

# Spotlight on GCSE English Language

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**Paper 2**  
**Q5**

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# Spotlight on GCSE English shines a light on exactly what examiners are looking for.

We've worked with Jonny Kay, post-16 English expert and author, to create a pack of resources to provide your students with best practice, guidance and top tips to improve their performance in GCSE English Language.

Focusing on Questions 4 and 5 on both papers, the Spotlight packs will support your students' progress and focus their development on the areas that will make the most difference to their performance in the exam.

These resources support our new [Spotlight videos](#)





## Each pack contains:

- A video for students breaking down the question and what they need to do to succeed.
- This teacher guidance booklet, including a question from a past paper and an example student response to pinpoint exactly what examiners are looking for.
- An editable PPT presentation to help you deliver the content to your students.
- Differentiated tasks and some additional suggested resources for you to use in the classroom.
- Jonny Kay's suggested lesson plan.



# What does the question look like?

Question 5 is always 40 marks and assesses AO5 and AO6. As a guide it's advised that students spend around 45 minutes on this question: 5 minutes planning and 40 minutes writing their response.

The question provides a discursive writing opportunity.

The topic or theme for the task relates to the reading material in Section A in a way that suggests something like: 'You have had a chance to read about a topic or issue from a modern and 19th century perspective, now tell us what your own perspective or viewpoint is.'

The statement acts to provoke a response and the question provides a clear sense of form, audience and purpose to the writing.

The form will always be some form of opinion-based writing, and will always be a formal context – due to the requirement for students to demonstrate technical accuracy.

## AO5:

Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

## AO6:

Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

## Example - June 2019

### Question 5

0 5

'It is people who have extraordinary skill, courage and determination who deserve to be famous, not those who have good looks or lots of money or behave badly.'

Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper in which you argue your point of view in response to this statement.

(24 marks for content and organisation  
16 marks for technical accuracy)  
**[40 marks]**

## What is the question asking students to do?

The question will open with a provocative or controversial statement stating an opinion and asks students to reply with their own viewpoint. The statement will very likely be linked to the topic or ideas already read about in the texts for Questions 1–4.

Students will be asked to respond, with the method of response, for example a letter, magazine article, speech, or blog, and it's important to think about the features to include when considering these formats.

The question also informs students who they're writing to, and outlines the purpose of their response. Again, it's important to think about the tone of the writing and how this would need to be adapted to support the response.

Question 5 asks students to write a convincing and engaging response which explains their point of view. This question is a great opportunity for students to think about the skills they've analysed in the other questions in the exam. For example, for Question 2, they'll have analysed language features such as similes and metaphors – these are the types of features and skills which they should include in their writing.

The question's divided into two parts in terms of what's required from a response:

- Content and organisation (24 marks). This assesses AO5:
- Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.
- Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts

- 
- Technical accuracy (16 marks). This assesses AO6:
    - Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

The most important word in AO5 is communicate. Students have to produce a piece of writing that communicates to the reader on one of two given options. They're assessed on the overall quality of their writing.



# What skills are being looked for in the mark scheme?

The section of the mark scheme below shows the four skills descriptors for AO5 and then AO6 and what is required at each level of the mark scheme.

## AO5: Content and organisation

Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.

Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

Level		Skills descriptor
<b>Level 4</b>  Compelling, convincing communication  19–24 marks	<b>Upper level 4</b>  22–24 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication is convincing and compelling</li> <li>Tone, style and register are assuredly matched to purpose and audience</li> <li>Extensive and ambitious vocabulary with sustained crafting of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varied and inventive use of structural features</li> <li>Writing is compelling, incorporating a range of convincing and complex ideas</li> <li>Fluently linked paragraphs with seamlessly integrated discourse markers</li> </ul>
	<b>Lower level 4</b>  19–21 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication is convincing</li> <li>Tone, style and register are convincingly matched to purpose and audience</li> <li>Extensive vocabulary with conscious crafting of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varied and effective structural features</li> <li>Writing is highly engaging with a range of developed complex ideas</li> <li>Consistently coherent use of paragraphs with integrated discourse markers</li> </ul>

