



Focus on success: GCSE English Language

Managing multiple texts

Handouts booklet

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Contents	Page
Section 2: Creative approaches to comparing texts	
Activity 1: Using images to improve skills for Question 2	5
Activity 2: Comparing student responses	7
Connecting ‘like with like’: Examples	8
Activity 3: Interpreting differences between information texts	9
Activity 4: Writing a question	11
Section 3: Reading the sources	
Activity 6: Reading the sources	12
Activity 7: Image analysis and ‘big ideas’	14
Activity 11: Identifying similarities and differences	15
Section 4: Synthesis and inference – Question 2	
Activity 13: Comparing student responses	16
Section 5: Vocabulary and ‘levelling up’	
Activity 14: Combining the vocabulary	19
Vocabulary: Progression through the levels	21
Activity 15: Comparing student responses	23

Contents	Page
Section 6: Comparing perspectives – Question 4	
Activity 17: Incorporating methods	27
Activity 19: Student responses	34
Activity 20: Using the ‘hook’ method	36
Activity 21: ‘Big ideas’, vocabulary and the ‘hook’ method	38
Student response commentaries	39
Reports on the examination	42

Creative approaches to comparing texts

Activity 1: Using images to improve skills for Question 2

Source A



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Source B



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Source A

What can you see?	What can you infer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rows of desks • Posed photograph • Lots of children in the picture • Not smiling • A teacher at the back • Angled desks all facing frontwards • Single learning resource (books) • Windows offer some natural light • All boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stern and disciplined • Joyless? • Everyone looks the same • Crowded • Learning would be formal and possibly repetitive • Fewer opportunities for interaction • Restricted and restricting • Lacks variety (in learning opportunities, resources and social interaction)

Source B

What can you see?	What can you infer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children sat on floor with cushions/coloured block comfortable seating • Sat in a circle, facing each other • Children communicating • Colourful surroundings and displays • Lots of books and learning materials • Own clothes • Boys and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed, more informal learning environment • Interactive • Co-operative learning • Immersive/stimulating • Possibly more fun • Individuals • Inclusivity

Activity 2: Comparing student responses

Student response 1

Source A is of an older school showing rows of students – all boys – seated in angled desks which suggests an element of formality and control. However, in source B, which is of a more modern environment, the children are seated on the floor working on laptops and tablets. This picture suggests a more informal learning environment than in source A and looks both relaxed and productive.

Student response 2

Source A is of an austere Victorian school. The image shows rows of students – all boys – seated at angled desks. The regimented feel to the room suggests an element of formality and control, and the unsmiling faces add to the feeling of joylessness that is captured by the image. However, source B depicts a modern learning environment that is far removed from the blandness of source A. Here, the children are seated on the floor and leaning on soft, coloured blocks whilst using electronic resources. This picture suggests a more informal learning environment than in source A and looks both relaxed and productive – the children are talking to each other, and learning seems to be co-operative whereas in the other image learning might well be formal and possibly repetitive.

Connecting ‘like with like’: Examples

What can you see?	Level 1 inference	Level 2 inference	Level 3 inference	Level 4 inference
The ways that the children are seated	The children are seated differently .	In one picture the boys are all sitting at desks but in the other the children are working on computers so they have more fun.	The children are seated at desks which suggests their education is formal and controlled whereas the other children are sitting on the floor indicating a more relaxed and informal approach...	...the difference in seating suggests a greater degree of regimentation in Victorian society and a lack of individuality, whereas modern expectations of children’s behaviour are more relaxed as they’re encouraged to express themselves as individuals.
The presence/absence of teachers	One has a teacher in, the other one doesn’t.	In the old picture the teacher looks really strict , standing up but in the other it’s just children which shows they get on with their work.	The teacher in the old picture looks strict and the children seem scared, whereas the absence of a teacher in the other picture suggests the pupils are more trusted...	...the presence of a teacher reinforces the importance of authority and control whereas the lack of teachers suggests pupils are expected to develop self-control and are trusted to behave without the need for discipline and fear.

Activity 3: Interpreting differences between information texts

Due to copyright restrictions, fictional holiday brochure excerpts are provided for the purpose of this activity, but you could use authentic versions with your students.

Source A

Location – Playa de la Victoria

This resort has a sea view and is adults-only. It overlooks the Mediterranean Sea and is a short walk away from Playa de la Cortadura. The resort has beautiful views and is close to the promenade with cafes and bars. The lush swimming pool and huts are surrounded by palm trees with rolling hills in the background, providing the opportunity to enjoy the sunset.

Accommodation

One-bedroom huts have air-conditioning and heating. They have a lounge with a phone, safe, satellite TV, a coffee machine, a fridge and a hairdryer.

Facilities

One pool and one jacuzzi
Solarium with deck chairs and parasols
Bar and restaurant with show cooking
Sauna
Tennis and badminton courts
Beach volleyball
Crazy golf
Laundry facilities

Your all-inclusive package

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner every day, plus alcoholic and soft drinks, snacks and afternoon tea with cakes and sandwiches.

Rooms: 150 **Floors:** 0 **Lifts:** 0 **Transfer time:** 30 mins

Source B

Location – Palma

The Playa de Palma is just 800 metres away and the restaurants are close by. The 4-star Hotel Elizabeth is in a wonderful position in the centre of Palma. The hotel has modern Mediterranean décor, giving it a homely, authentic quality. It boasts a range of amenities such as an indoor pool and spa, an outdoor pool, a bar and lounge and free Wi-Fi.

Accommodation

Rooms include en suite bathrooms as well as air conditioning and central heating. They also have satellite tv, piped music, a hairdryer and a phone. Tea/coffee facilities are available upon request.

