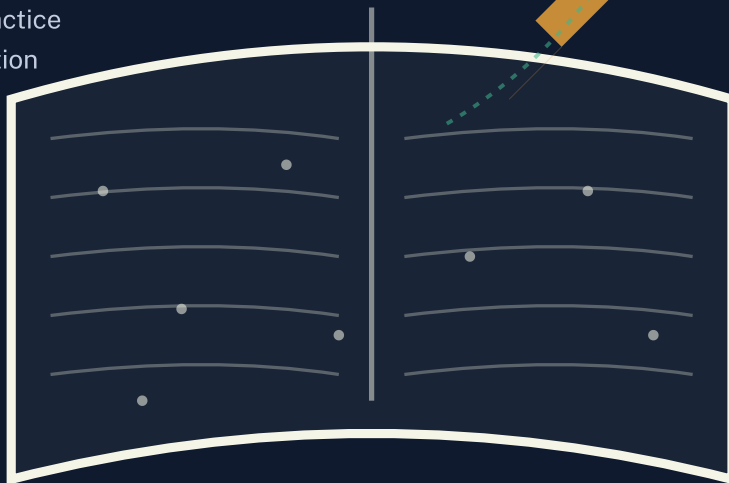


EDEXCEL GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1EN0) · COMPONENT 1

English Language Component 1

Reading a 19th-century fiction extract, and imaginative writing

Twelve topics on two pages each: learn it, then use it. Original extracts with every question answered and marked, a full response marked line by line, and a practice source with its own Section A and Section B to finish.

**12**

TOPICS, EACH ON TWO PAGES

45

KEY WORDS TO OWN

4

ORIGINAL EXTRACTS, FULLY ORIGINAL

64

MARKS IN THE PRACTICE PAPER

Start here

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Start here

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Two pages a topic

Learn it: sixty seconds of the skill, the facts with a circle to colour, key words, and a Spot it question on a sticky note.

Use it: the extract or example this skill needs, a real-tariff question answered and marked, how it could be asked, a box to write from memory, and a quick-fire quiz.

Four steps, every time

Predict how much you'll remember. **Recall** with the page covered. **Check** in another colour and fill the circles. **Repair** the weakest part, then come back in two days.

Where it comes from

The structure, marks and assessment objectives follow Pearson Edexcel's specification for GCSE English Language (1EN0, Issue 6, August 2024). The exam technique comes from Edexcel's own Component 1 papers, mark schemes and Examiner's Reports (June 2022 and June 2023). No Edexcel question, extract or mark scheme wording is reproduced: every extract, question, sample answer and practice source in this guide was written specifically for it.

First edition. No serving English teacher has read this guide through yet. If something should change, please tell Empower Educators at info@empowerededucators.co.uk.

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Know the exam

Component 1 on one page

Component 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing	
Section A	Reading: one unseen 19th-century fiction extract, four questions, 24 marks
Section B	Imaginative writing: EITHER/OR choice, 40 marks
Exam	Written, 1 hour 45 minutes
Marks	64, which is 40% of the GCSE
Tiers	Untiered – the same paper for every student

You should spend about 1 hour on Section A and 45 minutes on Section B. Bring black ink. Every text on this paper is unseen – you will not have studied it before the exam. Component 2 (Non-fiction and Transactional Writing, 96 marks, 60% of the GCSE) is a separate paper and is not covered by this guide.

The five questions, every time

The question types below recur, in this order, on every series. The wording and source change; the skill each one tests does not. Note that Question 3 is Component 1's one reading question that tests language and structure together – there is no separate structure-only question.

