

GCE



Revised GCE A2
English Literature

Student Guidance Booklet
A2 3: Internal Assessment



GCE English Literature

Student Guidance: Unit A2 3: Internal Assessment

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Introduction

In this unit, you will draw on the skills developed throughout your AS study, in particular The Study of Prose Pre-1900 in AS Unit 2. You will have the opportunity to effectively convey your knowledge and understanding of the novel form, through focusing on novels which appeal to your own strengths and interests. This unit encourages independent study, wider reading and enjoyment of modern literature.

You will engage in a detailed study of two novels, one of which must have been published post-2000, and produce an essay of no more than 2,500 words and a bibliography. Your teacher will offer guidance and support but the response that you produce must be your own work. You will develop your research abilities and writing skills as you explore a theme and analyse how authors shape meaning. You will also explore the contexts in which each novel was written and analyse connections across the texts.

What is being assessed?

The Assessment Objectives below form the basis of the strands of competence against which your completed response will be assessed. You will be expected to exhibit the ability to:

- articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression (AO1);
- analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts (AO2);
- demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received (AO3);
- explore connections across literary texts (AO4); and
- explore literary texts informed by different interpretations (AO5).

What is expected of you in this unit?

- an understanding that this is to be independent work. This unit gives you an opportunity to select and study a theme and novels that appeal to you on an individual level;
- an understanding that a successful outcome (you maximising your potential) depends on you taking ownership of, and responsibility for, the process - and also taking pride/satisfaction in this achievement;
- undertake the necessary research and study whilst employing good research practice;
- work within the set timeframe in order to meet the various interim deadlines;
- reflect carefully on the general guidance given by your teacher in order to improve your response following submission of the draft essay; and
- complete the final response on time – meeting deadlines is a key skill at tertiary level, and in the world of work.

What type of support can your teacher offer you in this unit?

There are clear regulations about the level of teacher involvement that is permitted in coursework units and your teacher must abide by these rules. Your teacher can offer you support and general guidance but you are responsible for producing work that represents your own thoughts and ideas. Your teacher can:

- help to organise a production timetable for you so that you remain on task;
- discuss with you possible/suggested summer reading texts that will inform your final selection of texts and theme;
- provide guidance on good practice in research and understanding plagiarism. You can also read the information for yourself by visiting: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/information-for-candidates-documents/infor;
- set aside classroom time for discussion of text choices;
- offer assistance with the consideration of a suitable theme;
- assist with the development of a task title/question to ensure you can address the five Assessment Objectives appropriately;
- offer feedback – at a general level – on the first draft submission only. This must not be seen as the responsibility of the teacher to offer you detailed suggestions or to proofread/annotate your first draft.

Your ability to show independence in this unit is key. Any additional assistance that your teacher gives you must be recorded and taken into account when assessing your response and arriving at a final mark.

Dos and Don'ts in this type of essay writing

The upper bands of the Marking Grid for this unit offer a series of positive indicators of what is creditworthy:

- an approach that exhibits independent thinking;
- an informed response;
- a response that communicates clearly;
- a detailed understanding of the texts;
- comparing and contrasting across the two texts in a relevant, informed way; and
- a clear demonstration of analysis/evaluation of techniques/methods (at word level but also structurally to illuminate the title being considered).

Issues to bear in mind:

- integrate contextual information/connections. Use relevant context/points of connection/ comparison as appropriate and illuminating;
- avoid story-telling – by all means put the point under discussion in context in a sentence or two but not at length (remember the maximum word limit is 2,500 words);
- be judicious in your selection of quotation and be concise. Use ellipsis to abbreviate lengthier

quotations and to precisely identify the key element(s). Remember that quotations, from the text or critical opinions, are illustrative – they do not replace your interpretation. So if a quotation is used, your analysis or comment should follow; and

- when you are re-reading your work, check your own fluency. It might be helpful to look at it as if it was someone else’s writing if this helps you to objectively assess it. Re-read your work a few days after you have written it – the distance will allow you to note when words have been omitted or when ideas have not been fully developed or completed.

The timetable for the completion of Unit A2 3

As has already been emphasised, the majority of this work has to be taken forward on your initiative. You can expect your teacher to monitor your progress in order to ensure you are on target. It would be advisable for your preparatory reading to begin towards the end of Year 13. During your A2 study, you will also be studying a Shakespearean play and an anthology of poems, as well as developing your skills of analysing unseen poetry. Much of the work required for this internally assessed coursework unit will be completed in your own time but your final response must be submitted to CCEA by early May. Your teacher will set a deadline that will allow him/her to assess your work in line with the procedures set by the Examination Board. It is important that you adhere to the deadlines that your teacher gives you.

