

INTERNATIONAL A-LEVEL CHINESE – FIRST LANGUAGE CN04

Unit 4 The novel and writing

Mark scheme

Specimen

Version: 1.0 Final

Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Assessment Writer.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from oxfordaqa.com

Marking criteria

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Candidates respond to two questions. All candidates choose to answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2 **or** Question 3, and **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4. Each question is worth 30 marks.

Candidates will be awarded marks in two categories for each response:

Table A - Analysis and evaluation for Q1, Q2 and Q3 (maximum of 25 marks)

Table B – Production of writing for Q4 and Q5 (maximum of 25 marks)

Table C – Accuracy for Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 and Q5 (maximum of 5 marks)

Indicative content – Q1, Q2 and Q3

Each question uses the following information for marking:

Questions 1, 2 and 3 – Tables A, C and the relevant indicative content

Question 4 and 5 – Tables B and C

Table A – Question 1, 2 and 3 Analysis and evaluation AO5

Level	Description
Band 5 21-25 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relevant, focused, and well-structured response, consistently addressing the question. Textual references or quotations are appropriate and concise, supporting arguments effectively. • Knowledge of the text and themes are consistently accurate and detailed. A thorough and insightful analysis of how the writer conveys meaning and creates effects. • A thoughtful, balanced, and personal interpretation of the text is presented. Logical and persuasive conclusions are consistently linked to arguments and analysis.
Band 4 16-20 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mostly focused and relevant response, with a clear structure. Textual references or quotations are mostly used appropriately to support arguments. • Knowledge of the text and themes is usually accurate and detailed. Some analysis of the ways the writer conveys meaning and effects. • A personal interpretation is presented, supported by some analysis. The conclusions may not always be fully developed or consistently linked to the argument.
Band 3 11-15 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general response with some relevance to the question. There is an attempt to structure the response, though key points may be missing. Textual references or quotations are used, but some may not be fully appropriate or sufficient. • Knowledge of the text and themes is sometimes accurate and detailed. Awareness of how the writer creates meaning or effects is demonstrated, but it tends to be more descriptive than analytical. • Some personal interpretation of the work, but with limited analysis or development. Conclusions may be brief or underexplored.
Band 2 6-10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A response with limited structure and focus on the question, and textual references may be incorrect or irrelevant. There is a lack of detailed textual engagement or analysis. • Some knowledge of the text and themes is demonstrated. Limited engagement with how the writer creates meaning or effects. • The personal interpretation is simplistic or vague, and any analysis is underdeveloped. The response lacks clear conclusions or links to the argument.
Band 1 1-5 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response lacks structure and focus on the question. Few or irrelevant textual references are made, and any analysis is simplistic or unclear. • Limited knowledge of the text and themes is demonstrated. The response lacks specific engagement with how the writer creates meaning or effects. • A simplistic personal interpretation may be provided, with no meaningful analysis or development. Conclusions are not drawn, or they are unsubstantiated.
0 marks	The response does not engage with the text or the question.

Table B - Question 4 and 5 Production of writing AO3

Level	Description
Band 5 21-25 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very detailed response, written in a sophisticated and natural style appropriate to the task. • Successfully integrates a range of complex details and ideas successfully, with a wide range of supporting information and examples. • Sophisticated use of a variety of writing techniques appropriate to the task. • A clearly-organised and coherent text using a diverse range of cohesive devices and appropriate paragraphing. • Uses a wide range of vocabulary and grammar, including consistently successful use of complex structures.
Band 4 16-20 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed response, written in an assured and natural style appropriate to the task. • Mostly integrates a range of complex details and ideas, with a range of supporting information and examples. • Assured use of some writing techniques appropriate to the task. • A mostly organised and coherent text using a wide range of cohesive devices and frequent use of appropriate paragraphing. • Uses a range of vocabulary and grammar including some complex structures.
Band 3 11-15 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A response with some detail, written in an appropriate style. • Integrates some complex details and ideas, with some supporting information and examples. • Ambitious use of writing techniques appropriate to the task but not always successful. • Some organised and coherent text using a small range of cohesive devices and some use of appropriate paragraphing. • Uses some vocabulary and grammar with complex structures. Can avoid repetition with some success.
Band 2 6-10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A response with limited detail, attempts to write in an appropriate style. • Develops ideas and main points with occasional supporting information and examples. • Limited use of writing techniques appropriate to the task. • A text with limited organisation and coherence. There is limited or repetitive use of cohesive devices and limited evidence of paragraphing. • Uses limited vocabulary and grammar with simple structures, frequent repetition.
Band 1 1-5 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very limited response, lacking in detail and appropriate style. • Limited development of ideas with minimal or no supporting information or examples. • Poor use of writing techniques. • A disorganised and unclear text with little to no cohesive devices or paragraphing. • Basic vocabulary and grammar with simple sentence structures.
0 marks	The response does not meet the standard required for Band 1.

