

OXFORD

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INTERNATIONAL GCSE

ENGLISH LITERATURE

(9275)

Non-exam assessment (NEA)

Teaching guidance and exemplar student responses
with commentary

For teaching from September 2016 onwards

For International GCSE exams in May/June 2018 onwards

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE (9275) NON-EXAM ASSESSMENT (NEA) TEACHING GUIDANCE AND EXEMPLAR STUDENT RESPONSES WITH COMMENTARY

This guide provides further guidance on the non-exam assessment (NEA) option and includes three student exemplar responses. It is intended that these materials be used as a guide for teachers to provide some examples of the kind of responses that might be submitted with some exemplification of the mark scheme and marker commentary. Each series standardising material will be provided for teachers to use in schools.

This resource contains real student responses for the purposes of exemplifying an appropriate standard for the NEA component. Any opinions expressed therein are those of the particular student who wrote the response and, as such, do not represent the views of Oxford International AQA Examinations.

INTRODUCTION

The non-exam assessment (NEA) option is an alternative to Paper 2a Poetry and unseen texts examined option is teacher-assessed and subject to external moderation. This route gives students and teachers the freedom to explore alternative texts to those listed for the examined units of the course and allows greater opportunity for exploration of literature without limitations. Students will study a substantial whole prose fiction text of their choice, though texts must not come from any of the prescribed set texts for this qualification. Texts can be selected from any literary period and can include seminal world literature though must provide enough scope and challenge to enable students to access the full range of marks. Teachers are encouraged to design questions which provide students with greater opportunities for research and independent thought. By opting for the NEA route, some students will benefit from the freedom and greater independence it provides.

TASK SETTING AND ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The NEA route takes on a skills-based approach to the study of literature and is assessed through the same AOs as both Paper 1 and Paper 2. Task setting should be a considered process to ensure students have the opportunity to be critical and demonstrate explorative skills whilst also guiding students towards the required Assessment Objectives of the marking criteria.

There are three Assessment Objectives for the Oxford AQA International GCSE in English Literature:

AO1: Understanding of, and engagement with, themes, ideas and contexts.

AO2: Analysis of how writers create meanings and effects.

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

The NEA option allows a different approach to the study of literature. Whilst some students benefit from the more open-ended possibilities of deeper research and exploration, task setting is crucial to guide students to produce a response which will demonstrate the typical features of each Assessment Objective.

Likewise, text choice should be selected with consideration. The text selected must be similar in quality, scope and challenge to those from the prescribed list of set texts on Paper 1 whilst also being suitable for the ability of the individual student. More able students should study a text with a level of challenge in order to allow them to access the full range of marks.

SAMPLE TASKS

The following sample NEA tasks have each been designed to encourage students to cover the Assessment Objectives in their response without narrowing scope or being too prescriptive. Questions should guide students' responses whilst still being open enough to allow for creativity and flair.

AO2 – Encourages students to write about how the writer creates meaning and effect.
AO3 – Encourages students to express an informed, personal response.

AO1 – Encourages engagement with themes and ideas.

How does Steinbeck present the ideas of 'the survival of the fittest' in 1930s America in his novella, *Of Mice and Men*?

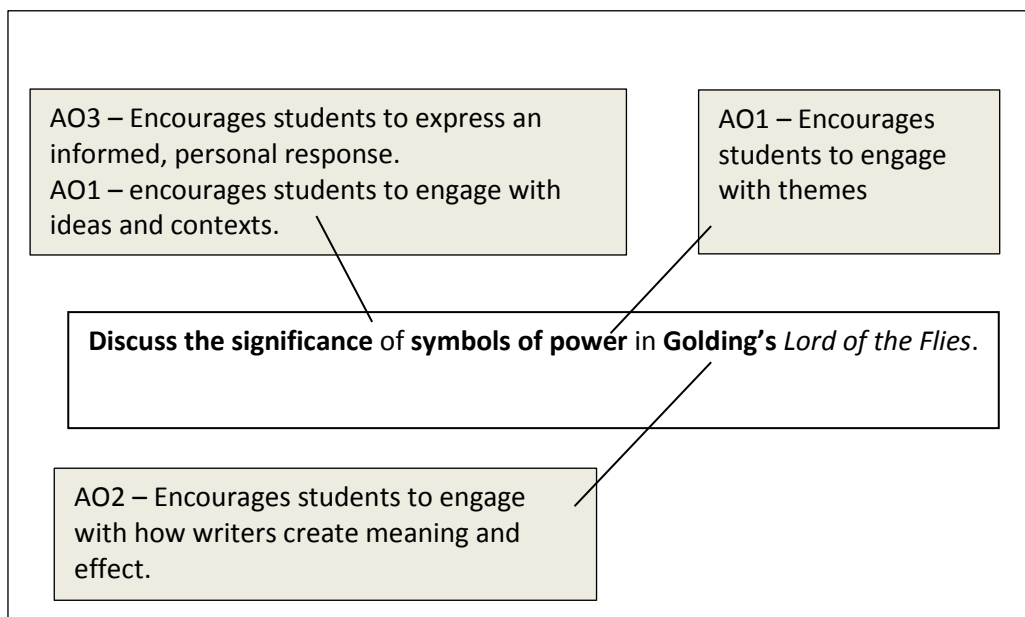
AO1 – Encourages students to engage with the context.