Q	Marks	AO	What it wants	Time
Q1	1	AO1	Identify a single word or phrase, from a short named line range, that shows a stated detail. The mark scheme accepts only the specific answer it names.	~2 min
Q2	2	AO1	Give two separate things, from a named line range, that show a stated idea. Your own words or quotation, each credited separately.	~5 min
Q3	6	AO2	Explain how the writer uses language AND structure together, in a named line range. Covering only one half caps the mark at Level 1.	~13 min
Q4	15	AO4	Evaluate how successfully the whole extract achieves a stated effect. Marked by levels 1 to 5.	~25 min
Q5 or 6	40	AO5 + AO6	Imaginative writing: EITHER a plain prompt OR a prompt with two images, both 'real or imagined'. 24 marks content and organisation, 16 technical accuracy.	~45 min

Sources: Pearson Edexcel GCSE English Language (1EN0) specification, Issue 6, August 2024; Edexcel's Component 1 question papers, mark schemes and Examiner's Reports, June 2022 and June 2023. Always check your own papers and the current specification.

Assessment objectives on Component 1

AO3 (comparing texts) plays no part here: it belongs to Component 2, where Section A gives two linked non-fiction extracts. Every Component 1 reading question stays inside the single fiction extract in front of you.

AO	What it asks for	Weight
A01	Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.	9.4%
A02	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects, using subject terminology.	13.1%
A03	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives across two or more texts.	N/A on Component 1
A04	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.	18.8%
A05	Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively; organise information and ideas.	30%
A06	Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.	20%

1 Finding one explicit detail

Learn it

In sixty seconds

The first Section A question is worth only 1 mark, and the mark scheme accepts a single, pre-decided answer: usually one word or a short phrase from a named line range. There is no credit for a near-miss or a reasonable alternative, so precision matters more than it looks.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ AO1 covers identifying and interpreting both explicit and implicit information and ideas - Question 1 tests the explicit half.
- ☐ Question 1 is worth 1 mark and is drawn from a short, named line range, usually the first few lines of the extract.
- ☐ The mark scheme for Question 1 is narrow: it lists the exact word or short phrase that earns the mark, not a range of acceptable answers.
- ☐ A correct idea expressed in the wrong words does not earn this mark - unlike Question 2, Question 1 rewards finding the specific detail the question is actually asking for.
- ☐ Read the question twice before answering: it usually asks what a detail 'shows' about something, not simply what is present in the lines.
- ☐ Checking the line numbers given is not optional. A true, relevant detail taken from outside the named lines earns nothing.
- ☐ Because the mark scheme is this narrow, the safest approach is to find the single word doing the most work in the question's chosen lines - a longer phrase built around it still earns the mark, but costs time better spent on the rest of the paper.

Key words

AO1 identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. ☐

Explicit stated directly in the text - no inference needed. ☐

Line reference the specific line numbers a question restricts you to. ☐

Single-word answer Question 1's usual format: one word or short phrase, narrowly marked. ☐

Extract A: The Lease's opening sentence reads: "The farmhouse stood at the end of a lane so overgrown" that Harwood twice doubted his way. A question might ask what shows the lane was difficult to follow. Several words are tempting - "overgrown", "Briars", "doubted" - but only one of them is the word the lane itself is described by. The mark scheme would accept only that word, not a true but less precise alternative.

Edexcel's examiners have reported that Question 1 is usually answered well, and the marks that are lost are almost always the same kind: a detail that is true and relevant but drawn from outside the given line numbers.

Spot it Which answer would be credited?

A question asks: from lines 1–3, identify a word or phrase that shows the lane was difficult to follow. Which answer matches the mark scheme?

- ☐ A overgrown
- ☐ B briars
- ☐ C a lane
- ☐ D Harwood doubted his way

Cover this, choose, then read

A. 'Overgrown' is the single word the lane is actually described by, and the kind of precise, narrow answer Question 1's mark scheme rewards. 'Briars' is true of the hedges, not the lane itself. 'A lane' names the thing, not a detail about it. 'Harwood doubted his way' describes his reaction, not a feature of the lane - a common way this mark is lost.

1

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

Finding one explicit detail

Use it

Extract A: The Lease: the opening of the extract, exactly as it would appear in the exam insert.