Table C – Questions 1 to 5 Accuracy AO4

Level	Description
Band 5 5 Marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates complete grammatical control with very occasional errors. • Accurate use of characters (both choice of characters in context and character formation) throughout, with very occasional errors. • Uses punctuation in a sophisticated way to guide and/or manipulate reader, may use creatively for effect.
Band 4 4 Marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates extensive grammatical control with occasional errors. • Mostly accurate use of characters (both choice of characters in context and character formation), with occasional errors. • Uses a range of punctuation accurately to demarcate sentences, and create a range of effects
Band 3 3 Marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates mostly secure grammatical control with some errors. • Mostly accurate use of characters (both choice of characters in context and character formation) with some errors. • Sentence demarcation is secure, and punctuation is used for effect.
Band 2 2 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates limited grammatical control with frequent errors. • Mostly accurate use of characters (both choice of characters in context and character formation), with frequent errors that may impede communication. • Punctuation is mostly used correctly; begins to use punctuation for effect
Band 1 1 Mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates poor grammatical control with constant errors. • Inconsistent or incomplete use of characters (both choice of characters in context and character formation) that affects overall readability. • Punctuation marks are mostly simple and repetitive with frequent errors.
0 marks	No response or the response does not demonstrate any use of grammar or punctuation worthy of credit.

Question	Indicative content
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response should integrate personal experience with the novel's vivid descriptions of western Hunan. A balanced discussion of how Shen Congwen's environmental descriptions create an immersive experience for the reader. Example: If the reader has visited rural China or similar landscapes, they might compare their memories with the novel's depiction. The novel's detailed depictions of mountains, rivers, mist, and traditional villages evoke a dreamlike beauty. <p>Example: <i>"The green river reflected the twilight, and the ferryboat swayed gently like a leaf."</i></p> <p>This creates a calm, poetic atmosphere that mirrors the simplicity and harmony of life in the town. The contrast between natural beauty and the protagonist's emotional journey adds depth to the setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The novel provides insight into western Hunan's traditions, such as local festivals, folk songs, and customs related to marriage and love. Example: The description of the Dragon Boat Festival and traditional matchmaking customs helps readers connect to an authentic cultural landscape. A strong response might compare these customs to the reader's own cultural background or experiences.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The novel's language is direct, unembellished, yet deeply moving, reflecting the hardships and resilience of the protagonist, Fugui. <p>Example: <i>"No matter how much suffering you've been through, to be alive is a beautiful thing."</i></p> <p>This straightforward sentence encapsulates the novel's core message without elaborate phrasing, making its impact even stronger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of short sentences and plain vocabulary enhances the novel's folk storytelling style, making it accessible and emotionally resonant. <i>Alive</i> is deeply rooted in Chinese folk storytelling traditions, where life's struggles are conveyed through simple yet profound words. Yu Hua integrates oral storytelling techniques, using a conversational tone that mirrors how stories are passed down through generations. Example: Use of rural proverbs and local expressions enhances authenticity, making the novel feel deeply connected to ordinary people's experiences. Despite its simplicity, the novel evokes deep emotions through its raw depiction of loss, survival, and fate. The tragic yet calm tone of narration makes Fugui's suffering even more poignant, as the language does not exaggerate events but presents them as part of life's natural cycle. Readers may relate to or feel moved by Fugui's endurance, making the novel a deeply personal experience.

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ba Jin uses Gao Juexin as a symbol of societal pressures, traditional constraints, and the struggles of the younger generation in early 20th-century China. • Ba Jin's delicate and vivid descriptions bring out Juexin's inner conflict and the novel's broader themes of societal decay and personal sacrifice. • Juexin's obedience to traditional family values despite his own desires reflects the rigid social hierarchy and filial expectations of feudal China. <p>Example: Juexin is forced into an arranged marriage with a woman he does not love, despite his deep feelings for Mei.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This illustrates the oppressive nature of family control and the personal sacrifices demanded by Confucian traditions. • His passive acceptance of fate represents the tragic struggle of the educated but powerless youth, caught between personal happiness and societal duty. • Internal monologues and emotional descriptions: Juexin's silent suffering is depicted through subtle and restrained language, making his pain more poignant. <p>Example: His tearful yet wordless moments of regret after his forced marriage show his deep but unspoken sorrow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juexin's character serves as a metaphor for the collapsing feudal system, unable to resist change yet incapable of breaking free. • Unlike his younger brothers, Juexin succumbs to tradition, making him a foil to the rebellious Gao Juehui, who actively seeks social reform. • Example: His inaction contrasts with Juehui's defiance, showing the generational divide in attitudes toward feudal values and modernisation. • This highlights Ba Jin's critique of blind obedience to outdated customs and the urgent need for reform in Chinese society.
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