Facilities

Outdoor swimming pool with a hydro massage whirlpool
Kids' pool with a slide and wave zone (April–September)
Day and nighttime entertainment, with live musical acts twice a week
TV room
Bowling
Children's playground
Table tennis

Rooms: 220 **Floors:** 15 **Lifts:** 5 **Transfer time:** 45 minutes

Activity 4: Writing a question

Student response

The hotel in source A is aimed at ‘adults only’ and this is reinforced by the various elements described therein. There is an emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the location – with its ‘beautiful views’ – whilst the text also emphasises the location’s peaceful and relaxing qualities: the ‘one-bedroom huts’ are ‘surrounded by palm trees’ and provide opportunities to ‘enjoy the sunset’. There is a clear emphasis on peace and tranquility and the intended demographic is catered perfectly by the single level accommodation which offers minimum hassle. The relative calm and simplicity of the resort in source A is quite different from source B which prides itself on being in the ‘centre of Palma’ with ‘restaurants close by’ and thus conveys a sense of hustle and bustle, which will be enjoyed by the younger, family-oriented holidaymaker. The difference in the target audience is emphasised by the facilities on offer. Whilst source B has numerous adventure-related things to do such as ‘slides’ and ‘wave zones’ as well as a range of entertainment themes such as ‘live musical acts twice a week’, source A prides itself on its ‘bar and restaurant with show cooking’ and its ‘sauna’, ‘deck chairs and parasols’. These different elements are indicative of the target demographic: source A is geared for rest and relaxation, whilst the hotel in source B is all about filling every minute with fun and entertainment.

Reading the sources

Activity 6: Reading the sources

Question	Source A: <i>Touching the Void</i>	Source B: <i>Climbing the Meije</i>
What do the writers focus their attention on? Think about events, places or people described.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weather • The passage of time • The physicality of the writer's pain • The feeling of camaraderie despite Joe taking out his frustrations on Simon and his haste to descend • Simon's psychological/moral support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the natural beauty of the scenery • Her gratitude to Marius – compliments his strength and the attention he pays her • Some focus on the danger and her incredulity at surviving
How are the narrators similar or different? Do they exhibit specific characteristics that you might be able to comment on?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe is a more experienced climber • Has to 'read' into Simon's responses • What is unsaid? What happens if Simon leaves him to save himself? • Resilient despite the agony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexperienced – relies on Marius to guide her • Some humour • Sees the climb as an adventure • Unwilling to admit her inexperience • Modest – the climb is quite a feat, perhaps recognised by the exuberant welcome she receives on her return

Question	Source A: <i>Touching the Void</i>	Source B: <i>Climbing the Meije</i>
How are the texts structured? Do they build up to a particularly important conclusion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with a mix of optimism (things have improved slightly) and anxiety created by lack of time. • The increase in tension is commensurate with Joe's pain. • Urgency and pace quickens, suggested by dialogue exchange, for example. • Hanging conclusion. • Chronological. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins in reflective mood; reveals her feelings about the climb at the start so reader is prepared. • Moves into chronological with some specific time references. • Episodic – pauses on moments of danger. • Clear conclusion.
What other prominent methods/language features do you notice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantic fields of battle. • Language of warfare reflects a male narrator, but also pits man in a battle with nature. • Dialogue is realistic. • Specialist vocabulary related to mountains and mountaineering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More moderate tone/language. • Humour. • Use of double negatives might suggest her own complicated feelings about the event. • Fewer examples of figurative language but some poetic description of nature. • Use of adverbs – 'dreadfully', 'awfully' – betrays her class.
Why do you think the examiner has chosen these two texts? Apart from their subject matter, what do they have in common? What themes or big ideas do the sources engage with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The texts could be approached from a gender perspective, with Bell challenging notions of femininity. They reveal different relationships between the writers and their partners – source A portrays an equal relationship but one which is altered by Joe's injury. Simon has a personal interest whilst Marius' relationship is professional. Indeed, Gertrude is at pains to describe Marius' caring nature which also permits comment on attitudes towards gender. • Both sources reveal the resilience of humans in the face of the challenges of nature, as well as human determination to conquer these challenges. The importance of teamwork is also highlighted in both sources. • Reading them from the perspective of human interaction and relationships, Joe never doubts Simon's commitment, nor indeed does Gertrude doubt Marius' loyalty, although their motives are different. 	

Activity 7: Image analysis and ‘big ideas’



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Activity 11: Identifying similarities and differences

November 2020 Paper 2 Question 2

You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.

Both writers are accompanied by another person on their adventure: Simon in Source A, and Marius in Source B.

What can you infer about the differences between the two companions, Simon and Marius?

Source A (Simon)	Source B (Marius)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is in charge • needs to get both men down and so has a lot of responsibility • is practical – gets things done • is keeping the pace; conscious of time • has a cheerful exterior – why? He wants to remain optimistic • is purposeful • considers teamwork – male/male 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is experienced • appears kindly but he has a job to do • always walking on ahead • is physically strong • does not have the same sense of camaraderie but does prepare her bed (gentlemanly or because it's his job?) • is not only a guide, but guiding an inexperienced female climber • has a reputation to uphold?

Both:

- adopt the role of leader (for different reasons)
- are respected/admired by their partners.

Activity 13: Comparing student responses

The two student responses below are answers to Question 2 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam).

Both writers are accompanied by another person on their adventure: Simon in Source A, and Marius in Source B. What can you infer about the differences between the two companions, Simon and Marius? **[8 marks]**

Source A

Due to third-party copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce Source A here. To read Source A, please download the GCSE English Language Paper 2 November 2020 Insert from [Centre Services](#).

Source B

In 1899, British explorer Gertrude Bell set out to climb one of the most dangerous mountains in the Alps, the Meije. Source B is an extract from the letter she sent home describing the climb.