Extract A: The Lease. This extract is from the opening of a novel. Mr Harwood, a young solicitor's clerk, has travelled to a remote farmhouse to collect the signature of its tenant, Mrs Prentice, on a lease she has long refused to sign.

- 1 The farmhouse stood at the end of a lane so overgrown that
- 2 Harwood twice doubted he had taken the right turning, and
- 3 twice pressed on regardless, there being no one in that
- 4 lonely stretch of country to ask. Briars had claimed the
- 5 hedges on either side, and more than once he was obliged
- 6 to hold back a branch with his free hand, the other being
- 7 occupied with his hat, his case of papers, and an umbrella
- 8 he had not once had cause to open.
- 9 When at last the house came into view he stopped short,
- 10 for it was in a worse state than the lane had prepared him
- 11 to expect. Three of the upper windows were boarded, and
- 12 the fourth stood open to the weather, its curtain moving
- 13 faintly though there was no wind to speak of. A dog,
- 14 chained near the gate, watched him approach without so
- 15 much as lifting its head from its paws, as if it had long
- 16 ago concluded that nothing arriving by that lane could
- 17 possibly concern it.

Lines 1 to 17 of the extract, as printed in the exam insert.

From lines 9–11, identify a word or phrase that shows the house was not well kept.

[1 mark]

"boarded" ✓

1/1

The mark scheme accepts only 'boarded' (or the fuller phrase it appears in). 'A worse state' is too vague to be the single word the question is really asking for, and 'the fourth stood open to the weather' describes a different window, not this detail.

It could be asked as

- Identify a word or phrase, from a short named line range, that shows a specific stated detail.
- Find the single word a description actually hangs on, rather than a longer, looser phrase.
- Check a tempting answer against the exact line numbers given before writing it down.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

1.1 What does AO1 cover, and which half of it does Question 1 test?

1.2 How many marks is Question 1 worth, and how many acceptable answers does its mark scheme usually have?

1.3 True or false: a true, relevant detail from outside the given line numbers can still be credited.

1.4 Why is naming the single key word quicker than writing a longer phrase, even though both can earn the mark?

2 Finding several things, in your own words

Learn it

In sixty seconds

Question 2 is worth 2 marks and asks for two separate things from a slightly longer line range. Unlike Question 1, the mark scheme here accepts your own words or a quotation, and lists several acceptable answers rather than just one - the skill is choosing two that are genuinely different.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ Question 2 is worth 2 marks: one mark for each separate, valid point, drawn from a named (and usually slightly longer) line range.
- ☐ You may answer in your own words or with a short quotation - the mark scheme for this question lists several acceptable versions of each point.
- ☐ Two points that make essentially the same observation in different words only ever earn one mark between them.
- ☐ The question usually asks what a set of details 'show' about something (a place, a person, a mood) - so a direct quotation sometimes still needs a one-clause explanation to make clear what it is being offered as evidence for.
- ☐ As with Question 1, a true detail from outside the given lines earns nothing, however relevant it looks.
- ☐ Because several answers are accepted, it is worth offering the two clearest, most separate details you can find, rather than two that overlap.
- ☐ Reading the whole of the given range before writing anything down helps avoid picking two details that turn out to make the same point.

Key words

Own words restating a detail in your own phrasing rather than quoting it directly. ☐

Separate point a detail distinct from any other point already made - repetition earns nothing extra. ☐

Acceptable answer the mark scheme's term for one of several valid ways to express a given point. ☐

Reading on from Extract A: The Lease's opening: "Three of the upper windows were boarded, and the fourth stood open to the weather, its curtain moving faintly" though there was no wind. A little further, "a worse state than the lane had prepared him to expect" sets the tone before any single detail is given. A question asking for two things that show the house was neglected could be answered with the boarded windows and the loose curtain - two separate, concrete details - rather than two different ways of saying 'the house looked bad', which would only earn one mark between them.