AO2 – Encourages students to write about how the writer creates meaning and effect.
AO3 – Encourages students to express an informed, personal response.

AO1 – Encourages engagement with themes and ideas.

How far does Bronte use ideas of the feminine to present Jane as a stereotypical helpless victim in *Jane Eyre*?

AO1 – Encourages students to engage with the context.



A NOTE ON DRAFTING

In addition to offering students the opportunity to choose and write about a text of their choice, non-exam assessment also provides the opportunity to reflect on their response and provide a more polished and considered outcome than might be possible in the exam situation. Providing a first draft of a response for teacher comment and general guidance before final submission is therefore appropriate, but teachers should avoid multiple drafting of non-exam submissions. The work submitted must be the student's own work, and it is worth remembering that in Route B, which allows for non-exam assessment, it only accounts for 20% of the marks overall, suggesting that proportionately 80% of the course time should be spent on the examination components.

NEA EXEMPLAR RESPONSES WITH COMMENTARY

STUDENT A

Task

How does Steinbeck present the ideas of ‘the survival of the fittest’ in 1930s America in his novella, *Of Mice and Men*?

AO1 Level 2: Some awareness of contextual factors.

In the novella ‘Of Mice and Men’ some characters are stronger than others. **There wasn’t a lot of work available in America in the 1930s so to get a job you needed to be fit and healthy.**

AO3 Level 2: Supported response – relevant and supported by some explanation.

George is a strong character because he is **‘small and quick’ suggesting that he is intelligent which you would need to be to find work and survive.** On the other hand, Lennie is a weak character. George is cross with Lennie because he isn’t clever and forgets things:

‘Might jus’ as well spen’ all my time tellin’ you things and then you forget ‘em, and I tell you again.’

AO3 Level 2: Supported response – relevant and supported by some explanation.

Lennie has also forgotten about the trouble he caused at their last job which **makes the reader think that he hasn’t learnt from it and could make the same mistake again.** This could make it difficult for him to survive.

AO1 Level 2: Some awareness of explicit themes and ideas supported by some explanation.

Another weak character is Curley’s wife. She is unhappy in her marriage to Curley but married him because he could give her a home. She tells Lennie that she ‘met a guy an’ he was in pitchers... He says he was gonna put me in the movies... he was gonna write to me about it... I never got that letter... so I married Curley.’ It is difficult for Curley’s wife to live on the ranch as she is the only woman. **She is lonely but is trapped because she relies on Curley to survive.**

Candy and Crooks have physical disabilities which make it difficult for them to survive. Both have had accidents. Candy lost his hand whilst working on the ranch and is also old. He is in fear of losing his job:

AO3 Level 2: Supported response to task and text.

‘When they can me here I wisht somebody’d shoot me... I won’t have no place to go, an’ I can’t get no more jobs.’

AO1 Level 2: More evidence of some awareness of contextual factors.

Crooks has a crooked back and is also black. **In those days, people were racist which made it harder for someone like Crooks.** Steinbeck includes a scene where all the weak characters meet in Crooks’ room. **Putting all the characters together makes the reader compare their weaknesses. I think that Crooks seems the weakest and Curley’s wife the strongest because she is cruel to Crooks but it is Lennie who doesn’t survive.**

AO2 Level 2: Identification and comments on effect of writer’s methods.

AO1 Level 2: Awareness of implicit ideas.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This essay fulfils all of Level 2 criteria. In order to move up to Level 3 comments would need to be more explained. It would be awarded a mark at the top of Level 2.

STUDENT B

Task

How far does Bronte use ideas of the feminine to present Jane as a stereotypical helpless victim in *Jane Eyre*?

Throughout the novel, 'Jane Eyre', the reader follows Jane on a journey from helpless victim of an orphan to a free and content woman.

At the start of the book, Jane is treated badly by the Reed family. They are wealthy and are cruel to her. She is isolated as the children of the family will not play with her.

