AS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Paper 1: Views and Voice
Report on the Examination

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General

A defining feature of this specification is the matching of precise descriptive linguistics with interpretative comment. In this second series of the AS specification, most students understood that matching of these two elements is an important approach to the questions in each section. Across both sections, students showed good engagement with their chosen texts, answering relevantly and with focus on the questions set on the extracts and poems selected. There were very few incomplete scripts or rubric infringements. Many students appeared to have divided their time wisely between the two sections.

As expected, there was a range in the quality of responses. There were some excellent answers that attracted marks in Level 5 by demonstrating all the qualities in the level descriptors; there were also some responses (although examiners reported fewer this year than last) that contained very little analysis of the language of the extracts and poems. Examiners reported that responses to the poetry questions tended to contain slightly more detailed language analysis. In fact, some students who hardly included any precise linguistic comment in their Section A answers, were able to produce much more detailed and successful analysis in Section B. Despite the central ethos of this specification that analysis of texts is best done through the systematic and accurate analysis of language features, there were still a small number of students who used little or no terminology.

However, where terminology was applied incorrectly or terms were used imprecisely, the positive was that many students were really trying to engage with the language and were not using more general labels. Common confusions were between simple and minor sentences, words classes such as adjectives, nouns and verbs and terms such as 'juxtaposition' and 'oxymoron' were frequently used for any kind of contrast. Examiners noted that some students tended to feature-spot, using linguistic labels purely for the sake of it, rather than discussing how particular word choices create meaning. One of the major areas where students could improve is in the selection of language levels to purposefully explore the ways the writer has constructed the narrative in the prose text and in the construction of the poetic voice and the presentation of time, place, people and events in the poetry. Overall, terminology needs to be used accurately as a tool to explore how meaning is created, rather than simply labelling.

It was pleasing to see students attempting to analyse their texts using concepts and analytical tools at the heart of this specification. A number of students explored deictic patterns and modality to good effect. This year, students seemed to be using more discrimination in selecting language levels relevantly to both the extracts/poems and the particular question. Those students who were able to select more carefully were also able to explore patterns and their effects of these; they were then rewarded in the higher levels. More students showed an awareness that AO2 is about not just about interpretation of the question but an analysis and exploration of narrative techniques and authorial craft.

Section A - Imagined Worlds

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (20 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply linguistic concepts and methods to prose fiction, using appropriate terminology in order to analyse narrative technique. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the extract.

Overall, this section focuses on how language choices help to shape the representations of different worlds and perspectives in prose fiction. The concept of 'world building' and how writers use language to create a fictional storyworld is important here and more students than last year dealt with this directly. The most successful answers were able to integrate a consideration of narrative point of view within their response to particular questions. The most popular prose text was clearly *The Handmaid's Tale*, with *Dracula* being the minority choice.

As a general overview, successful responses:
- explored the question focus using the Assessment Objectives purposefully to organise responses around interpretative elements; led by AO2 in structuring and shaping responses
- discussed the construction and effects of narrative point of view, often in the opening paragraph but returned to this throughout their answer
- made considered and relevant use of different concepts and tools (eg types of narration, modality, representation of speech and thought)
- used terminology accurately, making careful and thoughtful selections of features and quotations in order to undertake close analysis of the writer's craft
- stepped back from a chronological approach, selecting language levels and concepts purposefully to deliver a response to the question guided by interpretation.
- expressed ideas clearly and used paragraphs to structure responses into clear topics
- made comments on dystopian fiction and Gothic elements that generally added to rather than detracted from or dominated responses.

As a general overview, less successful candidates:
- did not adequately address the question
- did not use precise terminology or made errors in the application of terminology (especially in nouns/verbs/adjectives)
- used general labels (eg 'word', 'imagery')
- feature spotted by labelling each separate word class in a quotation, with very limited exploration of the meanings of these
- made broad assertions, not supported by clear examples
- included very long quotations or did not well contextualise quotations.

Question 1: *Frankenstein*

This question was concerned with the presentation of the Creature's character through his narrative at this point of the novel.

