

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL
GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE
(9275)
Exemplar responses

For teaching from September 2016 onwards
For GCSE exams in June 2018 onwards

This guide includes some exemplar material which provides responses to some of the specimen questions. It is intended to provide some examples of the kind of responses that might be submitted with some exemplification of the mark scheme connected to that response. It is not possible at present to provide exemplar responses for every question in the specimen papers, but it provides a snapshot of the kind of material we can make available to schools. Each series, the intention is to provide further exemplary responses as they become available.

The guide also includes an exemplification of a piece of coursework for the Non Examination Assessment Route. This shows the style and format of what might be presented as well as a outlining a standard with a suggested commentary and mark for the work. Further exemplary material will be provided by Autumn 2016, alongside a set of standardising material for teachers to use in schools.

Assessment Objectives (AOs)

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

AO2: Analysis of how writers create meanings and effects

AO3: Express informed, personal responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology, and coherent, accurate writing

Paper 1 Prose and drama: Exemplar student response and commentary

Each question on Paper 1 assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3

- There are 12 marks available for AO1
- There are 12 marks available for AO2
- There are 6 marks available for AO3

Sample question: Paper 1 Section A: Prose

Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens use the relationship between Pip and Estella to explore ideas about love in *Great Expectations*?

[30 marks]

Exemplar student response

I think that Dickens presents Pip's feelings as sensitive, self-conscious and very easily put down. When Estella picks on him he quickly changes his attitude towards himself. 'They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now'. This jumps right in to make it clear that he has changed his opinion of himself. The fact that Estella picks on him so much, he has started to believe the demeaning words that she says of him. He uses the word 'troubled' twice to deliberately tell us that all his life, compared to Estella, he has been troubled. He didn't think much of it before, but now being around people with such luxuries he has had second thoughts.

Secondly Dickens shows us how he builds up all of his emotion and doesn't let it out. 'I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry...'. All of these words are descriptions of his feelings, however they are all negative and presented in a list by Dickens to demonstrate how much they are overwhelming him at that moment. He let Estella, a girl, offend him to the point that he was 'sorry'. Due to the fact he was less fortunate than most, he blames himself. Even though it isn't his fault the words get to him and he overthinks. All of these emotions could be the feelings he feels everyday. He has just decided to show them now as Estella spotted his weakness.

I believe that Dickens presents their relationship as unequal because no matter how many times Estella picks on him and puts him down, he will carry on loving her. Earlier in the novel, Pip automatically falls in love with because of her beauty. However he had a different perspective to her personality as it was very

brutal. She showed this by picking on him. She made him feel really low about himself; unusually he carried on loving her. She said things like 'you boy' to patronise him and make him feel lower than he actually was. On the other hand, Estella had no feelings towards Pip as her mother, Miss Havisham, gave her the compulsory job to make him fall in love with her. She knew that her beauty would cause him to love her, being evil would create her to be mysterious. It would give Pip the thought that 'how could such a beautiful face be so evil underneath?'

As the story moved on and they grew up Estella grew more tolerant of Pip and Pip consistently loved her. The bullying stopped and she showed more of a light side even though she was married. The marriage had no interference with Pip's feelings. Luckily she got a divorce and her old feelings of nothing changed for nothing but love for Pip. This was cleverly thought out by Dickens as earlier on he showed that feelings were unequal, however as the novel gradually progresses the feelings become equal. The novel as a whole shows Estella hating Pip but at the end Pip, who has gained a lot of fortune, walks hand in hand with Estella showing that their relationship has balanced due to either Pip's wealth or due to Estella's maturity as a woman. Dickens has made this relationship this way to show that 'Great Expectations' can be achieved in any aspect.

Examiner commentary

This candidate demonstrates a clear explained response to the task although not so much to the whole text. The candidate shows understanding of the extract and uses evidence to support their ideas very effectively. There are clear links between context, text and task, in particular through the sustained commentary on the passage. There is some clear understanding of Dickens' use of language with references used to justify explanation, particularly in the second paragraph. Overall this candidate would achieve a mark in the Level 4 area.

Sample question: Paper 1 Section B

William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

Starting with this speech, explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman.

[30 marks]

Exemplar student response

Lady Macbeth describes Duncan's entrance as 'fatal' straight after hearing he will be coming to her castle, which shows power because she is capable of making instant decisions. Lady Macbeth's language in this extract suggests that she is calling for power from evil spirits to help give her strength to carry out the murder of Duncan. She wants to get rid of her feminine side: 'unsex me here' – which suggests that she sees being a woman as weak, also shown with 'come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall'. It is as if she thinks that she will only be able to carry out the act if her female side is replaced with 'gall' (poison). On the one hand Shakespeare might be showing her to be a powerful woman, capable of selling her soul to the 'dunniest smoke of hell' in order to get what she wants. However it could also suggest that she isn't powerful at all and knows that her female weakness has to be destroyed in order to give her the strength to do what needs to be done.