The reader feels the injustice of Jane's situation as we learn that her mother was entitled to a share of the family fortune and Jane is of the same class as the Reed children.

AO1 Level 2:
Awareness of implicit ideas.

Although Jane is a victim of injustice and cruelty, the reader sees that she is not a stereotypical helpless feminine victim. She does fight back when John attacks her:

AO2 Level 4: Shows understanding of the effects on the reader.

'These sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort. I don't very well know what I did with my hands.'

AO1 Level 4: Effective use of references to support explanations.

Bronte shows that although Jane acts dutifully she has strength and passion when she needs it which gives the reader hope for Jane's future. Although the poor treatment continues, Jane knows that she is going to leave for Lowood. She shows strength again when she speaks to her aunt before leaving, saying 'I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live.'

AO3 Level 4: Clear, explained response to task.

Life improves for Jane when she finds some independence and goes to school. Here she becomes friends with Helen. Helen is described as 'obedient'. Jane finds this strange as Helen doesn't defend herself against injustice. She is typical of the ideal of the feminine. Jane says 'I could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance; and still less could I understand or sympathise with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser.' But Jane learns from Helen and says 'I suspected she might be right and I wrong.' At school, Jane shows strength of endurance again and eventually life gets better. She is clever and enjoys her education. Bronte published the novel under a male pseudonym. She felt that women should have the freedom to improve themselves and to be respected for their talents. However, whilst Bronte was writing, women were not expected to behave in this way. They were domesticated wives.

AO1 Level 4: Clear understanding of themes, ideas and contextual factors.

AO1 Level 4: Clear understanding of themes, ideas and contextual factors shown by specific links between the context, the text and the task.

Jane's move to Thornfield brings new challenges. Bronte suggests a relationship between Jane and her employer, Mr. Rochester. The relationship is a difficult one as he is her master. She is a victim of his moods and power. He has influence over her which makes her defensive:

'You are cold, because you are alone... You are sick; because the best of feelings, the highest and the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly, because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach, nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you.'

Even when Mr. Rochester asks Jane to marry him, she recognises that her position is below his and she will still play the role of the feminine. She rejects him saying 'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.'

AO2 Level 4: Clear explanation of the writer's methods.

Jane is torn between the love she feels for Rochester and the desire to marry and be with him with the desire to be a free and independent woman. When she learns of Bertha, Rochester's 'mad' wife in the attic, she decides that she cannot be his mistress.

AO1 Level 4: Clear links between the context, text and task.

Bronte thought that it was difficult to be a governess as you were neither servant nor member of the family. To become Rochester's mistress would not resolve the feelings she has about equality as a woman. Jane is isolated by her position and situation. It isn't until she inherits her fortune that she is able to become truly independent:

'Here was a new card turned up! It is a fine thing, reader, to be lifted in a moment from indigence to wealth — a very fine thing.'

At the end of the novel, Jane finally returns to Thornfield where she finds it in ruins and Rochester, blind. In this situation, Rochester is now the victim and Jane is her 'own mistress'. Jane is now in a position where she doesn't need to rely on anyone else. She is well educated and free but she still chooses to stay with Rochester:

'I will be your neighbour, your nurse, your housekeeper. I find you lonely: I will be your companion — to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you. Cease to look so melancholy, my dear master; you shall not be left desolate, so long as I live'

AO3 Level : Clear, explained response to task and whole text.

This quote is interesting because she calls him 'master' but they both know that he needs her. Their relationship is now more equal. The reader may question Jane's independence as she finally finds true happiness but only through marriage. However, the marriage is an equal and loving one. This is something Jane has only been able to achieve due to the journey she has been on.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This response is a secure Level 4 as there is clear understanding throughout. AO1 and AO3 are stronger than AO2 as the explanations are more sustained. For AO2, the student is only starting to demonstrate elements of understanding. Because of this, the mark would be within Level 4 but not at the top.

STUDENT C

Task

Discuss the significance of symbols of power in Golding's 'Lord of the Flies'.

AO1 Level 5: Thoughtful consideration of perspectives and contextual factors shown by detailed links between context and

Influenced by his experiences during his involvement in the second world war, Golding wrote the novel 'The Lord of the Flies' as an exploration of the effects of power on human nature. After witnessing the brutality of war, Golding explores through his novel how we deal with stressful situations in which man can find himself. He uses symbols and allegory for the reader to form their own interpretations on the themes of good and evil.

AO1 Level 5: Apt references integrated into interpretations.