Monday 28th August, 1899

- I thought you would gather from my last letter that I meant to have a shot at climbing the Meije and would be glad to hear that I had descended safely. Well, I'll tell you – it's awful! I think if I
- 5 had known exactly what was before me I should not have faced it, but fortunately I did not, and I look back on it with complete satisfaction — and I look forward to other things with no further apprehension. . .
- 10 I left here on Friday, having hired a local guide, Marius, and we walked up to the Refuge. I went out to watch the beautiful red sunlight fading from the snow and rocks. The Meije looked dreadfully forbidding in the dusk. When I came in I found that Marius had kindly put my rug in a corner of the floor, and what with the straw and my cloak for a pillow, I made myself very comfortable.
- 15 The night lasted from 8 till 12, but I didn't sleep at all. We got up soon after 12 and I went down to the river and washed a little. It was a perfect night, clear stars and the moon not yet over the hills. We left just as the moon shone into the valley. Marius always went ahead and carried a lantern till we got on to the snow when it was light enough with only the moon.
- At 1.30 we reached the glacier and put on our ropes. It wasn't really cold, though there was an
- 20 icy little breath of wind. We had about three hours up very nice rock. I had been in high spirits for it was so easy, but before long my hopes were dashed! We had about two hours and a half of awfully difficult rock. There were two places where Marius literally pulled me up like a parcel. He has the strength of a bear. And it was absolutely sheer down. The first half-hour I gave myself up for lost. It didn't seem possible that I could get up all that wall without ever making a
- 25 slip. You see, I had practically never been on a rock before. However, I didn't let on to Marius and presently it began to seem quite natural to be hanging by my eyelids over an abyss. . .

Credit: The Letters of Gertrude Bell (Volume 1) by Gertrude Bell (1927)

30 We stayed on the summit until 11. It was gorgeous, quite cloudless. I went to sleep for half-an-hour. It's a very long way up but it's a longer way down – unless you take the way Marius's axe took. The cord by which it was carefully tied to his wrist broke and it disappeared forever into space.

35 Here comes the worst place on the whole Meije. Marius vanished, carrying a very long rope, and I waited. Presently I felt a little tug on the rope. "Mademoiselle," called Marius calmly, and obediently off I went. There were two little humps to hold on to on an overhanging rock and there was me in mid-air and Marius round the corner steadfastly holding the rope tight. . . perfectly fearful. I thought at the time how very well I was climbing and how odd it was that I should not be afraid.

40 The worst was over then, and the most tedious part was to come. There was no difficulty, but there was also no moment when you had not to pay the strictest attention. There was an hour of ice and rock till at last Marius and I found ourselves, with thankfulness, back on the glacier. When I got in, I found everyone in the hotel on the doorstep waiting for me and the hotel owner let off crackers, to my great surprise.

I went to bed and knew no more till 6 this morning, when I had five cups of tea and read your letters and then went to sleep again until ten. I'm really not tired but my shoulders and neck and arms feel rather sore and stiff and my knees are awfully bruised.

Student A

In source A, Simon seems to show no empathy for the writer and his safety. The writer mentions how "despite my cries of alarm and pain, he had kept the pace of the descent going." This shows us that he does not care about the writer and refuses to acknowledge the pain that he is putting the writer through. In source B, Marius seems much more understanding and caring towards the writer. She mentions how "there were two places where Marius literally pulled me up like a parcel." Which shows that he knows what he is doing and is willing to do any thing to help the writer, unlike Simon in source A.

In source A, Simon ~~is also~~ ~~also~~ also makes the writer go first despite his condition. "When I looked up, Simon could be seen descending quickly." He only follows after and makes the writer lead them even though ~~that~~ the writer had broken his leg. In source B, Marius seems to be more understanding due to the writers inexperience with climbing and "always went ahead and carried a lantern" This makes it clear that he is far a far better partner for the climb.

Student B

In the first source the writer was accompanied by Simon who was very calculative and making decisions that would be perhaps beneficial for both climbers. His strategy making skills were represented by the description of him 'weighing up the possibilities', suggesting he was careful to make the best decision. He was taking the role of a leader as we see the narrator trusting him ~~more~~ 'it was Simon's decision'.

In the second ~~source~~ source Marius who was accompanying the writer was very helpful, thoughtful and caring. This is displayed by the fact he 'kindly put my ring', showing Marius cares about his partner's comfort and prioritises it contrasting to the way Simon was pushing the limit of his partner not considering his difficulty as much 'he didn't seem to hear me'.

Marius was shown to take responsibility for his partner and putting him first as he knew he had less experience 'literally pulled me up like a parcel, he was strong as a bear'. This however is not the relationship and attitude the other ~~source~~ accompaniment had, Simon was more demanding and determined 'Howling or screaming for Simon to stop achieved nothing' emphasises his lack of thought whereas Marius in the second source was more tolerant 'called Marius calmly'.

Vocabulary and ‘levelling up’

Activity 14: Combing the vocabulary

November 2020 Paper 2 mark scheme (adapted to reflect 2026 changes)

AO1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas Select and synthesise evidence from different texts 		
This question assesses both bullets		
Level	Skills Descriptors	Indicative Standard
		This indicative standard provides an exemplification of the skills descriptors at each level. It is not a model answer, nor a complete response, nor does it seek to exemplify any particular content.
Level 4 Perceptive, detailed summary 7–8 marks	Shows perceptive or detailed synthesis and interpretation of both texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes perceptive inferences from both texts Makes judicious references/use of textual detail relevant to the focus of the question Statements show perceptive differences between texts 	In Source B, 'local guide' Marius is 'hired' and therefore paid to ensure the safety and success of the writer. She buys his experience and knowledge of the mountains to achieve her ambition. On the other hand, in Source A, Joe's companion, Simon, is involved in a 'partnership' which suggests that mutual respect, skill and collaboration are essential to ensuring their safety and survival. However, although one relationship is based on an equal friendship and the other is based on two strangers entering a business transaction, both companions take responsibility for the life or death of the person they are climbing with, which shows that both relationships can be just as effective.
Level 3 Clear, relevant summary 5–6 marks	Shows clear synthesis and interpretation of both texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes clear inferences from both texts Selects clear references/textual detail relevant to the focus of the question Statements show clear differences between texts 	In Source B, Marius has been 'hired' as a 'local guide' to help the writer because of his knowledge of the mountain, but although he has never met her before, he is very loyal and supportive. Simon, the companion in Source A, is also loyal but he is climbing with Joe as an equal partner rather than a paid guide. Joe says 'the partnership had worked ... effectively' showing that the close relationship between the two companions was really important as they were working together to survive after the accident.

