

Meet the Examiner

English Language

Paper 1



Meet the examiner: Alison Goodall

- English teacher for 25 years
- Senior examiner for 20 years





**English language
8700**

Teaching: Sept 2015

GCSE exams: June 2017 onwards



Context: brief overview of GCSE English Language 8700



GCSE English Language now consists of two untiered papers:



Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing



Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

Grades and Marks

- The grading system has moved from A* - G to a numbered system Grade 9 – 1, 9 being the highest and equivalent to A**
- Grade 4 is a C-
- Grade 5 is a C+



English Language Papers 1 and 2

- The mark scheme for English Language Section A has 4 levels:
- Level 1: Simple
- Level 2: Attempts
- Level 3: Clear
- Level 4: Perceptive





English Language Papers 1 and 2

- The mark scheme for English Language Section B also has 4 levels:
- Level 1: Simple / Limited
- Level 2: Some success
- Level 3: Clear / Consistent
- Level 4: Compelling / Convincing

English Language Papers 1 and 2

- So, when I am talking about levels, I am referring to the mark scheme NOT the overall grade.
- The grade boundaries can be different in each series so we cannot match up the mark scheme to specific grades.
- This year, however, lower level 3 on all questions was awarded a good Grade 5.



- 1 hour 45 minutes
 - 80 marks
 - 50% of GCSE

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

Section A:
Reading
- One
literature
fiction text

Section B:
Writing
- Descriptive
or narrative
writing

Reading (40 marks) (25%)

- 1 short form question (*1 x 4 marks*)
- 2 longer form questions (*2 x 8 marks*)
- 1 extended question (*1 x 20 marks*)

Writing (40 marks) (25%)

- 1 extended writing question
(*24 marks for content, 16 marks for technical accuracy*)

•Focus on Reading

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading

Section A:
Reading
- One
literature
fiction text

- The source for the reading question will be a literature fiction text.
- It will be drawn from either the 20th or 21st century.
- Its genre will be prose fiction.
- It will include extracts from novels and short stories, and will focus on openings, endings, narrative perspectives, character, atmosphere and other appropriate narrative and descriptive approaches.*

•Focus on Writing

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading

Section B:
Writing
- Descriptive
or narrative
writing

- As a stimulus for students' own writing, there will be a choice of scenario, written prompt or visual image that is related to the topic of the reading text in section A.
- The scenario sets out a context for the writing with a designated audience, purpose and form.*

Focus on - Paper 1

- Q1: retrieval/interpretation of ideas/information in the first few lines of the source (4 marks)
- ◦ Q2: analysis of language on a given focus in the next paragraph (8 marks)
- ◦ Q3: analysis of structure of the source as a whole (8 marks)
- ◦ Q4: evaluation of a given focus in second half of source (20 marks)



Focus on – Paper 1

- Q5: a narrative and/or description (40 marks)
- 24 marks for Content
- 16 marks for Technical Accuracy



Practice paper: Mr Fisher

- We are now going to look at a practice paper so you can see how these questions work in an actual examination.

- On your table, you should find a question paper and an insert.

AQA MOCK PAPER

Please write clearly in block capitals.

Centre number Candidate number

Surname _____

Forename(s) _____

Candidate signature _____

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(8700)
Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- Source A – provided as a separate insert

Instructions

- Answer all questions.
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes on this page.
- You must answer the questions in the spaces provided.
- Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
- Do all rough work in this book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- You must refer to the insert booklet provided.
- You must not use a dictionary.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark of this paper is 50.
- There are 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your reading in Section B.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in Section B.

Advice

- You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the source and all five questions you have to answer.
- You should make sure you leave sufficient time to check your answers.

Practice paper: Mr Fisher

- At the start of the examination, students will need to read the source material.
- Before doing so, it will be important to read the questions and prepare for the answers.



Question 1

- Read again the first part of the source, from lines **1 to 4**.
- List **four** things about Mr Fisher from this part of the source.