One such symbol of power is the conch. On the realisation that there aren't any adults, it becomes apparent to Ralph that they 'ought to have a meeting'. The conch is introduced as a symbol of power. Possessing it elevates Ralph from the others. Along with his very British qualities of organisation, the conch is described as 'obscurely, yet most powerfully... set[ting] him apart'. The boys accept that their survival is dependent upon their ability to form a social hierarchy. Using the conch to gather the boys shows that it is a symbol of order and therefore civilisation. Although their voting was described as a 'toy', the reader is aware of the reality of the situation the boys are facing and may well admire the way in which they quickly find their place in this new society. The leaders give their orders and the others, notably the choir and little'uns, follow them without question, perhaps another comment from Golding on war. Just as the leaders are selected with little hesitation and deftly adopt their roles of power, the weak ones in the group are also identified:

AO1 Level 5: Thoughtful consideration of contextual factors shown by examination of detailed links

'Piggy hung bumbling behind them. 'If Simon walks in the middle of us,' said Ralph, 'then we could talk over his head.'

AO2 Level 6: Analysis of writer's methods. AO3 Level 6: Critical, exploratory, conceptualised response to task and whole text.

As the reader learns more about the character of each of these boys, we realise that Golding is hinting at the problems in their society. Ralph brings leadership, Piggy provides intelligence, Simon appears to represent true human goodness whereas Jack shows his desire for dominance and power. Together, they could create a good balance but when intelligence is shut out and goodness is overlooked, through this event, Golding foreshadows the trouble to come as the power-hungry cause the society to crumble culminating in the deaths of the weaker boys.

AO1 Level 6: Convincing exploration of themes and ideas.

The power of the conch is tested as Piggy attempts to use it to reform society as the boys and the fire become out of control. He repeats 'I got the conch...'

AO1 Level 6: Convincing exploration of themes and ideas.

I got a right to speak' but his words are met with laughter. He continues 'How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things first and act proper?' As the chaos continues, Piggy recognises defeat and 'tucked the shell under his arm, and crouched back on a rock.' Recognising the conch as the only hope left to regain order, Piggy attempts to protect it. Only when the conch is broken is the dystopia complete and the hope of regaining order finally lost:

'The conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist.'

AO2 Level 6:
Exploration of effects
of the writer's methods
on the reader.

It is symbolic that Piggy is also destroyed along with the conch. It is clear that Golding was disillusioned by mankind after what he witnessed during the war. He stated that he "began to see what people were capable of doing. Anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head." **The speed at which the boys descend to anarchy and evil is shocking. During the rescue, the officer asks Ralph 'What have you been doing? Having a war or something?' A direct comment on how war exposes defects in society.**

Another symbol of power in the novel is the Lord of the Flies itself. 'Lord of the Flies' is a reference to the name of the biblical devil, Beelzebub. The pig's head on the stake found in the depths of the forest is a constant reminder of the evil lodged within man. The capability for evil is ever present. It is only Simon who recognises and fears this.

AO2 Level 6:
Convincing, critical
analysis and
exploration analysis of
the writer's methods.

The first mention of there being a beast is after the first night. 'The snake thing' which scared the younger boys alludes to the snake which tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and opened their eyes to good and evil. The idea of the beastie is too tempting for Jack and his hunters. It becomes sport to hunt it down and results in the killing of the pig and a clear divide in society:

'There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense.'

AO2 Level 6:
Convincing, critical
analysis and
exploration analysis of
the writer's methods.

The pig represents evil. The negative connotations associated with the pig along with the connotations of the devil through its name and hoof combine with the lust shown by the boys as they eat its meat. By eating the meat, Golding suggests that their Eden has fallen. Only Simon appears to represent a Christ-like figure. He is spiritual and good – free from evil. He is less influenced by the fear the beast generates amongst the others and instead climbs the mountain in the search of truth rather than following the instruction to 'forget about the beast.' The Lord of the Flies engages in a power struggle with Simon and encourages him to join with the others and attempts to frighten him:

'There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast.'

Yet Simon remains resolute in his knowledge that it is just a 'pig's head on a stick' and can pose him no real danger. He was right, it was the power of the beast living within the boys that he should really fear – the very boys who became the beast and 'screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws' until 'Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea.' Like a sacrifice drawing parallels between Simon and Christ on the cross. **This brings a final end to innocence matched with the symbolic pathetic fallacy of the 'dark sky... shattered by a blue-white scar' and the 'sulphurous explosions' reminiscent of the dropping of war bombs. The calm which follows the storm reminds us of the destructive power of evil in the light of day and the shame it brings.**

AO3 Level 6: Critical,
exploratory,
conceptualised
response to task and
whole text.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This response moves from a Level 5 to a Level 6 as the analysis becomes increasingly critical and convincing. By the end of the essay, the student demonstrates insightful analysis through convincing exploration of ideas and contextual factors.

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