<p>Level 2 Some, attempts at summary 3–4 marks</p>	<p>Shows some interpretation from one/both texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts some inference(s) from one/both texts Selects some appropriate references /textual detail from one/both texts Statements show some difference(s) between texts 	<p>The companion in Source B is a 'local guide' who has been 'hired' to help the writer climb the mountain which means she has paid him to help because without his help she wouldn't manage it. This is different to Source A because Joe and Simon know each other already and are climbing together, so Simon is not being paid to help like Marius is. In Source A, Joe says that it is a 'partnership' which means they work together well.</p>
<p>Level 1 Simple, limited summary 1–2 marks</p>	<p>Shows simple awareness from one/both texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers paraphrase rather than inference Selects simple reference(s)/textual detail(s) from one/both texts Statements show simple differences between texts 	<p>In Source B the companion is called Marius and he is a guide who shows her where to go. It says 'hired a local guide'. This is different to Source A because the writer and the companion are both climbers not guides. The writer says they are a 'partnership' which shows they are like partners.</p>
<p>Level 0 No marks</p>	<p>Nothing to reward</p>	

Note:

- If the quality of the response is L1 but only deals with one text, the mark must be 1 not 2.
- If the quality of the response is L2 but only deals with one text, the mark must be 3 not 4.
- A candidate has to deal with both texts and address the correct focus of the question to achieve L3 or above.

The focus of this question is the difference between the two companions.

AO1 content may include ideas such as:

- their relationship to the writer
- their actions
- their experience
- their knowledge
- their confidence
- their skills
- their decision-making

Vocabulary: Progression through the levels

Here are some words/phrases you may have selected from the indicative standard on the previous page.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different shows climbers guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different means paid to help she wouldn't manage know each other already climbing together work together well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge of the mountain loyal and supportive equal partner close relationship important survive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paid to ensure safety and success experience and knowledge achieve her ambition mutual respect, skill and collaboration essential to ensuring safety and survival entering a business transaction take responsibility effective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> simple vocabulary used to explain concrete ideas synonymising words in the question lacks inference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some 'Tier 2' vocabulary and phrasing such as 'manage' to suggest some inferential comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2 vocabulary is more developed to include some abstract nouns such as 'knowledge' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more sophisticated vocabulary with abstract nouns and noun phrases used throughout ('ambition', 'mutual respect, skill and collaboration') use of more abstract 'big' ideas ('business transaction') inferences drawn from the differences

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
They are like partners.	They work together well.	They were working together to survive after the accident.	They are ‘involved in a partnership which suggests that mutual respect, skill and collaboration are essential to ensuring their safety and survival.’



Whilst ‘partners’ sounds more effective than ‘work together well’, it is in fact derived from ‘partnership’ which is in the question.	‘Work together well’ shows some progression – however, as is typical of students working at Level 2, they are essentially synonymising the word ‘partnership’ used in the question.	At Level 3, there is more of a sense of understanding. The notion of partnership is unpicked and qualified by the reference to the necessity of working together to survive.	Although this Level 4 example uses the word ‘partnership’ as it appears in the question, the response is nuanced by the more sophisticated use of vocabulary that helps the student unpack further layers of signification.
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Activity 15: Comparing student responses

The two student responses below are further answers to Question 2 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam):

Both writers are accompanied by another person on their adventure: Simon in Source A, and Marius in Source B. What can you infer about the differences between the two companions, Simon and Marius? **[8 marks]**

Student C

In Source A Simon seems like a very happy person as we can see on the next quote "At this rate we should be down by nine o'clock. He said cheerfully" This is a reflect of his optimist personality as ~~he doesn't seem to be affect~~ his high energy doesn't seem to be affected by his companion's situation. ~~as~~ He is the type of person that sees the light at the end of the tunnel. Whereas in Source B Marius seems like a very peaceful person as he does things "kindly" and "calmly" since this is his job he doesn't get too excited or very cheerful as he is used to do this type of thing every day. He is not a person who shows his emotions easily so he is hard to read, and create ~~have~~ a rapport with.

In Source A Simon seems like a very impatient person. When he says "Nothing to wait for. Come on" ~~the~~ This is a reflect of his active personality as he wants to get things over with very fast and quick. He doesn't like to waste ~~the~~ time. On the other hand Marius is more slow and likes to do things on a practical step by step way as he always "went ahead and carried a lantern" this shows how he is always prepared as he thinks things ahead before he starts to do something.

Student D

The writer in source A presents Simon to be a very ~~resist~~ resilient and strong person to do. This With the use of "it was Simon's decision," ~~from~~ ~~there~~ it shows that Simon took the ~~leader~~ lead and made the important ~~decit~~ decisions between the ~~two~~ ~~two~~ two. Suggesting the authority he had in the situation and showing Simon to the reader as a strong ~~figure~~ fighter. In contrast to ~~Marious~~ source B Marious was a lot more ~~gentel~~ ~~gentel~~ ~~gentle~~ with his partner, he helped her out and made things easier ~~for~~ ~~for~~ ~~her~~ for her. For example, with "Marious had kindly put my rug in a ~~corner~~ ~~corner~~ of the floor" we depict Marious to be a kind ~~more~~ and ~~reliant~~ reliable person. He also helped his partner to feel more comfortable, presenting their close partnership. Both ~~of~~ ~~Simon~~ and ~~Marious~~ seem to have handled ~~their~~ ~~their~~ ~~their~~ ~~their~~ dangers. ~~At~~ Simon is more tough and attentive while ~~Marious~~ Marious appears caring and sensitive to the others.