The fact that Lady Macbeth is destroyed by guilt and remorse shows that this second interpretation of this speech is closer to the truth. Straight after the murder she is nervous and jumpy: 'hark / peace', and has to drink the wine meant for the guards to keep herself strong. She gets angry with Macbeth when he is too shocked and frightened to act, and takes the daggers back to Duncan's room herself. However, she also says that she couldn't murder Duncan herself because he reminded her of her father, which might suggest that she isn't as cruel and heartless as she thinks she needs to be.

By Act 3 she has already been pushed aside by her husband, who tells her to be 'innocent of the knowledge' of Banquo's murder rather than his 'partner in greatness'. Her power in her relationship has started to disappear. She is finally tormented so much by the murder of Duncan that she goes mad and kills herself. Perhaps Shakespeare is suggesting that Lady Macbeth is powerful in some ways but not others; she is determined and strong when she needs to be, but also feels that she has to completely get rid of her femaleness in order to be able to be strong in a man's world.

Examiner commentary

The opening sentence shows clear understanding of where this passage fits into the play. There is close focus on particular words / phrases with explanation of possible meanings. Ideas about power are being considered and the candidate is developing a response to the question as they go, thinking about different interpretations of what Lady Macbeth says and how it fits into an interpretation of her in the play as a whole. There are some appropriate uses of direct reference from other parts of the play, used to support the candidate's response to the play as a whole.

Overall this response shows clear understanding of the demands of the task and develops a thoughtful, considered response to ideas. The candidate deals well with both the extract and their knowledge of the whole play in order to demonstrate their response to ideas about Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman, and would achieve a mark in the Level 5 region.

Paper 2 Poetry and unseen texts: Exemplar student response and commentary

Each question on Paper 2 assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3

- There are 12 marks available for AO1
- There are 12 marks available for AO2
- There are 6 marks available for AO3

Sample question: Paper 2a/2b Section A

People and Places

Explore how poets present ideas about human beings and their relationship with their surroundings in 'The World is Too Much With Us' and in one other poem from *People and Places*.

[30 marks]

Exemplar student response

Wordsworth uses the title of his poem to suggest that ordinary life is not good enough and that there should be more to life. He says 'the world is too much with us', which seems to mean 'world' as being daily life, working to get money. He says 'too much' as if humans concentrate on this too much and it takes over other things that are more important. Wordsworth was a Romantic poet and is using Romantic ideas in the way that he describes the relationship between people and the natural world and the power of higher forces that we are ignoring.

Wordsworth uses phrase structures to reinforce his idea that the way we live is not good enough and we are concentrating on the wrong things. He says we are 'late and soon, getting and spending', as if we spend all our time (late and soon) meaning morning and night, as if that is all we spend our time on. Wordsworth presents this in very unpoetic language to show how ordinary and dull it is, and

then contrasts it with the language he uses to describe the natural world to show how much bigger and more powerful it is, using language like 'howling' to demonstrate the power of nature and how humans just ignore it. Wordsworth addresses his sonnet to 'us', the reader, as if he wants to address the reader directly in order to make us see the mistakes we are making.

In 'Storm on the Island' by Heaney, this is also directly addressed to the reader and he also uses the inclusive pronoun 'we'. In this poem, he creates a powerful sense of living very close to powerful, dangerous nature. He contrasts nervous, isolated people with a powerful and destructive storm to suggest that life on the island is a grim battle for survival. The speaker of the poem is present on the island as the storm breaks so it has a feeling of being very personal and immediate.

The opening of the poem possibly suggests the speaker's lack of confidence. At first sight, the word 'squat' seems to suggest that the houses are built low and sturdy to help withstand the wind and fits in with the idea that they 'are prepared'. However, it could also imply that the speaker is aware that humans do not belong on the island and that they are squatters waiting to be evicted by the island's rightful owner - nature. This links in with the fact that nature provides no 'company' in the form of trees or support - 'the wizened earth has never troubled us with hay'. This poem seems to be ironic in the way it suggests that people think that they have the ability to control nature when in fact it is the opposite. Although both poems are about the relationship with the natural world, Wordsworth's poem is more of a reflection whereas 'Storm on the Island' seems to be much more of a warning about how people can be arrogant and choose to ignore the power of the natural world. Although Heaney's poem is written over a century after Wordsworth's poem, both have the same idea about the power of nature which was a strong theme in Romantic poetry.