Successful responses:
- understood that this was an embedded narrative from the Creature's perspective
- focused on the creature's feelings – his sense of injustice, inner turmoil and anguish at his situation
- showed clear awareness of the Creature's narrative viewpoint in the extract
- explored Shelley's characterisation of the Creature in different ways in the extract: devilish, animal-like and finally seeing himself as a separate being from humankind
- reflected thoughtfully on the direct speech of the Creature and Shelley's use of exclamatives and interrogatives to convey his emotions
- considered the potential for a reader's response to range from sympathy to fear as the Creature's anger becomes more violent.
- identified and interpreted the effects of personification and the use of simile, metaphor and semantic fields, in additional to exploring phonological aspects (such as the effect of alliterative plosives).

Less successful responses:
- exaggerated the effects of pathetic fallacy by highlighting a small detail like 'damp grass' as an example
- took a one-dimensional view of the Creature and did not explore the complexities of the characterisation as shown in this extract
- simply labelled and listed features such as the alliteration of 'cursed, cursed creator!' but without exploring meanings.

Question 2: *Dracula*

This question was concerned with the interaction between Jonathan Harker and Dracula, exploring the relationship between them at this early stage of the novel when Harker is only beginning to realise that Dracula is a vampire.

Successful answers:
- explored the significance of the diary genre as way of recording events and perspectives; some noted that the recording of thoughts in a diary occurs retrospectively and suggested that this may alter memories or shape the framing of past events
- noted the significance of Stoker's choice of direct speech for Dracula and its sinister and threatening undertones, despite Dracula's seeming politeness
- chose to focus on aspects of power as a conceptual way for framing their response
- contrasted the two characters in responding to the question.

Less successful answers:
- referred extensively to other parts of the novel
- took a descriptive approach to discussing the significance of Harker cutting himself and Dracula's response
- focused on Dracula alone and overlooked Harker and his narrative viewpoint.

Question 3: *The Handmaid's Tale*

This question was concerned with thought presentation, in particular Offred's thoughts about Luke. This was by far the most popular prose text and candidates clearly enjoyed responding to the extract, demonstrated through the wide range of sensitive interpretations of Offred's shifting thoughts about Luke and her suggestions of different outcomes for Luke. Most candidates were able to make sensible observations about the Offred's thoughts.

Successful responses:
- maintained a relevant focus on the Offred's thoughts and Atwood's presentation of these in the extract
- made subtle observations about the impact of the Gileadean ideology in shaping Offred's thoughts at this stage (the religious lexis in the extract with 'pray' and the anaphora 'god knows' were used to support this)
- showed an understanding of Offred's absence of control over her life, shown in her lack of knowledge about Luke's fate and her creation of different possible scenarios for this
- the significance of Atwood using epistemic modality in the extract, often using Offred's shifting degree of certainty effectively to shape the answer.
- specific examples of world-building, exploring the ways that Offred manages her restricted world and her recreation of the past as if it is still a present time (for example, by keeping Luke vivid in her mind and using the present tense)
- the overall significance of Offred 'telling' her thoughts about Luke and Atwood's deliberate presentation of her an unreliable narrator
- Offred's presentation of Luke in the extract and the way that these change from a detailed presentation of his clothing, to her awareness that her memories of him are fading, to the final use of the definite noun phrase 'the body ' and metaphorically representing this as a jellyfish'
- focused on text layout and structure as an authorial choice – shown in the isolated paragraphs
- Offred's implied resistance to the regime shown by the references to the past in the similes 'bright as a lithograph' and 'a full colour advertisement'.

Less successful answers:
- focused on the identification of individual language features at the expense of a bigger picture of how these shaped meaning
- were more imprecise in their labelling of features or used quotations embedded in the interpretation without any accompanying labels.

Question 4: *The Lovely Bones*

This question was concerned with the presentation of place and space, specifically Jack's study and its importance to Jack. On the whole, the function and role of the setting was well-understood.

More successful answers:
- explored the complexity of the presentation of point of view in the extract. For example, as filtered through Susie's narrative viewpoint but also in presenting Jack's viewpoint and thoughts in his notebook entry
- engaged with Susie's unusual narrative viewpoint, with her access to Jack's thoughts (as she is dead, she is not bound by time or space)

- understood Sebold's use of motifs and symbols, especially of light both within and outside, and its association with Susie
- explored Sebold's presentation of body language
- structured responses around interpretation - for example, the study as a place of safety (shown in the description of the furniture) or as a symbol of Jack's isolation and separation from others and then selected quotations from across the extract to support these.