Guidance on good practice in research and understanding plagiarism

Reading around the texts, the authors and potentially the different contexts of the novels is worthwhile but also time-consuming so be targeted and quite ruthless in your background reading. Your essay title should help guide/focus your research (e.g. is one area of contextual research more relevant to your essay title? Literary? Biographical? Social?).

Skimming and scanning are useful and time-saving strategies. Again, let your title help focus this scanning/skimming. Only if you find something that seems useful should you begin to read more closely. If the answer to the question, “Am I getting anything useful out of this text/internet source?” is “No”, then take a note of the title/source and author before passing on to whatever else you have on your background reading list. Taking a note of the source/URL is good practice and will ensure that, if as your essay develops you decide to integrate some of this originally discarded information, you will have the reference information to hand. This type of referencing will help you avoid inadvertently committing plagiarism.

When going through your selected texts – always take a note of the page number and a brief note of the subject matter of significant sections so that you can find them again quickly. Endless flicking through a text to find a section you’d seen earlier and failed to note down is really frustrating as well as being a waste of precious time. Post-its can be your best friend: use them as bookmarks and to make notes on.

Paraphrasing a classmate’s work is easily spotted and can be treated as student malpractice for both individuals. By all means discuss ideas with classmates – but as a rule of thumb don’t ask to see what somebody else has written and, equally, don’t show what you have written to another classmate. Oral discussion helps to alleviate these dangers - and articulation of ideas often helps to refine them and improve them.

Do your own work to the best of your ability.

Developing a coherent outline

Mark Twain is commonly attributed with the following comment:

“It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”

Now whilst a speech is not the required outcome here, the sense that preparation is central to success is as valid in the production of 2,500 word essays as it was for Twain’s ‘impromptu’ speech. Creating a coherent outline is the methodical option that should enable you to advance raw initial ideas and progress into creating a fluent relevant response.

There are a series of building blocks with any piece of writing: firstly, having relevant things to say about the topic; secondly, organising this relevant content into a coherent order; and finally, expressing it in a manner that is fluent and sustains the interest of the specified audience (in this case, your teacher).

1. **Having relevant things to say** will only come about as a result of your own reading, research and focused thinking. Thinking time is a prerequisite of effective writing.
 - i. Keep your essay title at the forefront of your mind and, importantly, be prepared to trust your own critical instincts. If you are concerned about the validity of your views:
 - a. the first rule of thumb is - “Can I back this up with evidence from the text?”;
 - b. just because you’ve read a particular interpretation in a critical study of one of the texts doesn’t mean that you can’t disagree with the viewpoint – especially if you can offer textual evidence to the contrary. In fact this would be an effective way of displaying the breadth of your background research and also demonstrating your ‘independent thinking’ about the text;
 - c. the next option is to seek your teacher’s advice – this should be done in a way that does not become detail-specific and hence put your teacher in a situation where they are required to note that you’ve received specific support when the final work is assessed; and
 - d. finally, you have the safety net of knowing that your teacher will act as a critical friend.
 - ii. Begin by thinking and noting down your own broad impressions (use whatever style of brainstorming works for you - spider diagrams, bullet points, etc.). These ideas are unlikely to flow evenly and easily onto the page – there will be barren spells, false starts and fits and starts as well as much metaphorical or literal pen chewing.
 - iii. Don’t try to think about your reactions/impressions in any sort of chronological fashion – note down broad ideas to begin with. Initially, you are trying to come up with the major factors and then later see how these percolate down to the detail of the texts (if specific textual references/quotations are being noted – jot down the page numbers – it will save frustrating and unnecessary duplication of effort later). Draw, too, upon effective approaches you have used in your study of novels at AS, GCSE and even Key Stage 3 study.
 - iv. Occasionally the whole process can work in reverse and seemingly innocuous textual details can spark off significant ideas - focusing on key sections of text is a good thing as it avoids general narration or storytelling.

- v. once the individual texts have been trawled, the next stage is to focus across the texts, assessing and noting similarities and divergences of approach. In many ways, this can be the biggest challenge - again let your essay title guide you, and begin with the obvious links e.g. setting/characters/themes/endings.

Remember to 'balance' your work so that the final product deals with all relevant facets of the task. Don't opt for 'easy', lengthy descriptions of plot or context simply to 'fill out' your response at the expense of tackling the more demanding aspects of the answer which are more difficult but probably more important.