Another diff difference between the 2 companies is that is they both normalised the their dangerous experiences

different. This is presented through ~~the use~~ "Simon had already started to climb down" showing how Simon was ready and set to go. This shows ~~is~~ Simon to be a someone who is quick to act in critical situations. The writer continues to ~~use~~ "his confidence was infectious" to show how Simon ~~was~~ is a very determined person and was competent enough to try to get ~~the~~ ~~do~~ ~~and~~ himself back to the base camp.

However this contrasts to source B in where Moris was taking the ~~risks~~ risks to be able to safely save his partner. This is demonstrated in "Moris reassured the ~~corner~~ ~~corner~~ ~~corner~~ steadily holding ~~the~~ the rope tight" despite the very dangerous situation they were both in. Moris was ~~come to~~ ~~take~~ ~~take~~ responsibility and try to save his partner. ~~There is also a comparison~~ ~~Moris~~ Moris also shows off his strength when he "pulled me up like a parcel" showing that he is quite a strong, fears man. Which is similar in a way to ~~is~~ Simon.

Overall both ~~as~~ companions we should take care of their ~~corner~~ partners well. Moris ~~seems~~ ~~was~~ was a lot more calm and showed a strength ~~was~~. As where ~~Simon~~ ~~was~~ from the short ~~of~~ presents a strong, determined ~~character~~ characteristics.

Comparing perspectives – Question 4

Activity 17: Incorporating methods

The two student responses beginning on the following page are answers to Question 4 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam).

Compare how the writers convey their different feelings and perspectives on their adventures in the mountains.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different feelings and perspectives on their adventures
- comment on the methods the writers use to convey their feelings and perspectives
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

Student E

In source A the writer feels agony and weakness as he can't help to ignore his difficulty and ~~point~~ pain, ~~there was nothing I could do to bring the agony to an end~~, 'there was nothing I could ~~do~~ do to bring the agony to an end', the use of the noun 'agony' highlights the great pain and the use of 'nothing I could' emphasises the situation and the vulnerability the writer has and his lack of control perhaps saving him. This is again reinforced by the use of the adjective 'uncontrollably' to describe his leg shaking. On the other hand this feeling ~~is represented~~ again represented in the second source, even shows the writer enjoys the view 'gorgeous, quite cloudless' his little experience makes him feel vulnerable and lacking control 'Marcus literally pulled me up' showing he is dependent on his partner again when he says 'I gave myself up for lost'.

Showing in both sources the writers find the adventure difficult and faking over them. As Joe describes that him pressing my face into the snow, gritted my teeth, and waited. 'was he only thinking that temporary eased the pain and ~~the~~ Gertrude Bell thought 'didn't seem possible that I could get up all the hill.' ~~staying~~

However one main difference is the way the writers finish the extract. In source A we see Joe being optimistic for a second and seeing the appreciation of the partnership 'had worked effectively' ~~the partnership~~ but shortly after that his 'optimism evaporated', the journey hasn't finished for him he uses the metaphor 'hammering torture' to describe his feeling towards the adventure suggesting he finds it cruel and exhausting. In contrast to that in source B 'the worst was over and the most tedious part was to come' project the writer is now safe and towards the end we see him in his hotel room ~~in~~ vigour.

29 of 48

he evening 'had cups of tea and read your letters' suggesting the adventure was not so fun as he is 'not tired' ~~but~~ even though he felt some difficulty completing the journey. This is clearly not the perspective the writer had in source A where he was in ~~the~~ pain and 'dreadfully tired'.

Student F

In source A, the writer conveys their adventure on the mountain as a challenging and painful experience. This is illustrated by the gradual decrease in Joe's optimism as since at the start they felt that they had "lost the sense of hopelessness" and were hopeful they could make it further down. By the end the writer ends with a short simple sentence ^{optimism} "My optimism evaporated". The writer parallels the "clobbing" pain of his knee with the optimism he carries. As the pain of the his knee gets worse he loses hope and the personification of the knee as a "hammering force" with "vengeance" ^{shows the writer pretty harsh} ~~creates a the effect~~ ^{harshness} control over his knee and the noun "force" emphasises how ^{challenging and arduous} ~~challenging~~ his adventure is. On the other hand, Gertrude had a more positive experience as she comments on the landscape as being "gorgeous" ^{another "beautiful description"} indicating how visually stunning ^{compared} it looked ~~and~~ to the "freezing blast of snow" ~~the~~ by the difference

visual description. ^{how far} comparison indicates for Getrude the adventure was more scenic and has far less tension. Since, for Getrude the going down the mountain was "tedious" indicating how relaxed she was whereas Joe was in a life threatening situation. The short simple sentence "There was no difficulty" encapsulates Getrude's feelings one of excitement and ease. Joe's experience is the

In addition, the description of Getrude's pains as her "Shoulders and neck feels rather sore" directly contrasts Joe's "there of a sore" he felt and the more serious tone in source A. ~~it can be "scabbed"~~ indicates the severity of Joe's injury and causes helps understand his vulnerability on the mountain relying on Simon for support, ^{compared} ~~Getrude's~~ the more relaxed tone in source B ^{despite as the stories in source B are much less} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~Getrude~~ ^{Getrude} ~~lost~~ ^{lost} ~~the experience as~~ "awful" despite Getrude's ~~injury~~.

There is a sense of irony as "Getrude recalls the actual "awful" despite only having minor injuries, ^{such as bruising and sore "unusually bruised"} compared to Joe's brutal leg injury. highlighting the more dramatic effect the writer in source B tries to create. Despite the brutal injury, ^{in previous lines} ~~they~~ ^{tries} ~~she~~ ^{he} ~~is~~ ^{he} ~~opposed~~ ^{opposed} to Joe. The hyperbole in the description ^{other} ~~other~~ ^{as} "awful and very bruised" indicates she attempts to impress the ^{recipient or her} ~~reader or her~~ ^{reaction at her} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} as the journey was "no difficulty". ^{This shows} ~~Both writers~~

~~that she has to~~ ^{catch} her. This is ~~but~~ perhaps intended by the
writer to convey the ~~order's~~ ~~name~~ ~~will~~ she ~~feels~~ she
went through, at the start of her climb.