Less successful answers:
- did not show an understanding of a study as a place, confusing it with 'studying'
- did not closely interpret the choices of metaphor and similes to show the reader to see how Jack was feeling about being in the study.
- ignored Susie's narrative and the use of the notebook to allow an insight into his thoughts rather than filtered through Susie rarely commented
- allowed themselves to be diverted by comments on Abigail and Len.

Section B: Poetic Voices

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO1 (15 marks) – Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
This focuses in particular on students' ability to apply linguistic concepts and methods to poetry, using appropriate terminology in order to analyse poetic technique, the construction of the poetic voice and the presentation of time, place, people and events. It also rewards the ability to maintain an academic style throughout the essay.

AO2 (15 marks) – Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.

This focuses on students' interpretations and ideas in response to the question, and their ability to examine the ways in which meanings are shaped through the selection of relevant parts of the given poems.

AO4 (10 marks) – Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods.

This focuses on students' ability to make links between poems, explore similarities and differences and look at both poems evenly.

This section focuses on the nature and function of poetic voice in the telling of events and the presentation of people and on the distinctive ways that poetic voice might be constructed. The role of language in the construction of perspective is particularly important. Students will have studied the ways that their chosen poet has approached the following:
- the presentation of time: understanding the past, reviewing past experiences, the manipulation of time
- the importance of place: locations and memories, the ways in which these are captured in voice(s), and their effects on individuals
- how people and their relationships are realised through point of view, attitude, specific registers, physical descriptions, speech and thought
- the presentation of events through the poet's selection of material, the use of narrative frames and other poetic techniques.

All questions enabled students to selects aspects of these as relevant to the topic or theme that they were being asked to compare and contrast. Carol Ann Duffy and Seamus Heaney were by far the most popular, followed by Browning and then Donne. Unsurprisingly, timing was occasionally an issue on section B and some responses ended quite abruptly. Most candidates made a good start at comparing in the opening paragraph but this wasn't always consistent through the response. Most students were able to make connections between the poems and, on the whole, comparisons were sustained well. This year, students appeared to have few problems with offering even coverage of the poems. However, an issue for some was in organising their comparative approach. Some candidates used the approach of looking at one poem first, then bringing in the second and making connections. This was often, though not always, unhelpful, as it tended to lead to limited comparisons being made and uneven coverage, particularly if the student ran out of time on the second poem. The main problem was still that points were set up as comparisons but were actually not comparing like with like, either thematically or linguistically.

Overall, students' responses to the poetry questions tended to be more detailed and analysed language more precisely than answers on the prose texts and examiners noted that there were many excellent answers on the poems. There were some very pleasing responses that discussed the effects of particular poetic techniques, although some students struggled to comment on these effectively. There were still some very broad, often over-stated, claims about the effects of different stanza lengths or structures.

As a general overview, successful responses:
- focused on the question and discussed the construction and effects of poetic voice
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant quotations
- applied terminology accurately and precisely and explored in detail how meanings are shaped
- made considered and relevant use of different concepts and tools (eg modality and deixis)
- made thoughtful and relevant comments on the poets' use of rhyme patterns, enjambment, caesura
- provided interpretations that were well supported by detailed evidence from the poems
- made detailed comparisons between the poems and covered both poems evenly
- produced well expressed, clearly structured answers.

As a general overview, less successful responses:
- made little or no comment on poetic voice or did not develop a clear sense of narrative perspective throughout the response
- did not adequately address the question
- did not use precise terminology and/or made errors in its application
- feature spotted, with very limited exploration of meaning
- made broad assertions, not supported by clear examples
- made few or very simple and general connections
- produced very brief responses with only a few superficially relevant ideas.

Question 5: John Donne

The focus of this particular question was on the presentation of place and how Donne's speakers use this to explore relationships with others.