<b>Level 3</b>  Consistent, clear communication  13–18 marks	<b>Upper level 3</b>  16–18 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is consistently clear</li> <li>• Tone, style and register are clearly and consistently matched to purpose and audience</li> <li>• Increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and phrasing, chosen for effect with a range of successful linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective use of structural features</li> <li>• Writing is engaging, using a range of clear, connected ideas</li> <li>• Coherent paragraphs with integrated discourse markers</li> </ul>
	<b>Lower level 3</b>  13–15 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is generally clear</li> <li>• Tone, style and register are generally matched to purpose and audience</li> <li>• Vocabulary clearly chosen for effect and appropriate use of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually effective use of structural features</li> <li>• Writing is engaging, with a range of connected ideas</li> <li>• Usually coherent paragraphs with range of discourse markers</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>  Some successful communication  7–12 marks	<b>Upper level 2</b>  10–12 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates with some sustained success</li> <li>• Some sustained attempt to match tone, style and register to purpose and audience</li> <li>• Conscious use of vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some use of structural features</li> <li>• Increasing variety of linked and relevant ideas</li> <li>• Some use of paragraphs and some use of discourse markers</li> </ul>
	<b>Lower level 2</b>  7–9 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates with some success</li> <li>• Attempts to match tone, style and register to purpose and audience</li> <li>• Begins to vary vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts to use structural features</li> <li>• Some linked and relevant ideas</li> <li>• Attempt to write in paragraphs with some discourse markers, not always appropriate</li> </ul>

<b>Level 1</b>  Simple, limited communication  1-6 marks	<b>Upper level 1</b>  4-6 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates simply</li> <li>Simple awareness of matching tone, style and register to purpose and audience</li> <li>Simple vocabulary; simple linguistic devices</li> </ul> <b>Organisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of simple structural features</li> <li>One or two relevant ideas, simply linked</li> <li>Random paragraph structure</li> </ul>
	<b>Lower level 1</b>  1-3 marks	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited communication</li> <li>Occasional sense of matching tone, style and register to purpose and audience</li> <li>Simple vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>Level 0</b>  No marks		<b>Nothing to reward</b>  Students will not have offered any meaningful writing to assess.

## AO6: Technical accuracy

Students must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (This requirement must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole.)

Level	Skills descriptor
<b>Level 4</b>  13-16 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentence demarcation is consistently secure and consistently accurate</li> <li>Wide range of punctuation is used with a high level of accuracy</li> <li>Uses a full range of appropriate sentence forms for effect</li> <li>Uses Standard English consistently and appropriately with secure control of complex grammatical structures</li> <li>High level of accuracy in spelling</li> <li>Extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>  9-12 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate</li> <li>Range of punctuation is used, mostly with success</li> <li>Uses a variety of sentence forms for effect</li> <li>Mostly uses Standard English appropriately with mostly controlled grammatical structures</li> <li>Generally accurate spelling, including complex and irregular words</li> <li>Increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary</li> </ul>

<b>Level 2</b> 5-8 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and sometimes accurate</li> <li>• Some control of a range of punctuation</li> <li>• Attempts a variety of sentence forms</li> <li>• Some use of Standard English with some control of agreement</li> <li>• Some accurate spelling of more complex words</li> <li>• Varied use of vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b> 1-4 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional use of sentence demarcation</li> <li>• Some evidence of conscious punctuation</li> <li>• Simple range of sentence forms</li> <li>• Occasional use of Standard English with limited control of agreement</li> <li>• Accurate basic spelling</li> <li>• Simple use of vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>Level 0</b> No marks	<b>Nothing to reward</b> Students' spelling, punctuation etc is sufficiently poor to prevent understanding or meaning.