Activity 19: Student responses

Below is a further response to Question 4 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam):

Student G

Despite the idea that Simpson is a climber, which suggests that he loves climbing and has a passion for it, the extract displays the exact opposite. Before the source came up in Simpson's autobiographical account, at both Joe and Simon both had an ~~exceeding~~ invading sense of hopelessness, as shown early on in the source where it says, 'we had lost the sense of hopelessness that had invaded us at the ice cliff'. This quote ~~conclusively~~ ~~be interpreted~~ shows the reader that after Simpson broke his leg there was a looking ~~feeling~~ ^{persuading} from the two experienced climbers that there was no solution to the problem facing them ~~showing~~. This idea is even reinstated later on in the source where Simpson appears to lack any hope of keeping his broken leg away from the snow, describing it as 'an impossible task'. The use of this hyperbole shows how Simpson is ^{both} extremely pessimistic about the situation he is facing and ~~does not~~ is looking in the belief that he

can protect his knee. These ideas show an overriding idea that Simpson's ~~prospective~~ perception of enjoyment on adventures in the mountain has changed; ~~he is~~ instead feeling it ~~it is~~ ~~terrors~~ torturous.

On the other hand, Bell ^{also} seems to believe that adventures in the mountain are not very fun, as shown when the letter reads: 'I'll tell you - it's awful'. Whilst this letter is likely for someone who Bell shares a bond with it also ~~seemingly~~ ~~do~~ appears to directly address the audience - telling those who were considering mountain expeditions that the experience is not as good as it seems. However, later on in that same paragraph Bell explains how she is that 'fortunately' she did not turn away from the challenge she was facing; also saying that she could 'look back on it in complete satisfaction'. This shows that Gertrude is thankful she was able to experience ~~the~~ climbing a mountain while also giving the impression to the reader that it is something she will look back on fondly for the rest of her ~~left~~ life - ~~creating a happy~~ leaving the reader to feel happy for her success. This shows that overall, Simpson did not have an enjoyable experience adventuring in the mountains whilst Bell did.

Activity 20: Using the 'hook' method

Below is a further response to Question 4 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam):

Student H

In both sources the writers have different feelings about their experience. In source A the writer uses lots of negative emotive language to portray how bad ^{his} experience is. He constantly references "pain" and the weather to give an image to the reader about how bad mountain climbing is. However this is contrasted by source B where the writer describes himself to have 'high spirits' and the summit 'was gorgeous'. He does this to emphasise how fun and exciting mountain climbing is. From this we know the writer in source A is trying to portray a negative image of rock climbing. ~~And the writer in source B is trying~~ due to his bad experience. However in source B the writer portrays a positive image of ^{mountain} rock climbing because he had a particularly pleasant experience.

Both writers use the weather to portray how they are feeling. In Source A the writer uses the weather to ~~make~~ ~~how~~ exaggerate how bad his experience was. Describing it as "freezing blasts of snow biting into my face" the words 'freezing', 'blasts' and 'biting' give connotations of the wild and warfare, which are typically one sided. In this case it is one sided and he is on the losing side. He does this to give off a negative message about the weather because it had caused 'nausea' and 'pain'. However in Source B the writer uses the weather to describe the beauty of the ~~mountain~~ Mountains. By stating that 'Clear stars' and the Moon' ~~there are~~ the sky is clear giving him nothing to complain about and only good things to say about the sky and the mountain. He further reinforced this by stating that 'It wasn't really cold' and that he has 'high spirits'. He does this because he has had a great experience and only has good things to say about it.

Activity 21: ‘Big ideas’, vocabulary and the ‘hook’ method

Below is a further response to Question 4 Paper 2 (November 2020 exam):

Student I (extract from a longer response)

There are also gender differences between the two writers’ perspectives. Joe and Simon are both male and seem to have an equal ‘partnership’. However, Joe’s perspective is not typically masculine as he lets Simon make the important decisions. His injury means that he is weaker and subservient and loses the right to take joint decisions. Simon takes on the dominant male role because Joe’s lack of physical strength diminishes his power in the relationship. Joe announces this humiliating realisation in a simple factual sentence: ‘It was Simon’s decision.’ In Source B, Gertrude’s perspective is more stereotypically female. She includes lots of domestic details about sleeping and washing, she comments on the views, and is happy to be lifted up the mountain ‘like a parcel.’ Using this simile turns Gertrude literally into an object rather than a person in her own right. However, it’s ironic that Gertrude is in some ways the dominant one, from a class and financial point of view, as she pays Marius for his services, meaning ultimately she has the power in the relationship, which was very uncommon for a woman at that time.

Student response commentaries

Activity 2

Commentary

Student response 2 uses the same ideas as the first one – the layout of the room and how the children are seated – but develops the inferences in more detail. Student response 2 picks up on more abstract ideas such as the harshness of the Victorian setting and explores these using a range of vocabulary that shapes the inferences into something perceptive. For example, response 1 uses the idea of ‘formality and control’, but response 2 extends this by comparing this to a sense of regimentation which itself leads to ‘joylessness’. The difference between the images referred to in response 1 is restricted to phrases such as ‘more modern environment’ and ‘more informal learning environment’. However, response 2 goes further to connect the formality/informality binary opposition to a mode of teaching which, in Source A, may be less engaging.

