

OxfordAQA

International A-level English Literature NEA guidance

Literary Representations Non-exam assessment (9675) LT04/B

For teaching from September 2017 onwards
For International A-level exams in May/June 2019 onwards

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Literary representations

This document provides guidance on the non-exam assessment (NEA) requirements for OxfordAQA International A-level English Literature and should be read in conjunction with the NEA requirements set out in the [specification](#).

'Literary Representations' is the title of the Unit 4 component of OxfordAQA International A-level English Literature. The NEA submission is one of two options in this component, the other being an examination paper using unseen texts. Representation is used here to refer to the process whereby a particular view of the world is presented, thus opening up texts to different interpretations.

Students are encouraged to explore the ways in which meanings are shaped by writers' methods. A central idea here is that meanings in literature are not fixed, but are shaped and influenced by many factors, including the ideas and experiences that the reader brings to the text.

In order to provide a framework for this unit, four broad areas are identified:

- Representations of childhood
- Representations of war
- Representations of women/men
- Representations of race/class/culture

These are not topic areas prescribed for detailed study; they are areas which teachers and students can explore through the analysis of their own selected texts, to practise the skills of literary analysis and interpretation.

The NEA option encourages students to work independently and follow their own interests. To that end, relatively few restrictions are placed on the students' freedom to choose their own texts and shape their own tasks, but there are some requirements that must be met.

Key reminders

- Students write two responses, each based on a different literary text.
- One text must be a prose text and one must be a poetry text.
- Each text must be linked to a different area of representation chosen from the four named above.
- Students cannot choose texts from any of the OxfordAQA International AS/A-level exam set text lists.
- The word count for each piece of work is 1,250–1,500 words.
- Tasks should enable students to address each of the three assessment objectives.
- Tasks are often most effective if they set up a genuine debate or ask a genuinely open question about the texts.

Managing the NEA

At an early stage, students should be given a clear explanation of the requirements of the NEA and how they will need to work independently. The point at which students begin their NEA preparation is a decision for schools and colleges, but many students undertake preparatory wider reading in between the end of their AS studies and the beginning of A2. Some reading and research work can help to act as a bridge between AS and A2.

Students will need time to select their texts, decide on which representation areas they wish to focus on, and write their essay. It is therefore important that NEA (worth 30% of the student's overall International A-level grade) is given enough time and consideration.

Schools and colleges will differ in how they approach NEA, and this may be dependent upon whether:

- students all choose individual texts and tasks for their NEA
- one text is studied by the whole cohort and the tasks are individually chosen
- a selection of texts is offered to the students from which they make individual choices.

Whatever approach is taken it is important that there is some autonomy in students' choice of text and task choice, and that the final response clearly demonstrates that the student has approached the task in an individual and independent way. Ideally, a range of differentiated texts and tasks will be seen across a submission for this component.

If centres want additional guidance or advice on how to help students make choices on texts and tasks, they can contact info@oxfordaqa.com to gain access to an NEA adviser.

Text choices

The NEA component encourages students to read widely and enables them to select their own texts. Although teachers may have provided help and guidance with their choices, ideally there will be something about the selected texts which excites or motivates the students. There is a great deal of freedom afforded to students as they explore what most interests them.

Not all texts will be equally suitable, however, and it is important that there is enough in the chosen texts to generate interesting work that is worthy of A-level study. This does not mean that the texts have to come from a preconceived idea of a literary 'canon'; students may well wish to explore new writers or those writing from different perspectives or backgrounds. This specification is designed to reflect the international contexts in which the students are studying, and some text choices may derive from these contexts.

Some things students should consider when selecting their NEA texts:

- Both texts should be of sufficient weight and of suitable 'quality' for A-level study.
- The set text lists for the examined components help to exemplify what is meant by a substantial text, particularly in relation to selecting an appropriate amount of poetry for a poetry text.
- None of the OxfordAQA International A-level set texts can be used for NEA work.
- The edition of the selected texts should be clearly indicated in the bibliography that accompanies the student's essay.
- Prose texts can be either a novel or a single-authored collection of short stories. If a collection of short stories is selected, it is expected that the student will have studied the whole collection and will explore at least two in their response.
- The same principles apply to the study of a collection of poems. It is expected that the student will have studied a range of poems from the collection (see the poem selections in Unit 2: Place in Literary Texts as a guide to the number of poems that might be studied) and that selected poems will be discussed as being representative (or not) of the collection as a whole.

- Poetry texts need to be as substantial as a novel or a collection of short stories. They can be either a single longer poem (for example, *The Waste Land*) or a single authored collection of poems, and students must write substantially about at least two of the poems in their response. As with short stories, it is expected that the poems will have been published as a single collection, not gathered from a variety of sources.
- Texts in translation are permitted, but as with all text choices for this unit they need to offer the student enough to ensure they can address all the assessment objectives and produce work that does justice to their potential.