## Example Level 3 response - June 2019

Response to the question on page 7

*A spritz of hairspray. A click of a camera. A smile as bright as the icy Arctic. Images of glamour (emphasised by injections of plastic and accessorized with material goods) dominate the dreams of young ones. I urge you to think: whilst growing up, did you dream of making a name for yourself, and leaving your footprint of your legacy on this earth, or did you desire to have your tweet viewed by Kim Kardashian?*

*In a world of reality shows and acting for the cameras for paychecks, shouldn't we all aspire to be real talents of this world?*

*In 2017, it was reported that there had been a 27% increase in the number of cosmetic surgeries for people under the age of thirty. Together, we must lift each other up to gain confidence in our abilities. Together, we must not try to tear people's confidence down in order for one having smaller lips than the other. Together, we must learn to lose obsession with material worth such as Rolls-Royce's and Range Rovers. Instead we should try to learn how we can make the Toyota in our garage function so less carbon dioxide is emitted.*

*Einstein. Albert Einstein is a name everyone from all walks of life recognises. Why? Due to the fact he expressed his knowledge with others in a much more valuable way to people than Katie Price shows to her followers her pink Range Rover.*

*From talentless, mumbling rappers to botched brainless celebrities. These "influences" are controlling the everyday lives of others whether we recognise this or not. I'd encourage you to ponder whether you think we should set positive examples of celebrities to teenagers, such as activists who will save our planet down the line for others. Or, we could continue to damage the earth and minds of people to become 'famous' and 'pretty'.*

*Yours faithfully,*



# How do students perform on Paper 2 Question 5?

The best responses are characterised by students engaging with the 'big ideas' (these were the big ideas in relation to the example question used in this pack about being famous; politics, economics, gender, aesthetics, class, morality, psychology, philosophy) and framing their own perspectives in this larger context, enhancing the overall quality of their argument.

These are the same big ideas that support responses to the reading questions, and it's clear that providing students with opportunities to encounter and explore these brings benefits.

As part of their planning and preparation for the writing task, students would be well-advised to write a summary of their argument in a single sentence. If this idea is established in the opening paragraph and confirmed in the concluding paragraph, it's more likely that the student will maintain a greater degree of discipline in the intervening points.

Another strategy adopted by more successful students is to address just one or two of the strands in the statement and to write in more depth about each. Students who are able to offer extended ideas, particularly if they became more complex as they develop, are more likely to achieve marks at the upper end of Level 3 and into Level 4.

There remain some areas where students' responses to the writing task could be improved:

A potential focus for further teaching could be structuring arguments. Students who carefully consider the use of paragraph links and discourse markers are likely to improve the clarity of their writing and improve the overall quality of the argument. This is a key discriminator for examiners and determines the level to be awarded, before then fine-tuning their judgement by assessing individual skills.

A large number of students are still writing too much. This can be detrimental because it

becomes far harder to sustain both the clarity of their argument and technical accuracy.

## **In summary:**

In this question, students will be asked to evidence their ideas and back up their statements. This can take many forms, but is usually seen through using facts, figures, statistics and then a range of persuasive techniques.

## **Tip:**

This question is a great opportunity for students to think about the skills they've analysed in the other questions in the exam. For example, for Question 2, they'll have analysed language features such as similes and metaphors – these are the types of features and skills which they should include in their Question 5 response.

# Support for teaching the AO5 and AO6 skills

## Ideas for teaching

- Give students the courage and confidence to adopt a 'quality rather than quantity' approach to plan and craft a structured response, leaving time at the end to revise and improve.
- Communicate effectively by structuring an argument and link and develop ideas together by sequencing paragraphs.
- Engage and convince the reader by sustaining an appropriate tone, style and register to match purpose throughout the writing.
- As part of planning, write a single sentence to summarise the argument.
- Extend students' use of varied punctuation, sentences and paragraphs. Spelling of key words, correct homophones and accurate punctuation of sentences, including speech and apostrophes, are core skills.



Use the suggested lesson plan, classroom resources and teaching presentation in this pack

Example student responses across the grades can be found on [Centre Services](#), and we've included one in this guidance



There's a range of material for each question on every paper in the [Exampro Highlights](#) package

[Spring 2018 GCSE hub network meeting materials](#)

Focuses on writing (slides 13, 15, Activities booklet pages 8, 10–11)

[Summer 2018 GCSE hub network meeting materials](#)

(Activities booklet page 33 activity 8)



[2020 Stretching grade 3 to 4](#)

Activities including box and pyramid planning for creative writing

[Focus on  
success packs](#)



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# Notes

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# Contact us

Our team of subject experts are here to help and support you as you deliver our specifications.

We're here to provide advice and respond to queries you might have to make sure you feel confident about guiding your students to fulfil their potential.

We understand the trust you put in us to provide great assessments for your students and we are committed to delivering on this.

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