Edexcel's reports note that this mark is most often lost in one of two ways: giving only one valid point when the question asks for two, or taking one of the two points from outside the given line range.

Spot it Which pair of answers is safest?

A question asks for two things that show the house was in poor condition. Which pair of answers would be marked as two separate points?

- ☐ A Three windows were boarded up; a curtain was moving in an open window
- ☐ B The house looked neglected; the house was not well kept
- ☐ C It was a bad house; it was clearly empty

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Two separate, concrete details - the boarded windows and the loose curtain - are exactly what this question rewards. The other two options each restate the same general impression twice in different words, which the mark scheme can only credit once.

2 Finding several things, in your own words

Use it

Extract A: The Lease: lines 9 to 17, where the house's neglect is shown through a run of separate details.

Extract A: The Lease. This extract is from the opening of a novel. Mr Harwood, a young solicitor's clerk, has travelled to a remote farmhouse to collect the signature of its tenant, Mrs Prentice, on a lease she has long refused to sign.

- 9 When at last the house came into view he stopped short,
 10 for it was in a worse state than the lane had prepared him
 11 to expect. Three of the upper windows were boarded, and
 12 the fourth stood open to the weather, its curtain moving
 13 faintly though there was no wind to speak of. A dog,
 14 chained near the gate, watched him approach without so
 15 much as lifting its head from its paws, as if it had long
 16 ago concluded that nothing arriving by that lane could
 17 possibly concern it.

Lines 9 to 17, each line printed exactly as it appears in the exam insert.

Give two things, from lines 9–17, that show the dog at the gate was used to being ignored.

[2 marks]

The dog was “chained near the gate” ✓, and it “watched him approach without so” “much as lifting its head from its paws” ✓.

2/2

Two separate points, each taken from within the given lines: that the dog is chained (so it cannot investigate even if it wanted to), and that it does not react to a visitor at all. A candidate's own words would be credited just as readily as the quotations shown here.

It could be asked as

- Give two (or more) things that show a stated idea, from a slightly longer named line range.
- Answer in your own words, in quotation, or a mixture of both - the mark scheme accepts either.
- Choose two genuinely separate details rather than two versions of the same observation.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

2.1 How many marks is Question 2 worth, and how are they awarded?

2.2 Can you answer Question 2 in your own words, or must you quote?

2.3 What are the two most common ways this mark is lost, according to Edexcel's reports?

2.4 True or false: Question 2's line range is usually shorter than Question 1's.

3 Language, word by word

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

Learn it**In sixty seconds**

Question 3 is worth 6 marks and asks about language AND structure together in one question - there is no separate language-only question on this paper. This topic builds the language half: picking a precise word or phrase and explaining what it does, ready to combine with structure in the next topic.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ AO2 asks you to explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using subject terminology accurately.
- ☐ Question 3 tests language and structure together - choose single words or short phrases to analyse, not whole sentences.
- ☐ A long quotation pushes an answer toward describing content ('what happens') rather than language ('how it is said').
- ☐ Say what a word or phrase literally means, what it connotes (suggests beyond that meaning), and what effect that has on the reader - in that order.
- ☐ A simile compares two things using 'like' or 'as'; a metaphor describes one thing as if it actually were another, without 'like' or 'as'.
- ☐ Personification gives a non-human thing a human quality or action - useful for describing a landscape, the weather, or an object as though it has intent.
- ☐ Precise subject terminology (simile, metaphor, personification, connotation) is credited when used accurately, and costs nothing if a sentence doesn't happen to name a device, as long as the comment itself is sharp.
- ☐ Checking a device both ways before naming it matters: is this genuinely what the term means, and do the exact words quoted actually show it?