Use your highlighter or pen to put a bracket around lines 1 – 4.

Question 2

- Look in detail at this extract, lines **9** to **15** of the source.
- How does the writer use language here to convey Mr Fisher's views on books and stories of the past?
- You could include the writer's choice of:
 - words and phrases
 - language features and techniques
 - sentence forms.

Put a bracket around lines 9 – 15.

Question 3

- You now need to think about the whole of the source.
- This text is from the beginning of a short story.
- **How is the text structured to interest you as a reader?**
- You could write about:
 - what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning of the source
 - how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
 - any other structural features that interest you.

Get ready to look for patterns and shifts.

Question 4

- Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source, from **line 25 to the end**.
- **A student said, 'This part of the story, where Mr Fisher is marking homework, shows Tibbet's story is better than expected, and his reaction is extreme.'**
- **To what extent do you agree?**
- In your response, you could:
 - consider your own impressions of what Mr Fisher expected Tibbet's homework to be like
 - evaluate how the writer conveys Mr Fisher's reaction to what he discovers
 - support your response with references to the text.
 - **Put a bracket around lines 25 to the end.**

English Language Paper 1

- We now need to read the source looking out for:
- 4 things about Mr Fisher in lines 1 – 4;
- Language features in lines 9 – 15;
- Changes in mood, tone, time, situation and place;
- Mr Fisher's reaction to Tibbet's work.





List 4 things you learn about ...

- In Question 1, students will be asked to list 4 things they learn about a specific focus in the first paragraph of the extract. This is a retrieval exercise.
- The answers must be taken from a set number of lines which will appear in the question.

Top Tips!

- Always write in sentences
- Always use the subject of the question as the first word of each sentence (or use 'It', 'He' or 'She')
- List the information straight from the page – there is no need to infer
- Make sure the information is about the right focus
- Make sure the correct line references are used.



Question 1

- Read again the first part of the source, from lines **1 to 4**.
- List **four** things about Mr Fisher from this part of the source.

Attempt Question 1

- You now have 5 minutes to attempt Question 1

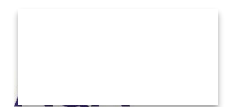


Answers

- he lived alone
- he lived in a terraced house
- he lived in a small house
- he lived in the centre of town
- he didn't own a car
- he did much of his weekend marking at school
- he travelled home by bus
- he took some books and papers home at the weekend to mark.

Answers

- Also credit:
- he is a teacher
- marking in the form room
- marking after school
- he worked in school
- he does his marking



What students did

Those who did not get full marks:

- selected points from the wrong lines
- only selected two or three points rather than four
- misread the text, eg by saying Mr Fisher spent his weekend marking books in his form room
- ran points across lines rather than selecting four separate and distinct points.
- Eg
 1. Mr Fisher lived alone.
 2. In a small terraced house.

Question 2

- Look in detail at this extract, lines **9** to **15** of the source.
- How does the writer use language here to convey Mr Fisher's views on books and stories of the past?
- You could include the writer's choice of:
 - words and phrases
 - language features and techniques
 - sentence forms.



What you have to do

- Choose some examples of language
- Write about the effects of their selected examples of language
- Use subject terminology to enhance the response



Question 2

- I'm going to give you five minutes to see what you can find.



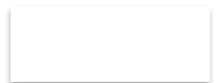
What you have to do

- **The key skill for Q2 is analysis of language.**
- The quality of what you write about the effect of the writer's choice of language is the most important part of this question.
- The use of subject terminology should enhance the comments that are made, and not be the driving force of the response.



Task

- On your table, you have a sheet with 4 examples.
- Decide which level you would award to each response.
- Level 1 Simple
- Level 2 Attempt
- Level 3 Clear
- Level 4 Perceptive



Exemplar responses

- Level 1
- The writer uses an image to describe Mr Fisher's view of books. The word 'golden' suggests that the books were like gold.



Exemplar responses

- Level 2
- The writer uses an image to describe Mr Fisher's view of books. The word 'golden' suggests that the books were precious and valuable.