Activity 13

Commentary

Student A is stronger on the interpretation of ideas in the individual texts than on the interpretation of differences between them. The student makes clear inferences about both Simon and Marius – that one fails to acknowledge the pain he is inflicting on his companion, and that the other recognises his companion’s inexperience – but is only able to identify the differences rather than exploring them. The phrase ‘unlike Simon’ tagged on to the end of the first paragraph was an opportunity missed by the student to examine that difference further. The mark awarded was therefore at the lower end of Level 3.

Student B engages with a big idea of leadership, and makes detailed inferences about Simon’s decision making skills, his strategic thinking, his calculations and the benefits of these for both climbers. These are Level 4 inferences. In the second paragraph, the student comments perceptively on the difference between Marius prioritising Gertrude’s comfort and Simon’s determination to push Joe as far as he can. This could have been more detailed and could have been matched with a more perceptive understanding of Source B, and for this reason, the mark awarded was at the lower end of Level 4.

Activity 15

Commentary

Student C uses a diverse range of vocabulary to explain their understanding of the sources. They use adjectives such as ‘happy’, ‘peaceful’, ‘excited’, ‘cheerful’, ‘active’, ‘fast’ and ‘quick’, ‘slow’ and ‘practical’. These are not particularly ambitious words by any means, but they are clear. The student’s vocabulary also includes phrases such as ‘step by step’, ‘optimist personality’, ‘high energy’ and ‘create a rapport’, which may be relatively familiar, but nevertheless contribute to the student’s ability to explain their understanding clearly. The mark awarded was at the top of Level 3.

Student D demonstrates their wider vocabulary and how the more sophisticated Tier 2 vocabulary provides a more nuanced and subtle understanding, which meets the criteria for Level 4. Adjectives such as ‘resilient’, ‘sensitive’, ‘critical’ and ‘competent’ indicate a more perceptive grasp of the companions’ characteristics. Equally, the use of abstract nouns such as ‘responsibility’, ‘authority’ and ‘partnership’ signpost that the student is engaging with big ideas, which again supports their progress into Level 4. The student was awarded full marks.

Activity 17

Commentary

Student E provides comment on a range of methods used by both writers, although they are stronger on Source A. They refer to specific words, identifying the word class (not always correctly): ‘the noun ‘agony’’ and ‘the adjective ‘uncontrollably’’. The comments explaining why they have been used and what effect they create are clear. The student makes excellent use of a comparison of the structure of the extracts, with an explicit focus on explaining the contrast between the endings of both and how they impact on the reader. Finally, the comment on the metaphor ‘hammering torture’ is used effectively to explain clearly the writer’s attitude to pain. The student was awarded the top mark in Level 3.

In Student F’s response we see an even wider range of methods selected for comment and comparison, which are integrated and brought together in an impressive way. The student comments on the effects of short simple sentences, the use of parallels, personification in ‘hammering torture’, visual description and hyperbole. In most cases, the student explains how and why the methods have been chosen by the writers, but these comments are not always as full or as detailed as they might be. There are also references to structural features such as contrasts, and the student is rewarded for the way in which they link the methods to the creation of either a serious tone or relaxed tone, depending on the text. The student was awarded a mark in the middle of Level 4.

Activity 19

Commentary

Student G adopts an approach to Source A whereby they trace the progress of the writer's fluctuating sense of optimism through an understanding of how structure has been used. The student makes references to the chronology of the extract throughout, using phrases such as 'early on', 'before the source', 're(in)stated later on' etc. By tracking these shifts in perspective, the student secures a mark in Level 3 for their clarity of understanding of the writer's perspectives, as well as for demonstrating a clear understanding of the methods used. The mark awarded was mid-Level 3.

Activity 20

Commentary

The first page of Student H's response exemplifies a typical Level 2 response, with the student attempting to meet the demands of the different strands within the task. However, at the top of the second page, they use the 'hook' method to really good effect. The sentence 'Both writers use the weather to portray how they are feeling' sets them up beautifully for a comparison of the writers' perspectives which is clearly 'like for like'; this explicitly engages with the concept of the texts as deliberate constructs, commenting on how and why the writers use the weather to create specific effects. The response was awarded a mark at the lower end of Level 3.

Activity 21

Commentary

Student I (an extract from a longer response) is explicit in adopting a conceptualised approach and the student has clearly been taught to read texts through a specific lens. By taking gender as a starting point, the student is able to interpret the writers' perspectives on their experiences and relationships in both texts individually, but the students is also able to make comparisons on how one writer behaves according to gender stereotypes whilst the other does not. Furthermore, the student develops their response to explore why the stereotypes might not fit the circumstances, and offers some historical perspective too in explaining Gertrude Bell's position. The methods are understated but clear and relevant, and in both sources support the ideas; the vocabulary is mature, abstract and ambitious in places, but the perceptive comments are determined by the conceptualised ideas in the response rather than a particularly impressive vocabulary, demonstrating that this sort of response is not just the preserve of a few. The response was awarded a mark towards the top of Level 4.

Reports on the examination

Here we have collated some of the most relevant comments regarding managing multiple texts that have appeared in the GCSE English Language Reports on the examination. The full reports can be found on Centre Services.