More successful responses:
- discussed how the poetic voices convey their attitudes towards their lovers and supported this with clear evidence from the poems

- selected carefully some of the language of the poems in detail, choosing metaphors as one of the most significant aspects to evaluate in 'The Sun Rising' and the Donne's use of prepositions in 'Elegy 8'
- engaged with the sexual meaning behind the speakers' presentation of places in a subtle way
- compared well the presentation of places with the choice of proper nouns 'India' and use of apostrophe 'O my America', as well as the significance of these as places in a new colonial world.

Less successful answers:
- wrote brief and/or descriptive responses, selecting very few language features to analyse.

Question 6: Robert Browning

This question was concerned with the importance of the speakers' emotions. Most students clearly understood the contexts of each of these poems and used these to their advantage in their responses.

Successful responses:
- explored the 'telling': in The Lost Leader' who speaks and to whom, and any changes that occur within the poem(s)
- recognised the significance in the religious allusions and the pronoun choices in 'The Lost Leader' and the pathetic fallacy in 'Prospice'
- used emotions as a way of comparing and contrasting rather than trying to find particular language features to make connections
- explored the 'tellability' of the poems – the negative feelings towards Wordsworth and the reaction to death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
- engaged with the creation of a disappointed and bitter poetic voice in 'The Lost Leader' and the reflective but determined voice in 'Prospice'
- interpreted the use of the first person in each poem to construct perspective and used biographical knowledge to enhance interpretations.

Less successful answers:
- found links harder to find between the two poems
- made the biographical information overshadow the answer.

Question 7: Carol Ann Duffy

This question was concerned with the presentation of strong feelings. This was by far the most popular of the poetry questions and many students showed a real engagement with the poems and had clearly enjoyed studying them. Most answers were relevant and showed that students had a basically sound understanding of Duffy's intentions. It was pleasing to see a wide range of features being analysed in both poems, with students really taking advantage of the wealth of content available.

Successful responses:
- explored the poetic voices and the particular configurations of 'telling' in each poem: the speakers and to whom (or what) they were addressing
- examined Duffy's setting up of the poetic voice and their feelings though the interrogatives in 'Small Female Skull' and the challenging of the clichés surrounding love in 'Valentine'
- compared the metaphorical use of objects (the 'skull' and the 'onion')

- explored different strong feelings as an effective way to structure the answer, for example regret, love, feeling towards themselves and feelings towards others
- offered alternate readings throughout the responses, seeing that interpretations need not be fixed and used textual support well for these different suggestions
- looked at authorial choices of text layout (the isolated lines in 'Valentine') and the allusions to *Hamlet* and intertextual references to be ventriloquists (in 'Small Female Skull')
- focused well on linguistic details such as noun phrases (such as 'a vanishing sigh' and 'a wobbling photo of grief')
- selected a number of language levels (eg phonology, lexis/semantics and grammar) to support interpretations and allow for close analysis of detail.

Less successful responses:
- struggled to interpret 'strong feelings' and created different question to answer (for example, a thematic link of love)
- tried to find oxymoron and/or juxtapositions in 'possessive and faithful' and 'careful undressing'
- became distracted by possible readings about miscarriages, babies and *Hamlet*
- relied too much on biographical information as a way of creating interpretations.

Question 8: Seamus Heaney

This question was concerned with the importance of the speakers' attitudes towards other people and students engaged well with these attitudes along with the presentation of other people in metaphorical ways.

Successful responses:
- made comparative comments on the speakers' relationships with and attitudes to other people and nicely linking these in responses
- showed close focus on his mixed attitudes in both poems and how love/admiration and feelings about himself develop in the poems
- perceptively explored the subtleties in the speakers' conflicting views of others and their views of themselves
- commented closely on the extended metaphors of digging and the otter and the effects of these
- investigated the effects of memories of specific events and memories built up over time
- evaluated the effects of particular word classes, for example the use of adjectives in 'The Otter' to show admiration and the effect that she has on the speaker
- selected language levels to explore thoughtfully, for example the phonological choices in 'Digging'
- saw the significance of place and actions in each poem to presenting the speakers' attitudes ie Tuscany/swimming and Ireland/farming
- focused relevantly on comparing the speakers' feelings of admiration towards close family members.

Less successful responses:
- took a more simplistic and negative view of the speakers' feelings towards family members
- identified specific features such as rhyming couplets without being able to link to meanings or an interpretation.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks *(delete if appropriate)*

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.
UMS conversion calculator