Exemplar responses

- Level 3
- The writer uses an image to describe Mr Fisher's view of books. The word 'golden' suggests that the books were precious and valuable to Mr Fisher, as he saw books as something special to treasure and cherish.

Exemplar responses

Level 4

- The writer uses an image alluding to wealth and prosperity when describing Mr Fisher's view of books. The word 'golden' sees Mr Fisher nostalgically reflecting on the value of fiction and the 'golden' age of literature when creativity flourished and books were treasured.





So ...

- The quotations can be the same
- The comments on the **effect** of the language are the driving force in determining a mark
- Sophisticated sounding techniques will not get any more marks unless the comments are sophisticated and perceptive

Those who did not do so well:

- identified and labelled language features but failed to comment on the effect on the reader or explain a reason behind the writer's choices
- offered a basic, generic comment, eg 'it creates a picture in our heads' or 'it makes us feel like Mr Fisher feels', which could apply to most examples of language in the given lines.

Those who did not do so well:

- looked for the connotations of words without a consideration of context
- Example 'swept away in the fever' suggests that the class were ill.



Paper 1, Question 2 –tips:

- Focus on words and images.
- Make sure your comment is contextualised.
- Avoid long quotations. Zoom in on specific words to analyse.
- Make sure comments are focused on language rather than ideas.



Question 3

- You now need to think about the whole of the source.
- This text is from the beginning of a short story.
- How is the text structured to interest you as a reader?
- You could write about:
 - what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning of the source
 - how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
 - any other structural features that interest you.

What students have to do

- Choose some examples of structural features
- Write about the effects of their selected examples of structure
- Use subject terminology to enhance the response



How to approach the question

1. Scan through the text looking for patterns, and shifts in the story
2. What does the writer focus on in the beginning / middle / end?
3. Are there any changes in mood/tone/situation/place?
4. How are the beginning and ending linked?



Question 3

- I'm going to give you five minutes to see what you can find.



Question 3 - examples

Level 1

In the middle of the extract the writer talks about Mr Fisher reading Tibbet's work. He thinks it is really good and he begins to sweat. He talks about getting to the end of the story and reading it again - 'his breathing quickened'.

Simple comment

Textual reference

Subject terminology

Question 3 - examples

Level 2

- In the middle of the extract the writer focuses on the reaction that Mr Fisher has to Tibbet's work. It says that 'his breathing quickened' which suggests that he was excited at reading such a good piece of writing. The reader feels glad that he has found something good to read.

Comment on effect

Textual reference

Subject terminology

Level 3

- After focusing on Mr Fisher's disappointment with the students' work at the beginning of the extract, the writer shifts the focus to his reaction when reading Tibbet's work. This allows us to see the contrast between his view that 'there were no more stories to be written' and the excitement as 'his breathing quickened' in response to Tibbet's story. Mr Fisher's lack of enthusiasm at the start, therefore, has helped us to understand why he is so excited later on.

Comment on effect

Textual reference

Subject terminology

Level 4

- The source has a number of structural shifts in place, situation and especially time. One such shift is seen in the middle section of the text where reference to 'the old days' and 'Mr Fisher remembered' heralds a flashback to a previous time filled with colour and delight, a time where 'imagination soared'. When the focus then shifts back to the present, where everything is 'black and white', the reader can, not only understand why Mr Fisher feels disillusioned with teaching, but also appreciate why his reaction to Tibbet's work provokes such an extreme reaction.

Comment on effect

Textual reference

Subject terminology

Level 4

- The writer structures the exposition by zooming in on Fisher's view of his students, their work, and the stories of the past which were 'golden'. This interests the reader because it suggests that Fisher has to look back into the past to find inspiration and originality. However, it also foreshadows the discovery to come.
- At the end, Fisher finds that 'nugget of gold' in Tibbet's work, which interests me as a reader because it implies that Fisher is taken back, symbolically to the past: the 'golden' age of literature.