Task setting

There are three main areas of this NEA unit where students can be given independent choice and ownership of their work:

- Choice of texts
- Choice of area of representational focus
- Choice of tasks

Some students will be able to make fully independent choices of texts and tasks, whereas others will need more support with certain choices and decisions.

Tasks must enable students to access all three assessment objectives. As with examination questions, tasks work best if they are framed around a debate or if they ask a genuinely open question. It can be helpful to look at the questions on the examined units in order to see how tasks can be framed to encourage all of the assessment objectives to be addressed, as well as the NEA exemplar material on the [OxfordAQA website](#).

The focus of the task needs to be on some aspect of representation: an exploration of how ideas are presented in the text. As such, it is important to devise task titles that enable and encourage a genuinely discursive response. Command words such as 'Describe' or 'How is ... presented', may lead to responses that act as a descriptions of a process rather than the development of a line of argument and debate. That is not to say these command words cannot be used, just that they need to be accompanied by an invitation to explore possible readings and interpretations.

Phrases such 'To what extent...' and 'How far do you agree that...' might encourage more discursive responses.

The task must clearly connect the chosen text with one of the four areas identified in the specification. The focus is likely to be on a specific aspect of the chosen area. It is important that tasks do not focus on themes which are too wide for effective treatment in an essay of 1250 – 1500 words.

Advice on task choice

Centres can check individual essay titles with the OxfordAQA NEA advice service by emailing info@oxfordaqa.com before students start their research, especially if you are uncertain about a student's selection of text, task or approach.

The NEA assesses all three assessment objectives, so students should be aware of them from the outset and it's vital that the final task is one that allows students to demonstrate their skills in all three areas. The mark scheme for the NEA is identical to the one used for all exam questions, so students should be familiar with how they will be assessed.

It is worth considering how the wording of the task titles enable all the assessment objectives to be addressed:

1. Poetry text

‘Christina Rossetti focuses more on the criticism of men rather than the promotion of sisterhood in Goblin Market and Other Poems.’

How far do you agree?

<p>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.</p>	<p>The focus on criticism of men and the promotion of sisterhood clearly aligns the task with one of the designed subject areas, and offers the opportunity to explore social contexts.</p>
<p>AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to literary methods.</p>	<p>The word ‘focuses’ relates to Rossetti’s own perspectives and poetic methods and thus encourages attention to the ways meanings are shaped.</p>
<p>AO3: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.</p>	<p>The task balances two alternative readings of the poems. This should assist the shaping of a structured argument.</p>

2. Prose text

‘The sedation and ignorance of the proles is presented as being the biggest factor sustaining the party culture in 1984.’

How far do you agree with this statement?

<p>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.</p>	<p>The focus on ‘proles’ and ‘party culture’ invites the student to consider aspects of class and culture, one of the designated subject areas. The given view offers an interpretation of the text which is open to challenge.</p>
<p>AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to literary methods.</p>	<p>The phrase ‘is presented’ explicitly invites the student to explore aspects of narrative methods.</p>

AO3: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.	The words 'how far do you agree' encourage the student to debate the given view and construct a reasoned argument. The word 'biggest' allows for a degree of agreement or disagreement.
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Advice on writing the NEA responses

Having studied their chosen texts, researched secondary sources and devised an appropriate task, students will need guidance on how to structure their ideas into a coherent, focused response. The word count for each piece means that a tight focus on a clear line of argument, with well selected supporting evidence, is required.

Some key points to note:

- The task should remain central to the line of argument and the essays should be written in a suitably academic style.
- Students should select the most appropriate and relevant textual references.
- Consideration of writers' methods should be fully integrated into the response.
- Contexts and critical material should not be 'bolted on', but woven into the student's own line of argument.
- Essays should be accompanied by a bibliography (including the editions of the selected texts used), be appropriately referenced and include an accurate word count.
- The upper limit for each NEA essay is 1500 words. While there is no automatic penalty for exceeding the word count, we expect responses to be within this figure. It must be stressed that no advantage can be gained by exceeding this total, and indeed it is often self-penalising to do so as over-long work can drift out of focus and become repetitive or irrelevant.

Supervising and authenticating students' work

The responsibilities of the teacher in supervising and authenticating students' work are set out in the specification.

It is worth emphasising that the teacher must confirm that each essay submitted is the work of the individual student.

In terms of what support and guidance teachers can give students, the following support would not be acceptable:

- giving detailed advice and suggestions on how the work may be improved in order to meet the assessment criteria
- giving detailed indications of errors or omissions which leave the candidate no opportunity for individual initiative
- providing writing frames specific to the task (eg outlines, paragraph headings or section headings)
- intervening personally to improve the presentation or content of the work.