2. Organising these ideas into a coherent outline provides the route map for your draft response. Having completed this outline, consider:

- is it sufficiently detailed to allow me to 'see' my response in skeleton form?
- is there a logical progression?
- have I adequately addressed all the significant aspects of the task?

If you can respond positively to these questions then it's probably time to compose your draft response. Remember, your teacher is your 'critical friend' in this unit. If he/she asks you questions about your skeleton outline of ideas that you can't answer, don't panic! Consider whether further investigation would help you formulate clearer ideas; consider if your personal opinions about a narrative aspect/character may be clouded or too narrow. Your teacher's questions will be designed to provoke further thought, to push you to demonstrating your potential in the actual 2,500-word response. As a critical friend their role is to offer you support and challenge.

The next step is to re-work/tweak/repair your notes and ideas. This is all part of the writing process – very few successful people will tell you that their first idea is their best idea.

Fluently fleshing out the outline – your draft 2,500-word response

It's now a matter of building on your 'outline' ideas, organising your research and adding details and critical comments. In other words, combining what you have done so far into an essay form. Take care when composing this draft response. You can submit this draft response to your teacher. Your teacher is permitted to review one draft so investing time and effort in this submission is very important.

Points to bear in mind:

- i. A clear and incisive opening that sets out your perspective will create interest and give direction. It will take time. A piece that perhaps opens with a quotation and uses this to exemplify a broader point is one way to generate an effective opening – for example: "The real evils... of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think rather too well of herself."¹ Austen's initial remarks about the deficiencies of her heroine's upbringing and her lack of self-knowledge ensure the reader is warned that Emma is far from being a well-rounded young person." By contrast, an opening such as "In this essay I am going to look at Text A, then Text B and afterwards I will look at the connections..." is a pedestrian opening style. (Remember that you can also rewrite your introduction at the end of the process!).
- ii. Connections and connectives are central to a relevant and fluent response. They help to lead the reader logically through your ideas:

- ✓ 'Like author A, author B also makes use of...'
 - ✓ 'Written at the height of the "swinging sixties" ...'
 - ✓ 'Further evidence of this trait...'
 - ✓ 'All too often Knightley proves himself to be more perceptive than...'
 - ✓ 'Similarly it's obvious that...'
 - ✓ 'Both writers employ differing strategies [approaches] when...'
 - ✓ 'The main protagonists in both novels...'
 - ✓ 'Throughout the book...'
 - ✓ 'If this is the case, then...'
- iii. The conclusion – finish with your best effort at a thoughtful, perceptive summation of what you've learnt in writing the piece.
- iv. When revising your writing look critically at your what you've written. Ask yourself:
- does my introduction generate interest and act as a clear directional indicator for what follows?;
 - have I said exactly what I mean? Have I proofread for meaning?;
 - what about topic sentences – do they follow through?;
 - is my spelling and use of punctuation correct? Don't be afraid to check it out;
 - is my language choice/use of technical vocabulary appropriate? Indeed, have I used any?;
 - have I repeated aspects that don't need repeating? (Just because you understand and can use 'juxtapose' for example, should not mean that it needs to make multiple appearances);
 - syntax – are there creaking/cumbersome/unclear sentences?;
 - sentence structuring – has it been varied to enliven my argument or add emphasis to a particular point?;
 - does my conclusion finish the work strongly rather than leaving a sense that it has fizzled out?; and
 - is my essay balanced – have I written too much on one of the more straightforward aspects of the topic and glossed over some of the more difficult and important issues?

Feedback on your draft response

Your teacher will read your draft response and give you feedback. This feedback will be at a general level as teachers have strict rules to follow. You will not be told which sections may require development or be given ideas as to what to add to your response. Your teacher can alert you to an imbalance (e.g. not enough discussion on Text B) or advise you that your first draft response does not contain enough relevant/illuminating contextual information (AO3) for him/her to be able to award you credit beyond Band 4 for example.

Preparing for the final submission

2,500 words is a sizable piece of work – it requires the writer to ensure that an evenness of style is sustained across the entire piece. If you have worked steadily throughout the Autumn and Spring Terms, the production of your final piece will be straightforward.

¹ Please note that references to Emma by Jane Austen have been used in this document for illustration only. The six texts available for study in AS Unit 2 are not permitted for study in A2 Unit 3.

When proofreading your final piece, take your time! An essay for this unit is usually around five typed sides. Proofread only one side at a time; it is a precise and demanding task and rushing it is not a good idea. Proofreading for a second and third time can also be extremely helpful. You may also like to revisit the self-reflective questions from the earlier sections in this document to reassure yourself that your final submission is showcasing the best that you have to offer.