Paper 2 Question 2

- This question **assesses**:
 - the student's skill both in interpreting the implied meanings of texts and in synthesising ideas and evidence. These two key skills are weighted equally within the mark scheme
 - their ability to explore connections between the two texts and to infer meaning in response to a given focus
 - a student's ability to synthesise and interpret evidence from both sources, according to a given focus.
- Students are expected to have absorbed information from the whole of both sources relating to this specific focus and bring the information and ideas together to consider either the similarities or differences, as directed.
- The wording of the question includes the phrase 'what can you infer...', which is intended to encourage students to infer meaning rather than simply summarise. It is vital that, in preparing students to respond to Question 2, it is made very clear that interpretation is at the heart of both key skills assessed here (making inferences and showing differences). This is true regardless of whether the focus of the question is concrete or abstract.
- The **focus** of the question:
 - is likely to have a very narrow, discrete focus. There are two reasons why the focus of the task is deliberately narrow. Firstly, it enforces the need for students to select specific information and ideas from the wider text, allowing the assessment of those retrieval skills enshrined in AO1. Secondly, it ensures that there is no crossover with the comparative task set in Question 4, which has a wider focus.
 - varies and could invite students to engage with an abstract focus (such as the behaviour of school children in November 2017), or it could involve a more concrete aspect of the text (such as the activities of the boys in June 2017).
 - (could ask students) to explore similarities rather than differences in the two texts.
- Within the framework offered by the assessment objective, students are expected to 'synthesise evidence' (which includes information, ideas and textual detail); this allows the selection and interpretation of similarities or differences to be equally valid. Although the focus of the question was on similarities, comments on differences were also rewarded by examiners where they were appropriate to the focus of the question.
- Where students failed to maximise marks, it was occasionally as a result of their focus being exclusively on differences rather than similarities. While comments about differences can be credited as part of a discussion of similarities, students are reminded that they must focus on the question set. The focus on similarities rather than differences was chosen to give students the widest number of options.

- Teachers are advised to continue offering students a breadth of non-fiction texts throughout KS4 and developing their skills in identifying similarities and differences across a range of different aspects, both concrete and abstract.

Quantity vs quality?

- Students do not need to make a large number of points: quality is more important than quantity. It is the depth and detail of comments which is rewarded rather than the breadth and range of comments. Some students wrote more than the two sides available within the answer booklet, continuing onto an additional page, but rarely achieved a higher mark as a result of their extended answer. The negative impact, however, was felt later on in the exam when some of these students inevitably ran out of time to write an extended response to Question 4, where there are 16 marks available, as opposed to the 8 marks available for Question 2.
- Improving the detailed explanation of a small number of inferences is more beneficial than making a larger number of questionable or less precise inferences.
- Encouraging students to write in detail is an approach well worth adopting, as it can often be the means of moving up a level. For example, a student working at Level 2 might typically attempt to make one inference, and then move on to make a separate point. However, by focusing and commenting further on the same point, the student is more likely to provide the explanation they need to meet the criteria for 'clear' at Level 3. By the same token, a student working at Level 3, by engaging in more detail with the same point and looking to extend and develop their comment with further inferences, is in a better position to move into Level 4. Coaching students in the patience required to add depth and detail to their responses can only be a positive way forward for all abilities.
- At the highest level, the **most successful responses** students were rewarded for responses which were perceptive or detailed or, in some cases, both. Students can offer interpretation which is perceptive: insightful, conceptualised or profound; or which is detailed: extended, developed or analytical.
- **Finally**, students should be reminded to always read the introduction in the text box before reading the extract, as there is frequently contextualising information to help orientate students in advance of reading an unseen text. It is also helpful if students can practise reading texts where there is more than one character.

Paper 2 Question 4

- This question:
 - presents a demanding and multi-dimensional challenge for students
 - requires students to juggle the need to compare and comment on ideas and perspectives as well as methods
 - requires (students) to read and understand information and ideas from two substantial sources and focus on the writers' perspectives specifically. They are expected to bring together and compare the two perspectives, analysing the differences and linking these points of view to the methods used by the writers to convey them. There are three discrete key skills which contribute towards a particularly challenging comprehension task
 - requires a response which includes not just a demonstration of the student's understanding of the ideas and perspectives in both texts, but also a comparison of these ideas and the writers' different perspectives, supported by relevant textual detail, and an explanation of how both writers have used a range of methods to convey their points of view
 - builds on the inferential understanding and synthesis of ideas required by Question 2 (the 'what'), and the exploration of language methods required by Question 3 (the 'how').
- Each of the three preceding reading questions provides the student with practice and inspiration for this response, with the understanding of ideas introduced in Question 1, synthesis between texts in Question 2, and a focus on methods in Question 3. These questions offer the student stepping stones towards meeting the challenge of Question 4.
- The **focus** of this question:
 - is a more open than any of the previous three reading questions, allowing students to engage with the whole of both sources and to extract whatever they choose to illustrate their response.
 - is usually very straight-forward, encompassing the whole of both texts
 - is deliberately broad in order to allow students to select the details which have caught their attention
 - may vary according to the content of the sources, and teachers should advise students that this may be the case and to be guided by [the precise words of the question] in their response
 - will always be the perspectives, attitudes or feelings of the writers
 - could be on similarities. Students progressed naturally from an identification of the writers' similar perspectives to explore the different methods the writers used to present their points of view.
- The **most successful** responses:
 - identify like with like – this is key to success in Question 4, but is also central to the synthesis required in Question 2, and is therefore a valuable teaching focus
 - compare 'like with like' is essential for meeting Level 3 and Level 4 criteria
 - move seamlessly between perspectives and methods in their wide-ranging analysis of the texts.
- Three points of comparison are sufficient to demonstrate clear or perceptive understanding.

- The **less successful** responses:
 - tend to focus on ideas at the expense of perspectives; deal with the texts separately without making meaningful connections; and identify methods used without exploring their effect or how they contributed to presenting the writer's point of view
 - repeat the content of their Question 2 response. The focus of Question 4 will always be different from the focus for Question 2; these two questions address entirely different AOs and therefore require different skills. Students therefore need to have a distinctly different mental schema in approaching each question in Section A
 - ignore the reference to methods in the task entirely. This omission left students offering a more two-dimensional comparison which engaged exclusively with the 'what' and not the 'how'
 - do not address the 'how' in this question, and their marks are reduced as a result. Exploring the methods used by the writers is an integral and necessary strand of this task and students should be prepared for this requirement.

On formula/rigid writing structures

There was limited evidence of an overly mechanistic approach to structuring responses to Question 4, suggesting students were finding their own way intuitively through the task and, in many cases, producing coherent extended answers. It appears that, where students tracked their way through the disparate elements of the task step by step, they were able to meet the criteria for success.

Notes



Contact us

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

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