Assessment, administration, awarding marks

Teachers should not award marks separately for each assessment objective; instead they should mark holistically, assessing the essay as a whole.

Each essay is marked out of 25. The marks for the two essays are added together to arrive at a final mark out of 50, which is recorded on the Candidate Record Form and sent to OxfordAQA.

Teachers should annotate the NEA work, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses, and also include a final summative comment where the qualities of the work are evaluated. The purpose of these comments is to explain to the moderator the reasons why the centre awarded the final mark. The fairer and more honest these comments are then the easier it is for the moderator to understand the centre's marking.

Some administrative points to remember:

- All work should contain written comments that are aimed at the moderator.
- The teacher comments should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the work and explain/justify the mark that has been awarded.
- Each folder must have a completed and up to date Candidate Record Form attached to the front.
- Individual folders should be secured with treasury tags or staples (not plastic wallets or envelope folders).
- Each centre sample should be accompanied by a completed Centre Declaration Sheet.

Available support

Visit our [website](#) for further information, guidance, support and resources.

Teacher Online Standardisation (T-OLS)

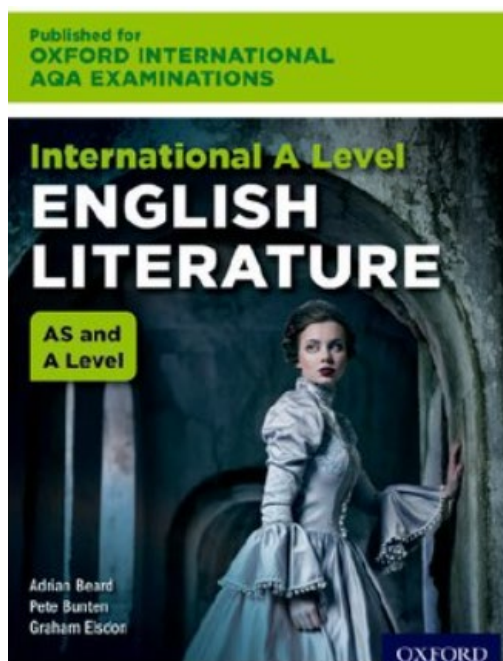
You can find examples of student projects on the Teacher Online Standardisation (T-OLS) website via [Centre Services](#). These exemplar folders demonstrate different approaches to the NEA tasks and cover a range of marks. They are updated annually so you can see a wide range of approaches.

These folders should be used by teachers to consider the marking standards for the NEA and used to benchmark marking of your own students' work. If several teachers are marking the NEA, it is important that the standard for marking is consistent across the centre. Internal standardisation is mandatory and the T-OLS folders should be used to ensure fairness and consistency for all students.

Additional support

Centres have access to an NEA adviser who will be available to offer support. They will be able to offer guidance on task setting and text choices as well as general advice about the NEA process. You can access this service by emailing info@oxfordaqa.com

Further guidance for teachers can be found on the OxfordAQA website:
<https://www.oxfordaqa.com/qualifications/international-as-a-level-english-literature/>



The Oxford University Press course textbook contains a useful section that explores approaches to the NEA task.

International A-level English Literature (2016) Beard, Bunten and Elsdon Oxford University Press

Frequently asked questions:

- **When do I teach the non-exam assessment?**

Students may start work on the NEA at any point during the A-level course. One approach, that many schools employ, is for students to start work on the NEA immediately after finishing the AS examinations.

- **Who will mark NEAs?**

NEA will be marked by the teacher and moderated by OxfordAQA. Essays should be annotated in the body of the work and include a summative comment indicating the balance of strengths and weaknesses that resulted in the final centre mark.

- **How will teachers be standardised?**

Teachers will be standardised online through Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS), which can be accessed through [Centre Services](#).

- **How can I get help with non-exam assessment?**

You can receive guidance from an NEA adviser by emailing info@oxfordaqa.com. They will be able to offer advice and guidance on all non-examination matters, including guidance on task setting.

- **Will advisers be able to suggest suitable texts and tasks?**

No – the choice of texts and tasks is the centre's responsibility. NEA advisers will be able to discuss the suitability of the choices the centre has made.

- **Do I need to get approval for the texts and tasks I want to set my students?**

No, you do not need to get your NEA tasks approved. You may, however, seek advice and guidance on task setting from an NEA adviser.

- **Should the two texts be taught for NEA or should the students choose their texts independently?**

The spirit of the NEA is independent study. Ideally, students will choose their texts and tasks in negotiation with the teacher, and there will be limited direct teaching of the texts.

- **Is it acceptable for the whole class to use the same text for NEA?**

In the spirit of the component, we don't expect to see the whole cohort using the same text and the same task. If the tasks are different, and students have clearly been encouraged to deliver individual and independent responses, they could use the same text.