Key words

AO2 explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects, using subject terminology.	☐
Connotation an association or feeling a word carries beyond its literal meaning.	☐
Simile a comparison using 'like' or 'as'.	☐
Metaphor describing one thing as if it were another, without 'like' or 'as'.	☐
Personification giving a non-human thing human qualities or actions.	☐

Extract B: The Crossing describes the marsh as "flat and silvered", broken by reeds that "bent all together when the wind crossed them, as though the whole expanse had briefly agreed upon a single thought and then abandoned it". 'Silvered' connotes something cold and reflective, almost metallic, which already unsettles a scene that should simply be calm. The personification of the reeds 'agreeing upon a single thought' goes further: it gives the whole marsh a single, unified will, which makes Eleanor - alone, on foot - feel outnumbered by the landscape itself before anything has actually happened to her.

The two surest ways to slip from language analysis into content description are quoting more than a short phrase, which pulls the comment toward what happens rather than how it is said, and reading a figurative image literally, as though the comparison itself were the thing being described rather than its effect.

Spot it Which comment analyses language, not content?

A student is asked how language shows the marsh's effect on Eleanor in lines 12-15. Which comment is doing AO2 work?

- ☐ A The personification of the reeds 'agreeing' with one another gives the marsh a single, unified will, which makes Eleanor feel outnumbered before anything has happened to her.
- ☐ B The marsh is flat and has reeds growing in it, which the wind blows.
- ☐ C Eleanor is walking across a marsh on her way to a new job.
- ☐ D It is evening, so the light is beginning to fade over the marsh.

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Naming the device, quoting the exact words, and explaining the effect on the reader is exactly what AO2 rewards. The other three options are all true readings of the content, but none of them analyses a word or phrase - they describe what is happening rather than how the writer's language makes it happen.

3 Language, word by word

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

Use it

Annotating a phrase: name the connotation, mark the word it hangs on, then build the effect from there.

a cry that was almost

unsettling - not quite animal, not quite human

Look at lines 25–30 of Extract B: The Crossing. Choose one word or phrase and explain its connotation and effect on the reader.

[2 marks]

The “cry that was almost human” ✓ is unsettling precisely because it will not settle into either category: not animal enough to be dismissed, not human enough to be a person calling for help, so the uncertainty itself becomes the source of alarm ✓.

2/2

This isolates the language half of Question 3 for practice. The real Question 3 never asks for language alone - it always needs structure considered alongside it, which Topic 4 shows in full.

It could be asked as

- Pick a single word or short phrase and explain what it connotes, then what effect that has.
- Avoid a quotation long enough to describe content rather than analyse language.
- Name a device (simile, personification, connotation) only where the exact words actually show it.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 8 got ___ / 8

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

3.1 What three things should a language comment do, in order?

3.3 What is a connotation?

3.2 Why does a long quotation often weaken a language answer?

3.4 Does Question 3 ever ask about language on its own?

4 Structure, and combining it with language

Learn it

In sixty seconds

Question 3's mark scheme has one rule above all others: a response that considers only language, or only structure, cannot score above the bottom level, however good it is. Both must appear together, on the same passage, for the higher levels to be available at all.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ Structure means how a text is organised and arranged - where the writer's focus starts, how and why it shifts, and what order events or images are revealed in.
- ☐ Edexcel's own mark scheme for Question 3 states that a response considering only language, or only structure, cannot progress beyond the bottom level (Level 1), however detailed it is.
- ☐ The safest shape for an answer is one clear language point and one clear structural point, each explained, rather than several of one kind and none of the other.
- ☐ A focus shift is a change in what the writing pays attention to: from the wide scene to one small detail, from a steady pace to urgency, from one sense to another.
- ☐ A shift in sentence length or form is itself a structural choice, not only a language one - a short sentence after several long ones is often doing structural work.
- ☐ Looking at where a paragraph or section begins and ends often reveals the structural choice a question is pointing toward, before any individual word is considered.
- ☐ Two or three well-explained points, covering both language and structure, score higher than a long list of labelled devices with no explanation attached.