Examiner commentary

This candidate makes a good selection of poem to use in conjunction with the named poem. Although comparison is not assessed, the candidate has chosen to provide some clear links between the poems which is useful for them as it enables them to structure their response as a whole in a more holistic way. The response shows elements of Level 4 and Level 5; there is a clear, sustained and consistent response which begins to demonstrate thoughtful appreciation of ideas and some detailed examination of particular elements.

Overall, this response would achieve a mark in Level 5 as a result.

Sample question: Paper 2 Section B

Unseen Poetry

In 'How to Leave the World that Worships *Should*,' how does the poet present ideas about the way we live and work in the modern world?

[30 marks]

Exemplar Level 4 student response

In this poem the poet's attitudes towards how we live in the modern world is quite negative and sarcastic. She starts by saying 'let faxes curl on dusty shelves' this suggests that fax was once a popular way of communication but was soon thrown aside and forgotten about when something new was introduced.

In the third line she uses sarcasm; 'like glorious fireworks' this suggests that people don't meet deadlines anymore, and people aren't as strict if their deadlines are not met. She makes us think that deadlines are there for the sake of it, to make it look better without actually having a true purpose, just like fireworks. Fireworks are dramatic but don't last and are not real, just like what she suggests 'deadlines' are. It's as if we are giving our 'deadlines' much more importance than they deserve and just like fireworks we don't need them.

Overall the poet has a negative attitude to the way we live and work in the modern world and she uses lots of similes and metaphors to make her point. I liked this poem and think that she is right to feel how she does.

Examiner commentary

This response demonstrates the beginnings of understanding with some explanation of overall ideas, although these are not particularly developed. The second paragraph shows some explanation of writer's methods, with a quite detailed focus on the effect of one simile, linked to the point of the poem and the overall ideas. Although not sustained and consistent, there is evidence of clear understanding and therefore this candidate has provided enough evidence for a mark at the lower end of Level 4.

Exemplar Level 5 student response

The poet's overall attitude towards our life and work ethic is that we should stop worrying about it and just relax and enjoy life. Barber emphasises this through a series of personifications and similes.

The first object to be personified is a fax sheet: 'let faxes butter-curl on dusty shelves'. This implies that you should ignore faxes and leave them in a high place to be forgotten, the adjective of 'dusty' suggests a long period of time. There is also assonance of the 'u' sound which gives a pleasant sound to the reading of the line.

'Let junkmail build its castles in the hush' creates an image of a castle made out of junkmail which gives the poem a sense of innocence and childhood' this makes the poem more enjoyable. The onomatopoeia of 'hush' creates an almost calming and gentle sound, reinforcing the message of the poem – relax and keep calm.

'Flash like glorious fireworks somewhere else' this indicates that instead of getting stressed out by your workload and becoming at the point of insanity, let it be someone else's problem. The alliteration of 'f' creates sounds which could reflect that of fireworks when they are set off.

The use of the word 'softly' in 'as hours go softly by' creates a gentle and soothing sound reinforcing the point of the poem. On the other hand, the harsh 'c' sound in 'curse the roads' creates a harsh sound which reflects the anger of those driving. 'Where distant drivers queue like sheep' creates an image of a traffic jam of cars with drivers who are all the same and have the same problem, ie the expression 'follow like sheep'. The alliteration of 'd' reminds the reader that they don't have to ever be in this situation if they have a better attitude to work and just relax. 'You've made your mark like birdtracks in the sand' this simile suggests that all the work you do now will soon be forgotten so don't stress yourself out and 'breathe'.

The last four lines contain the idea that life is short, so work is pointless. The 'mark' that 'you've made' is 'like birdtracks in the sand'. Birdtracks are slight and spidery, and difficult to make out, and are quickly washed out by the waves. 'Sand' suggests the beach which appears in the last line. The destructive element of fire appears only in the first stanza. In the second there is air, then earth in the form of the sand, and finally water. Watching the waves break might suggest simple enjoyment of nature, but perhaps 'each wave' is each person, or each reader: one among very many, and as soon as it's arrived it vanishes, like the 'birdtracks'. 'Breathe' sounds like a command to live, and enjoy life, but maybe it's desperate breathing, because you won't be doing it for long. This would make the world of work even more pointless – it's a waste of the little time you've got.

Examiner commentary

This response is extremely detailed and the candidate has shown very clear understanding of the ideas in the poem. The response builds as it goes; initially the candidate tends towards making comments about a wide range of AO2 elements without particularly developing them, but then in the last paragraph there is a much stronger sense of overview of ideas and thoughtful development. This final paragraph lifts the response into Level 5 with some elements of Level 6 for exploration of ideas and judicious use of details.

