **times and places** in which the story is set. Furthermore, successful students analyse:

- the ways the writers use timeframes and sequencing to add complexity to a narrative, for example, the use of flashback as in *Heart of Darkness* where Conrad sets up a story-within-a-story and a place (the Congo) within a place (London's own dark River Thames); different narrators for different time periods as used by Ackroyd in *Hawksmoor* where Dyer narrates the eighteenth-century sections, and an omniscient narrator tells the story of the twentieth-century murder mystery being investigated by DCS Nicholas Hawksmoor
- the ways writers describe settings and the importance of those settings, i.e. the inn and its environs in Du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn* or the farmhouse and the village of Howling in Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm*
- how choice of place(s) can symbolise aspects of characters and relationships, i.e. in Lodge's *Nice Work*, the University (Robyn Penrose's environment) and J. Pringle and Sons Casting and General Engineering plant (Vic Wilcox's environment) within the fictional city of Rummidge.

Following on from the example of novels such as *Nice Work* where place (environment) is a feature of character and vice-versa, the most successful NEA students in 2025 were able to consider the range of **characterisation strategies** used by authors and readers to create and develop characters. Characterisation strategies include:

- how characters are presented: physical appearance; their actions and motives; what they say and think, how their language is constructed; how they interact with others; what others say and think about them; any direct or implicit revelation of author's/narrator's attitude to them
- how realistic or unrealistic the presentation of character is. In satire, for example, characters are often presented in a non-realistic, exaggerated manner. This year, as last year, there was some good work on Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Orwell's *1984* and Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm*. The most successful students were able to consider caricature as part of satire.
- manipulation of reader response via making characters empathetic or not
- as with drama, the construction of characters as a vehicle for the author's views, often through the use of direct or indirect speech.

Alert and successful students were always aware of character arc and plot and could demonstrate a knowledge of whole text (AO2 structure) via precise and helpful signposting.

Poetry

Comparatively very few students offer poetry for NEA. Less successful students tend to ignore genre and want either to 'translate' the poems they offer or to tell the 'story' of the poem. In 2024 Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (from *Selected Poems* ISBN 0 00 2555794) suffered in this regard. Hardly any of the students who offered 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' took any notice of the seven-part structure and were seemingly oblivious to the variable stanza length, rhyme schemes or the loose patterning of tetrameter for odd-numbered lines and trimeter for the even numbered lines. Even terms like 'ballad' were ignored. This year, as we also saw in 2024, a particular feature of less successful students - in all genres, not just poetry - is a tendency to respond to single words when attempting to address AO2: how meanings are shaped. Hence, in Carol Ann Duffy's 2005 collection *Rapture* individual words were picked out for 'analysis': in *River* we had 'rain', 'grass' and 'soul'; in *Cuba* we had 'rose', 'white' and 'kiss' and in *Over* we had 'dark', 'night' and 'blush'. Such a methodology does not do justice to Duffy's methods or design and did not impress the moderator.

The most successful students understand that in the analysis of poetry there is an absolute necessity to explore the poetic methods chosen by poets to convey meaning. Some of these methods are poetic structure, poetic imagery and sound effects. The best analyses reflect the conventions of relevant poetry movements (e.g. Metaphysical, Cavalier, Victorian, Modernists etc) and relevant poetic form (e.g. elegy, ballad, lyric, dramatic monologue, sonnet etc). Students answering on 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' could have saved themselves a world of pain by analysing the poem as lyrical and a ballad which was first published as part of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's joint enterprise of 1798. With Duffy's *Rapture* a simple acknowledgement that it is a 52-poem sequence tracing the progress of a love affair would have demonstrated at least an awareness of structure. To have said that eighteen of the poems are classical sonnets would have been better still. To have contextualised Duffy's exploration of the sonnet form against the other types of poems in *Rapture* and the use of sonnets elsewhere in the canon of English Literature would have been impressive.

The most successful students were aware that demonstrating a coherent or sophisticated knowledge of **poetic structure** was of key importance, so were able to consider how meaning could be shaped through such aspects as:

- stanza length (e.g. couplet, tercet, quatrain, sestet, octet etc.), shape, regularity
- line length (metre), shape, regularity.
- end-stopped lines, caesura, volta in sonnets, enjambement etc
- other features common to prose and drama can also be considered, i.e. contrast, motif, cumulative effect (especially in narrative poems), climax and anti-climax, shifts in mood or tone and whether the poem has a linear or cyclical structure. The following list of features are common to all literary genres but perhaps feature more prominently within the parameters of **poetic imagery**: symbolism; simile and metaphor; images both concrete and abstract; colour imagery; nature/pastoral imagery; and diction, i.e. the linguistic choices made by a writer. More successful students often make telling observations about the **sound effects** employed by poets. These include rhyme and half-rhyme, alliteration/assonance/onomatopoeia, and sibilance.

Administration

This year was the first time that we asked centres to upload NEA scripts so that they could be processed and moderated electronically. Every moderator commented on how successful this had been and how much more streamlined and efficient this process is. Therefore there was much evidence this summer of excellent administrative practice. However, centres are reminded to:

- adhere to deadline dates. The deadline date for NEA is always May 15th or the last working date before this. This is the deadline for centres to submit to AQA, not for students to hand in their work in centres
- ensure that students use a sensible 12-point font with double line spacing. This year some centres accepted and then passed on work which was written in tiny font and which was difficult to read
- discourage students from using sub-headings in their essay
- ensure that all pages are numbered and that the essay is paginated in the correct order
- engage in a debate in the margins of students' essays and offer a summative statement at the end of the essay to enable the moderator to see how the final mark was reached. Centres are reminded that mere lists of AOs with brief comments ('AO1 good', 'AO5 perceptive') are not evidence of thorough, **holistic** engagement with students' work.
- ensure that the essays include an accurate word count.

Further support

Mark ranges and award of grades

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

Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Use our exam results analysis tool to create and customise as many different reports for comparison as you like.

Professional development

Attend one of our feedback [courses](#) where you can review example responses from students and commentaries from our examiners.

Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

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