Paper 1, Question 3 - tips

Focus on the writer and the way they sequence their ideas.

For Level 2, write 3 paragraphs looking at the beginning, middle and end. Include reader response.

For Level 3 and 4, focus on shifts in tone/mood/situation/place/character.

Answer by explaining the effect of those shifts.

Examples: Contrast, Cyclical structure, a journey, a move towards an epiphany

Those who did not do so well:

- identified and labelled structural features such as 'at the beginning', 'in the middle' and 'at the end', but then just discussed the content of what was happening in the story at those points without considering why.
- offered a basic, generic comment, eg 'makes us want to read on' or 'it attracts our attention', which could apply to most examples of structure.



Question 4



shutterstock.com • 1080089855

- Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source, from **line 25 to the end**.
- A student said, ‘This part of the story, where Mr Fisher is marking homework, shows Tibbet’s story is better than expected, and his reaction is extreme.’
- To what extent do you agree?
- In your response, you could:
 - consider your own impressions of what Mr Fisher expected Tibbet’s homework to be like
 - evaluate how the writer conveys Mr Fisher’s reaction to what he discovers
 - support your response with references to the text

What a student has to do:

- evaluate the ideas in the text
- evaluate the effects of the writer's methods used to convey these ideas
- support with textual references
- focus on the given statement



How to approach the question

- Decide on your viewpoint and think of 3 – 4 reasons to support your opinion
- Look for quotations to support your ideas
- Highlight and label the quotations with language features or identify how the structure of the text can support your ideas



How to approach the question

- For this question there are 3 elements-
- 1. What Mr Fisher expected
- 2. What he got from Tibbet
- 3. His reaction – was it extreme?



Question 4



- I'm going to give you five minutes to discuss the statement and your reasons for agreeing, or partly agreeing, that Mr Fisher's reaction was extreme.
- I would also like you to find **THREE** quotations to support your opinions.



What you could do

There are no right or wrong answers:

- Some thought Mr Fisher's expectations of Tibbet were low as 'he'd obviously done part of his homework on the bus' and he wasn't a 'brilliant scholar by any means'.
- Others thought Mr Fisher was not surprised at Tibbet's story because 'not all his boys lacked imagination', and he had already recognised Tibbet's potential as 'there was a spark in him which deserved attention'.

What you could do

Either way, the more you could select evidence like this to formulate your views, and the more you could link your ideas together with words like 'even though' and 'despite', the more considered your evaluations became and the more likely you were to achieve Level 3 or above.



shutterstock.com • 1080089855

Those who did not do so well:

- Focused on the 'what' and did not address the 'how' – there was sometimes little mention of method
- Misinterpreted the text by confusing the image of the prospector finding gold with Mr Fisher, and thought Mr Fisher was removing his boots and shaking something out
- Found it impossible to accept that any English teacher could become so excited over a piece of homework
- Started to write before they had considered their own impressions



Top Tips



shutterstock.com • 1080089855

- Be analytical not opinionated
- Focus on the bullet points
- Do not argue against the statement because you think it will make you look smarter
- You must include ideas AND writer's methods
- Keep referring back to the statement



Level 1

Mr Fisher thinks Tibbet's homework is going to be bad, but it turns out to be good. It says 'not a brilliant scholar by any means' so Mr Fisher didn't expect it to be any good. I agree Mr Fisher's reaction is extreme. This is shown in the image 'like a nugget of gold' which suggests that he had found something good.

Comment on effect
Textual reference
Writer's methods

Level 2

Mr Fisher expected Tibbet's homework to be bad. He says 'not a brilliant scholar'. He also 'took a deep breath', which tells us he didn't really want to mark the book. I think Mr Fisher is surprised when he discovers Tibbet's story is good, and I agree he has an extreme reaction. It says he felt like a 'prospector' who found 'a nugget of gold'. This suggests that he had found something precious and valuable.

Comment on effect
Textual reference
Writer's methods

Level 3

Mr Fisher says Tibbet wasn't a 'brilliant scholar by any means', despite having a 'spark in him', so I don't think his expectations of Tibbet's homework were high. He even 'took a deep breath' before he started marking, which suggests he was dreading it and maybe thought he was wasting his time. When he reads the story, he discovers it's really good because it's original, and he is surprised and stunned. The writer conveys his extreme reaction by comparing himself to a 'bankrupt prospector' finding 'a nugget of gold' in his boot. This image suggests that Mr Fisher did not expect Tibbet's work to be good but, like the prospector, he was overjoyed and excited to discover such an unexpected treasure.

Comment on effect

Textual reference

Writer's methods

Level 4

Mr Fisher is resigned to his students' lack of imagination and we learn that his expectations of Tibbet are low: despite 'a spark in him which deserved attention'. Indeed, the triple 'home; dinner; bed' emphasises to the reader the domestic distractions he would rather be doing than mark Tibbet's work. However, when he reads Tibbet's story, I think Mr Fisher sees such originality and uniqueness, he experiences an epiphanic moment of sudden realisation that is so profound that he will never look on life in the same way again. The moment is captured in the allusion to a 'bankrupt prospector' who unexpectedly finds 'a nugget of gold' in his boot. The image interests me as a reader because it implies that Fisher is taken back, symbolically to the past: the 'golden' age of literature.

Comment on effect

Textual reference

Writer's methods

Section B

- Candidates are given a choice of 2 tasks
- They may be asked to write a narrative or a description
- One of the tasks will have a picture as a visual stimulus



Question 5

- A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing section.
- Either
- Write a description of an old person as suggested by this picture:



or

- Write a story about a time when things turned out unexpectedly.

What you have to do

- The most important word in AO5 is communication. You have to produce a piece of writing that communicates to the reader on one of two given options.
- You are assessed on the quality of your writing.



What you have to do

- Communicate effectively
- Link and develop ideas
- Sequence paragraphs/effective use of discourse markers
- Use of vocabulary
- Use linguistic devices for effect
- Engage and convince the reader
- Sustain an appropriate tone, style and register to match purpose.



Examples

- Look at the example on your table
- It is a solid Level 3
- Let's look at the skills it demonstrates



Level 3 benchmark

- Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate
- Range of punctuation is used, mostly with success
- Uses a variety of sentence forms for effect
- Mostly uses Standard English appropriately with mostly controlled grammatical structures
- Generally accurate spelling, including complex and irregular words
- Increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary



Those who did not do so well:

- Did not plan and therefore wrote at great, and unnecessary, length - the more students wrote, the greater the deterioration in ideas, structure and accuracy.

- Did not leave time to revise or improve their work.

Paper 1, Question 5 - tips

- Adopt a quality rather than quantity approach – you need to take time to plan, and then craft a shaped and structured response in two or three sides, and leave time at the end to revise and improve.
- Practise not only addressing the skills descriptors in the mark scheme but integrating them seamlessly into a description or narrative.

Paper 1, Question 5 - tips

- Work on technical accuracy – although many students were able to write generally accurately, and the most able employed colons, semi-colons, brackets and dashes - others were showed comma splicing, and many, of all abilities, were unable to punctuate dialogue correctly or use apostrophes properly.

What you can do to help your child

- Read together – openings to novels
- Make up your own examination papers from books you have read
- Pick out paragraphs of description in a book you are reading and explore the use of language
- Help get a picture from google images and use it as a stimulus for a piece of creative writing





Happy Talking!