- **Students must write about one poetry text and one prose text in separate responses, but do these texts also have to be linked to different topic areas?**

Yes. The four broad areas identified in the specification are:

- Representations of childhood
- Representations of war
- Representations of women/men
- Representations of race/class/culture

Each text chosen for study must be linked to a different area chosen from the four named above. The Candidate Record Form which accompanies the work should clearly indicate the two different areas selected.

It is important to note that the above areas are not topics which are prescribed for detailed study. They are areas which teachers and students can explore through the analysis of their own selected texts, and so practice the skills of literary analysis and interpretation. The key word is 'representations'.

- **Can the texts students study come from any time period?**

Yes, but remember one must be a poetry text and one must be prose.

- **Can examination texts be used for NEA?**

No. Texts listed for the International A-level examination components cannot be used for NEA, even if they have not been used in the exam.

- **What are the guidelines for using poetry and/or short stories as NEA texts?**

Poetry:

A text could be either one long narrative poem or a single authored collection of shorter poems. A single tale from *The Canterbury Tales* would be suitable as a text for study, as would one of *Paradise Lost's* twelve books.

If students are using a collection of short poems, it is expected that the student will have studied a range of poems from the collection (see the poem selections in Unit 2: Place in Literary Texts as a guide to the number of poems that might be studied) and will select at least two poems to write about in detail as examples of the wider collection.

Prose:

Single authored collections of short stories are permissible.

If students are using a collection of short stories, they must have studied the whole text and select at least two stories to write about in detail as examples of the wider collection.

- **Even if students cannot use examination set texts for NEA, can they use another text by the author of that set text?**

Remember that the idea of independence is at the heart of NEA work. For this reason, a distinction needs to be made in the context of this question.

If a student chooses a different novel by a writer from the set text list, they should ensure that it allows them to deliver an independent response to that text, one that is not significantly assisted by the study of the set text. For instance, there is no reason why a student should not be able to respond in a fresh and individual way to *Bleak House*, even if they have studied *Oliver Twist* for the examination.

However, the situation is rather different if a student chooses a collection of poems or short stories by a set text writer, where the set text is also a collection of poems or short stories. Here, even if a wholly different selection of stories or poems is chosen, it is probable that these stories or poems will significantly resemble the set text collection in terms of methods or contexts. This makes it more difficult to deliver a genuinely independent response.

Remember that the NEA component offers students an incredible opportunity to choose texts from a full range of literary texts. Even small restrictions on choice should be seen in that context and you should consider very carefully before limiting students in this way.

- **Can students use texts in translation?**

Yes, an English translation of an international text can be used. In the spirit of a specification called 'English Literature', it is expected that only one such text will be chosen out of the two texts offered. It is often helpful if a selected translated text has been influential and significant in the development of literature in English.

To be clear: students should study the English translation and the NEA essay must refer to the English translation, not the original language version.

- **Can students use non-fiction texts?**

No. Non-fiction texts are not appropriate choices for this specification.

- **Are there any other criteria which should be applied when selecting texts?**

Texts should allow access to a range of critical views and interpretations, which students can evaluate and apply autonomously. Secondary sources, relevant to the texts, can include film and stage productions as well as books and articles. Critical interpretations can also, of course, emerge from class discussion.

Although some reference to critical theory while teaching the texts can encourage the development of debate and discussion around the potential meanings of texts, there is no requirement for students specifically to mention critical theories or individual critics in their responses.

Chosen texts must also maximise opportunities for writing with reference to ways in which meanings can be found in literature.

Both texts should be of sufficient weight and of suitable 'quality' for A-level study. The set texts for the examined components help to exemplify what is meant by a substantial text, particularly in relation to selecting an appropriate amount of poetry for a poetry 'text'. Any selection of poems or short stories should be taken from a single published text clearly identified in the bibliography, rather than different poems/short stories taken from different sources.

- **Will students be penalised for exceeding the word count?**

There is no automatic mark deduction for exceeding or falling short of the word count. Teachers are encouraged, however, to guide their students towards the recommended word count. Students should be advised that there is no advantage in exceeding the word count, and that doing so may prevent them presenting the sharply focused and structured responses required by this component.

- **Are quotations, bibliographies and footnotes/endnotes included in the word count?**

Quotations are included in the word count. Bibliographies are not. Neither are endnotes or footnotes, if students choose to use them.

- **What other information needs to be provided with the responses?**

Every piece of work should be accompanied by a signed and completed cover sheet. A bibliography should be included at the end of the piece of work, along with an accurate word count. No specific form of academic referencing is required, but centres may wish to encourage the use of a recognised form of referencing, such as footnotes or endnotes, as a preparation for future educational study.