

FACTFILE: GCE ENGLISH LITERATURE

STARTING POINTS – PROSE PRE 1900



The Study of Prose Pre 1900

In this Unit there are 4 Assessment Objectives involved – A01, A02, A03 and A05.

A01: Textual Knowledge and understanding, and communication

In this examination, the candidate should be able to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively knowledge and understanding of the selected novel.

This AO involves the student's knowledge and understanding of the novel, and ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts. Quality of written communication is taken into consideration in all units.

A02: Narrative methods

In this examination, the candidate should analyse the writer's use of such narrative methods as structure, form and language.

The student should analyse relevantly the ways in which meanings are shaped in novels. This means identifying narrative methods and showing how these methods relate to the key terms of the question.

Discussing narrative methods – advice to teachers and students:

As this unit is closed book, examiners will be realistic about the amount of detail which can be provided in the time available. Every novel has its memorable phrases which come to mind when writing, but it is anticipated that the larger-scale features of structure, form and language will be most useful in constructing a relevant response in the time available.



The Study of Prose Pre 1900

A03: Contexts

In this examination, the candidate should demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a novel is written and received.

Contextual information offered should be relevant to the question. Contextual information which is made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded. Students should be aware that little credit can be given for contextual information that is introduced merely for its own sake. They should remember that the text has primacy over the context. A good response will use contextual information sparingly and judiciously.

A05: Argument and interpretation

In this examination, the candidate should offer opinion or judgment in response to the given reading of the text, taking account of the key terms as the basis of the argument. This AO is the driver of Unit AS 2 and is of primary importance.

A05 can be satisfied in full by the candidate developing his/her own reading in response to the given reading. If, however, critics are used, they must be

- used with understanding
- incorporated into the argument to reinforce or be seen as an alternative to the student's opinion
- not used as a substitute for the development of the student's own opinion
- properly acknowledged.

Coherence and relevance of argument will be rewarded. Students should be aware of the importance of planning in the sequencing and illustration of the reading they wish to put forward. They should also beware of the danger of replacing the key terms of the question with others of their own choosing which they assume mean much the same thing.

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a starting point for teachers and students. It reflects some of the stylistic and contextual issues which may be explored and developed further both in the classroom and through teachers' and students' own independent research.



Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter

A02: Narrative methods

A few general features:

- Hawthorne's use of a symbolic method encourages multiple interpretations of e.g. Hester's sin
- Development of Hester: she incorporates various contradictory roles
- Hawthorne's use of a participating narrator to shape reader response
- Use of imagery e.g. the rose-bush, the scaffold

A03: Contexts

This information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a helpful guide to teachers and students. It reflects some of the contextual areas which might be found useful. Remember the remarks above about balancing text and context in a response.

- The nature of the heroine
- Gender inequality and women's rights
- The "American Dream"
- The symbolist novel



Shelley: Frankenstein

A02: Narrative methods

A few general features:

- Symbolism of light and fire with Promethean undertones alluded to in title
- Structure: framing narrative of Robert Walton
- Use of narrative structure in presentation of the Monster
- Symbolic use of nature/weather
- Allusions to Biblical creation narrative and to Milton's *Paradise Lost*

A03: Contexts

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- Genres of Science-fiction and Gothic Horror
- Scientific/technological developments of Enlightenment
- Revolutionary politics in Europe and America
- Romantic Movement; its interest in e.g. the 'sublime' in nature, the rights of the individual, revolt, the process of creation



Eliot: Silas Marner

A02: Narrative methods

A few general stylistic features:

- Use of omniscient narrative voice
- Patterning of plot: 'poetic justice'?
- Nature imagery to depict Silas' spiritual progression
- Plot structure of contrasting movements (exclusion from and re-absorption back into society) uncovers ironies and counterpoints

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- Combination of genres: realism vs fairy tale
- Conservative religion and dissenting sects in Victorian England
- Industrial Revolution and effect on social class structure and rural communities
- Events and experiences of Eliot's own life



Brontë: Wuthering Heights

A02: Narrative methods

A few general features:

- Setting of moors
- Use of contrast e.g. Wuthering Heights/Thrushcross Grange - wildness/civilisation
- Dual narrators – Nelly as unreliable narrator
- Cyclical/repetitive structure of plot

A03: Contexts

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- Genres of Gothic novel and Romantic fiction
- Character archetypes (heroine, anti-hero, Byronic hero etc.)
- Industrial Revolution and effect on social class mobility
- Gender roles and social conditions in 19th century



Austen: Emma

A02: Narrative methods

A few general features:

- Omniscient narrator who, however, supplies incomplete information; narrative focalized through main character
- Notable use of contrast in characterization
- Ironic, ambiguous dialogue

A03: Contexts

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- Genres of feminist novel and comedy of manners
- Gender roles in nineteenth-century England
- Social context: the nature of courtship and marriage in nineteenth-century England



Stoker: Dracula

A02: Narrative methods

A few general features:

- Multi-voiced narrative through letters, diaries, newspapers
- Stoker's use of contrasting heroines
- Characterization of Dracula: gradual revelation of his true nature

A03: Context

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- Horror genre and Gothic genre
- Victorian attitudes to female sexuality
- Concerns regarding immigration and 'other' races