NEA Exemplar student response and commentary (Route B only)

Students are required to study a substantial whole prose fiction text. This text must not come from any of the prescribed set texts for this qualification. The text selected must be similar in quality, scope and challenge to those from the prescribed list of set texts on Paper 1 and can be from any literary period, including seminal world literature.

Teachers may use this option to promote students' independent study, or they may use the option to create threads of meaning and coherence that link to the texts studied for the examined components.

Exemplar task

'In spite of their appalling actions it is still possible to sympathise with Christopher's parents.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? How does Haddon shape your response by the methods he uses?

Exemplar student response to task

The novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, is one which thoroughly explores the theme of parenting, where the author, Haddon, displays to the narrator examples of bad parenting. Haddon creates his two parent characters and uses them as vehicles for which to explore several different parenting themes.

Throughout the first part of the novel, Chris' mother is not present due to her supposed 'death'. Halfway through the text we learn through the epistolary device of the letter that she is actually alive, however she actually abandoned her disabled son in order to live with the person she had been cheating with. Although this behaviour is clearly inexcusable, Haddon uses the letters as a narrative device which the character of Mrs Boone uses as a confessional to explain the reasons behind her actions. Haddon explains that Mrs Boone, "Realised you and your father were probably better off if I wasn't living in the house. Then he would only have one person to look after instead of two". As the characterisation of Mrs Boone gives her reasons for leaving, and admits, "I was not a very good mother Chris", the reader begins to feel sympathy for her and begins to forgive her for leaving the central character Chris.

On the other hand, the reader recognises how Mrs Boone struggled as a parent, as Haddon compares her to Mr Boone, when he informs the

reader through the letters, "I'm not like your father. Your father is a much more patient person". In this reference, the reader may question Mrs Boone's reasons for leaving, as if Mr Boone managed to cope and stay with Chris, then Mrs Boone should do also.

However, Haddon also uses Mr Boone to explore various themes of parenting and mistakes. Haddon forces the reader to feel anger towards Mr Boone, particularly when he hits Chris. The narrative voice of Chris describes, "I said that he had grabbed me hard". Many readers will believe that a parent should not harm their children, particularly one with such unconventional behaviour as Chris, however, other readers such as parents will recognise the stress and difficulties that Mr Boone is facing so will feel some sympathy towards him also. We recognise the love and protection that Mr Boone provides for Chris, for example when his character says, "Christopher, you have to stay out of trouble, ok?" Therefore, Haddon forces us to understand that Mr Boone loves Chris and does his best to protect him.

The main turning point in the novel is when the initial main plot of the murder is solved and the subplot of Mrs Boone's whereabouts becomes the main plot instead. Haddon forces the reader to feel anger and injustice towards Mr Boone for both the murder and the theme of deceit which Haddon employs. These are evidently appalling actions and force Chris to leave home. Haddon narrates through Chris, "Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me." We come to realise the fear that Christopher feels as a result of his father's actions. However, the novel is written by Haddon in the first person and this along with Chris' unconventional way of viewing the world, leads to a very unreliable first person narrator.

Therefore the reader's feelings towards his parents may be biased and inaccurate as they are through Chris' view. Also, some readers may agree with the character of Mr Boone's viewpoint that "I did it for your good Christopher". Some readers may sympathise with Mr Boone, as he was left in a very uncompromising position when being left by Mrs Boone, and was left to protect Chris on his own. Some readers who have been in similar positions will engage with Mr Boone's viewpoint.

Throughout the novel, Chris shows frequently sides to his behaviour and personality that are unorthodox and very difficult to cope with. For example, Haddon informs us of some of Chris' behaviour through

Chris' narration, "There were too many people in John Lewis...I lay down on the floor next to the wristwatches and screamed." The reader identifies this as difficult behaviour to cope with, and Haddon therefore allows us to sympathise with both parents who have a tough job dealing with Chris' character's behaviour.

It is undeniable that the characters of Mr and Mrs Boone display almost unforgivable behaviour such as adultery, abandonment, violence and deceit, and for the majority of the novel our sympathies lie with Chris as a result. However, once the reader begins to see the entire picture that Haddon creates rather than Chris' flawed narration, we recognise their difficult task and sympathise with them instead.

Examiner commentary

This response largely addresses all of the Level 5 criteria and lifts into Level 6 by the end. It takes a considered, thoughtful approach to the full task, dealing equally with their view of Christopher's parents and the ways in which Haddon has presented them as characters to the reader. References are integrated into their interpretation, and the examination of form is very thoughtful in terms of the epistolary style employed to present Mrs Boone's point of view. The candidate takes a balanced view, but there is a sense of clear development of thought. This creates, by the end of the essay, a sense that the candidate is beginning to explore their ideas in order to reach their conclusion, and lifts the mark into the bottom of Level 6.

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E: english@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk