

English Language: what every mark is for

Six objectives — four for reading, two for writing. The same six whichever board you sit.

A01

READING

“Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise evidence from different texts”

Finding it, and putting it together.

The lowest-tariff marks on the paper and the fastest. Explicit is stated; implicit is meant.

A02

READING

“Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views”

How it was written, and what that does.

Note the word “structure”. Half of A02 is about where things sit in the text, and most answers only cover language.

A03

READING

“Compare writers’ ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts”

Two texts, side by side.

Both halves are marked: what each writer thinks, and how each one shows it. Writing about one text then the other is not comparing.

A04

READING

“Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references”

Judging how well it works.

You are being asked whether you agree, and why. An answer with no opinion in it cannot evaluate.

A05

WRITING

“Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts”

Content, and the shape you put it in.

Plan the shape first. Paragraphing and a deliberate opening and ending are marked here, not just the ideas.

A06

WRITING

“Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation”

Vocabulary, sentences, spelling, punctuation.

Worth 20% of the whole qualification — the specification says so outright. A fifth of your grade is technical accuracy.

“This requirement must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole.” — on A06. One mark in five, on every paper, for spelling, punctuation and sentence variety.

Statements quoted in full from the current GCSE English Language specifications, which carry them identically:

“Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all GCSE English Language specifications and all exam boards.” A07–A09 cover the separately reported spoken language endorsement and are not shown. The lines under each statement are ours.

English Literature: what every mark is for

Four objectives. Two of them carry four fifths of the marks.

A01

“Read, understand and respond to texts”

- maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response
- use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations

Your reading of the text, evidenced.

A02

“Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate”

The writer’s choices, and what they do.

A03

“Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written”

Context that explains the text — not a history paragraph bolted on.

A04

“Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation”

Technical accuracy. Small, and the easiest to bank.

A01 + A02
80%

Response and analysis. Four marks in five, in every specification — though boards split the pair either 37.5/42.5 or 40/40.

A03
15%

Context, in every specification.

A04
5%

Vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, in every specification.

Statements quoted in full from the current GCSE English Literature specifications, and identical in every one. The weightings shown are the ones they all share: A01 and A02 together are 80% everywhere, though specifications split the pair either 37.5/42.5 or 40/40. The lines under each statement are ours.

The analysis paragraph

Six moves, in this order. Steps three and five are the ones that separate grades.

THE EXTRACT BEING ANALYSED

The market emptied as the wind rose. Awnings snapped like sails. By the time the first rain struck, the square was bare.

- 1

Point

One idea, in your own words, answering the question asked.

The writer presents the storm as something that clears the square before it has properly arrived.
- 2

Evidence

Short, embedded in your own sentence. Never a whole line dropped in with a colon.

The market “emptied” as the wind “rose”, and by the first rain the square was “bare”.
- 3

Method

Name what the writer did. This is the terminology mark, and it is the one most often missing.

A simile — awnings “snapped like sails” — and a four-word sentence dropped between two longer ones.
- 4

Effect

What it does to the reader — and be specific about which reader.

The sea image leaves the square feeling unmoored, and the abrupt middle sentence lands like the gust it describes.
- 5

Zoom

One word or one piece of punctuation from the quotation, taken further.

“Bare” is stronger than empty: it suggests something has gone, not a space that was never filled.
- 6

Link

Back to the question, or forward to the whole text.

The stillness here is what makes the noise of the storm in the next paragraph land as hard as it does.

FOUR THINGS THAT COST MARKS

Embed the quotation
“By the first rain the square was ‘bare’” is one sentence, and it is yours. A quotation sitting on its own line after a colon is not.

Write about structure as well as language
Where it sits in the text, what comes before it, what changes after — all of that is AO2.

Name the method, do not spot it
“This is a metaphor” earns nothing on its own. What the metaphor does is the mark.

Context has to explain the text
If the sentence would be true with the text removed, it is history, not AO3.

Writing about structure

Five questions. Half of AO2 is where things sit in the text, and it is the half most answers leave out.

THE SAME EXTRACT, READ FOR STRUCTURE

The market emptied as the wind rose. Awnings snapped like sails. By the time the first rain struck, the square was bare.

Where does it start?

1 The writer chose an opening. Ask what it makes you assume, and what it keeps back.

It opens on the market already emptying — the effect before the cause. The storm arrives third.

What changes?

2 Name the shift and where it happens. Time, place, focus, mood — one of them almost always moves.

Wind, then awnings, then rain: the weather closes in one sentence at a time.

Where is the focus?

3 Wide to narrow, or narrow to wide. The camera is doing something even when nobody mentions it.

It pulls back — one market stall’s awnings, then the whole square.

What is withheld?

4 What the writer has not told you yet is a structural choice, not an omission.

Nobody appears. The square empties without a single person being named.

How does it end?

5 The last thing you are left holding, and its position is the point.

It ends on “bare” — one flat syllable, in final position, after the longest sentence of the three.

FOUR THINGS THAT COST MARKS

Structure is not the plot

Retelling what happens in order is summary. Structure is what the writer did with that order.

One structural point beats four language ones

Most answers cover language twice over and structure not at all. The objective asks for both.

Say where, not just what

“There is a shift” earns nothing. Where it falls, and what sits either side of it, is the mark.

Sentence length is evidence — count it

Claim a pattern only after checking it holds. A pattern asserted and not there costs more than it wins.

The terminology wall

The words the mark scheme means when it says “relevant subject terminology”.

LANGUAGE

- metaphor
- simile
- personification
- alliteration
- sibilance
- semantic field
- imagery
- connotation
- juxtaposition
- hyperbole
- oxymoron
- pathetic fallacy
- symbolism
- motif
- diction
- register
- tone
- irony
- euphemism
- anaphora
- plosive
- assonance
- colloquial
- emotive language
- rhetorical question
- triadic structure
- superlative
- modal verb
- imperative

STRUCTURE

- opening
- ending
- shift
- cyclical
- foreshadowing
- flashback
- cliffhanger
- narrative perspective
- chronology
- focus
- contrast
- repetition
- caesura
- enjambment
- volta
- stanza
- turning point
- in medias res
- frame narrative
- parallel structure
- climax
- exposition
- denouement
- withheld information

FORM

- sonnet
- dramatic monologue
- soliloquy
- aside
- stage direction
- free verse
- blank verse
- iambic pentameter
- rhyme scheme
- ballad
- novella
- epistolary
- act
- scene
- quatrain
- couplet
- octave
- sestet
- refrain
- tragedy
- comedy
- prologue
- chorus

YOUR OWN WRITING

- purpose
- audience
- form
- tone
- register
- cohesion
- discourse marker
- topic sentence
- short sentence for effect
- semicolon
- colon
- parenthesis
- varied openings
- anecdote
- direct address
- counter-argument
- ellipsis
- dash
- one-sentence paragraph