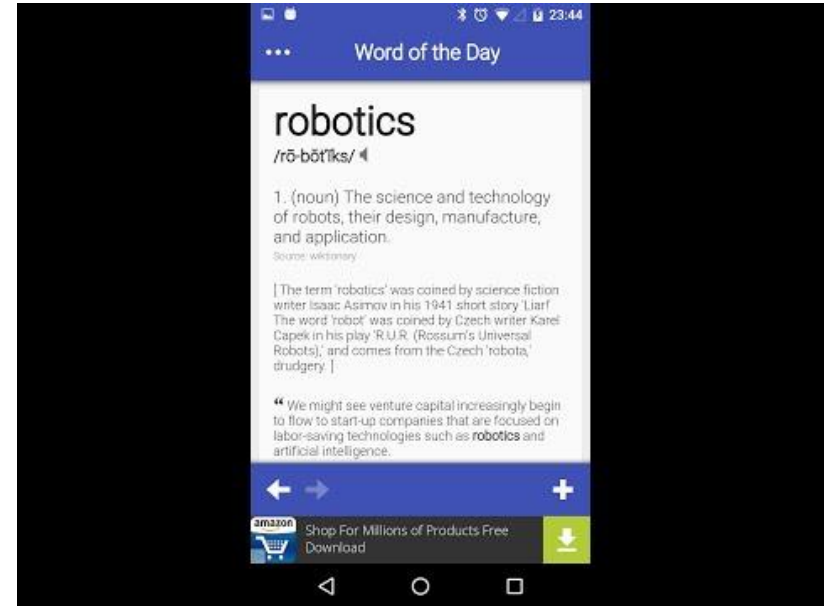


- The data from the latest National Literacy Trust survey of 34,910 children and young people shows that children and young people who sit down to eat dinner and talk with their family are more confident communicators than those who do not.
- Exposing children to as many words as possible helps them improve their vocabulary
- Idea! Have a dictionary in the kitchen and learn a new word every day?

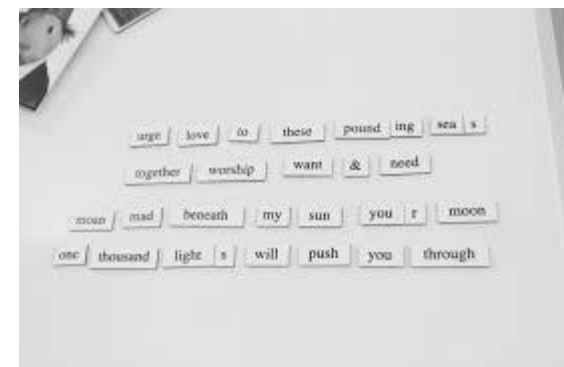


Use 'A Word a Day' App!

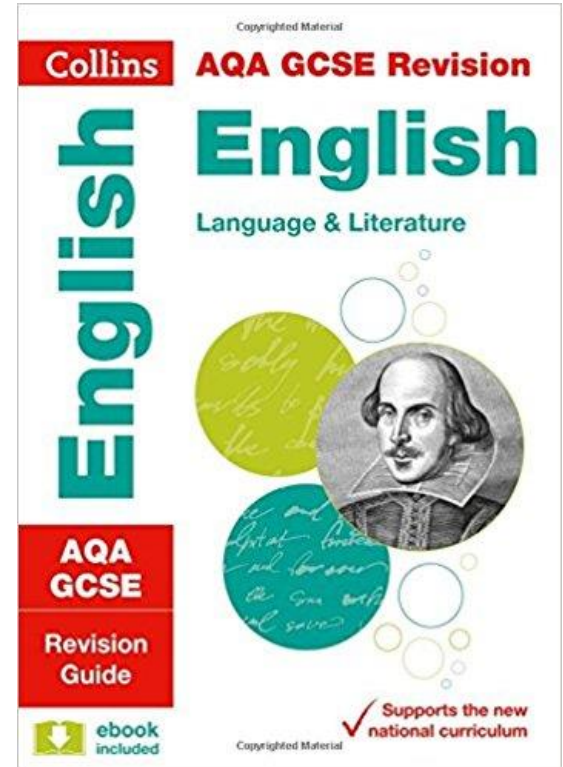
Games



Fridge magnets!



Revision Guides



Google Classroom code:



Useful websites



aqa.org



[GCSE Bitesize](#)



[BBC Skillswise](#)