Key words

Structure how a text is organised and arranged, as distinct from the words chosen within it. ☐

Focus shift a change in what the writing pays attention to. ☐

Pace the speed at which events or detail seem to move, often controlled by sentence length. ☐

Level 1 cap the mark scheme rule that an answer covering only language or only structure cannot score above the bottom level. ☐

Across Extract B: The Crossing's middle section, the writing shifts from a scene ("The marsh on either side lay flat and silvered") to a change in the light ("The sun went down behind a bank of cloud"), and the sentences shorten to match: "She quickened her pace without quite deciding to." is a short, simple sentence after two much longer ones, and its brevity does the same work as its content - both the pace of the walking and the pace of the writing speed up together. Naming only the short sentence (language) or only the shift from scene to urgency (structure) would each, alone, stay capped at Level 1; naming both, and connecting them, is what the higher levels ask for.

Edexcel's reports describe the single biggest reason this question underperforms as an answer built entirely around language, with structure mentioned only in passing or not at all - the reverse (structure only, no language) is less common but capped in exactly the same way.

Spot it Which response would reach the higher levels?

Two students write about how language and structure build tension in lines 17-23. Which approach is NOT capped at Level 1?

- ☐ A Naming the connotation of a word in the description, and explaining how the shift to a short sentence afterward mirrors the change in pace
- ☐ B Naming three separate connotations of words in the passage, each explained in detail
- ☐ C Describing how the paragraph is structured, with no comment on any individual word or phrase
- ☐ D Listing every structural shift in the passage, with no reference to language at all

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Covering both language and structure, even briefly, is what the mark scheme requires before the higher levels are even available. The other three options are each detailed within one half of the question only, which the real mark scheme caps at Level 1 regardless of quality.

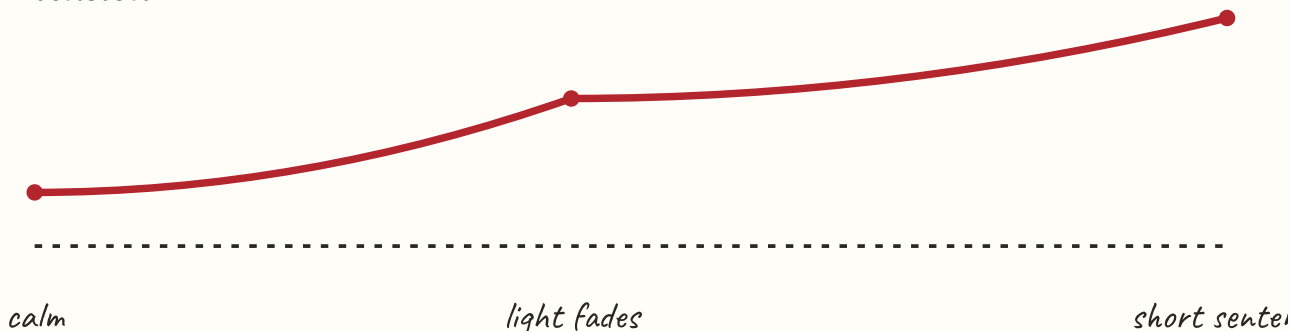
4 Structure, and combining it with language

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

Use it

The shift in lines 17–23: a calm scene, then the light changes, then the sentence shortens to match it.

tension



Look at lines 17–23 of Extract B: The Crossing. How does the writer use language and structure to build tension?

[6 marks]

The metaphor of someone “drawing a thin curtain across the sky” ✓ makes the fading light feel deliberate, almost watched over, rather than simply a natural change in the weather ✓. Structurally, this slow, multi-clause sentence is followed immediately by a short one, “She quickened her pace without quite deciding to.” ✓ - the sudden drop in sentence length mirrors the sudden change in Eleanor’s own pace, so the structure is doing the same work as its content ✓.

6/6

Level 3 (5–6 marks): both language (the curtain metaphor) and structure (the shift to a short sentence) are analysed, each tied to a specific effect, which is what the mark scheme’s top level asks for. An answer covering only one half, however detailed, could not score above Level 1.

It could be asked as

- Explain how language and structure work together to build an effect across a given line range.
- Identify one structural shift (pace, focus, sentence length) and one language choice, and connect them.
- Check a draft answer isn’t accidentally all language, or all structure, before finishing it.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

4.1 What score can a response reach if it analyses only language, however well?

4.2 Name one way a sentence’s own length or form can be a structural choice.

4.3 How many marks is Question 3 worth in total?

4.4 What is a focus shift?

5 Evaluating the whole extract

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

*Learn it***In sixty seconds**

The final Section A question is worth 15 marks - far more than any other reading question - and assesses AO4: evaluating a text critically, usually in response to a statement about something the whole extract attempts to do. It covers the entire extract, not a named line range.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- AO4: 'evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.' It is marked by levels and is worth 15 marks on its own.
- This question is usually framed as a statement about the extract ('there is an attempt to create a sense of X'), asking you to evaluate how successfully that is achieved.
- Unlike the other Section A questions, this one covers the whole extract, not a named line range - so planning which moments to use matters more here than anywhere else on the paper.
- An evaluation is not a retelling. State a judgement about how well the statement holds, then support it with specific, well-chosen references across the extract.
- References to the writer's techniques (language or structure) are only credited at the higher levels if they are used to support the critical judgement, not offered as analysis for its own sake.
- The strongest answers reach a genuine judgement - how far, and in what way, the attempt succeeds - rather than simply agreeing that it does.
- This question is worth almost a quarter of the whole paper's marks, so a rushed or very short answer caps how high it can reach, however sound the ideas in it are.

Key words

AO4 evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references. ☐

Evaluate weigh up a text and reach a judgement about it, rather than only describing it. ☐

Critical judgement a reasoned assessment of how well something is achieved, not just a summary. ☐

Whole-extract question a question whose evidence may be drawn from anywhere in the source, not one named section. ☐

A statement might read: 'In this extract, there is an attempt to create a growing sense of unease.' Across Extract C: The Inventory, the unease builds in stages: the small, early signs ("a film of dust across the hall table", a stopped clock) give way to the unsettling moment Margaret mistakes her uncle's coat for the man himself ("she had taken the nearest for the man himself, standing in the gloom, before her reason caught up with her eye"), and build further still with the discovery of the letters. A Level 5 answer would track that build across the whole extract and reach a judgement about how effectively it escalates, rather than simply listing each unsettling detail in order.

A misread detail early in the extract can be costly on this question, since later points of evidence often build on that first interpretation. Checking a key early reading before committing a full paragraph to it is worth the extra thirty seconds.

Spot it Which approach reaches the highest level?

A student must evaluate how successfully Extract C: The Inventory creates a growing sense of unease. Which approach is likely to reach the highest level?

- A** Tracking the unease as it builds across the whole extract, from small early signs to the discovery of the letters, and reaching a judgement about how effectively the escalation works
- B** Retelling the events of the extract from start to finish, in order
- C** Agreeing completely, because the extract does mention the letters being strange
- D** Listing every unsettling detail in the extract with no comment on how they build on each other

Cover this, choose, then read

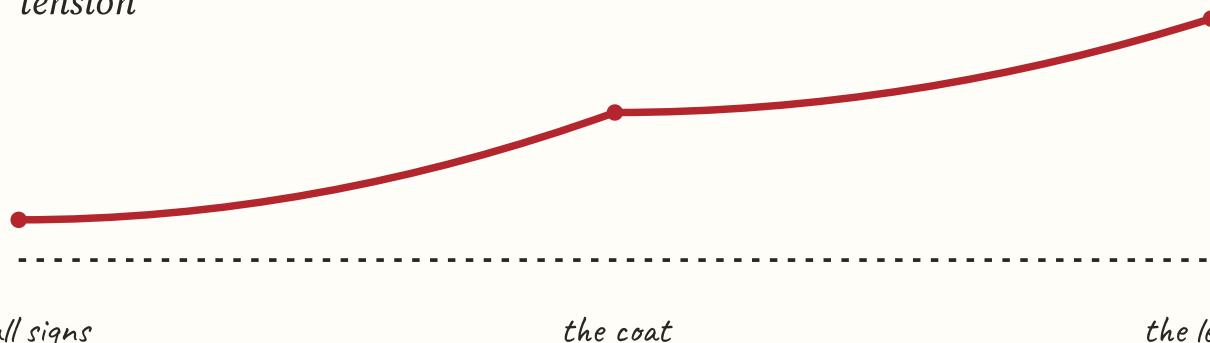
A. Tracking the development across the whole source and reaching a genuine, supported judgement is what AO4's higher levels ask for. Retelling isn't evaluation, agreeing without evidence isn't a judgement, and a list with no sense of build misses the 'evaluate how successfully' part of the question entirely.

5 Evaluating the whole extract

Part one · Reading the fiction extract

Use it**Extract C: The Inventory: the unease builds in three stages across the whole extract.**

tension



In Extract C: The Inventory, there is an attempt to create a growing sense of unease. Evaluate how successfully this is achieved.

[15 marks]

This is achieved very successfully, through a deliberate build across the whole extract rather than a single dramatic moment. It begins with small, almost domestic signs of neglect – “a film of dust across the hall table that no one had troubled to wipe” ✓ – which unsettle precisely because they are so ordinary; nothing has gone wrong yet, only unattended ✓. The unease sharpens at the mistaken coat, where Margaret “had taken the nearest for the man himself, standing in the gloom, before her reason caught up with her eye” ✓ – a moment where perception itself briefly fails her, which is more disturbing than an external threat would be ✓. It builds further still with the letters, where the discovery is followed not by action but by paralysis: she has “no idea at all how a person was meant to proceed from a discovery of this kind” ✓, and the extract closes not on a resolution but on her trusting “nothing in the house at all” ✓ – an escalation from a dusty table to a complete collapse of certainty, which is exactly the shape a successful build of unease should take ✓.

15/15

Level 5 (13–15 marks): the response tracks the unease in clearly identified stages, reaches a sustained judgement, and every reference supports that judgement rather than standing alone.

It could be asked as

- Evaluate how successfully an extract achieves a named effect, using evidence from across the whole source.
- Reach and sustain a judgement, rather than agreeing or disagreeing with a statement by default.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

5.1 How many marks is the evaluate question worth?

5.2 Which assessment objective does this question target?

5.3 Does this question name a specific line range to use evidence from?

5.4 Name one way to reach the highest level on this question.

6

Part two · Imaginative writing

Choosing EITHER or OR

Learn it

In sixty seconds

Section B offers a choice of two imaginative writing tasks, labelled EITHER (a plain prompt) and OR (a prompt with two images). Both are marked identically, out of 40: 24 for AO5, 16 for AO6. The choice is entirely about which gives you a clearer, more controllable idea - not which looks more impressive.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- Section B's single writing task offers a choice of two options, always labelled EITHER and OR: a plain prompt, and a prompt accompanied by two images.
- Both options are marked against exactly the same criteria, for exactly the same 40 marks: 24 for content and organisation (AO5), 16 for technical accuracy (AO6).
- Both prompts typically invite a response that 'could be real or imagined' - this is not a choice between a true story and a story you invent; either option may be either.
- The two options are usually close in spirit (often variations on a single kind of moment), so choosing between them is about which gives you a clearer, controllable idea, not a different skill.
- Choose ONE moment, situation or feeling before choosing any words. A broad idea is too big to control in 45 minutes; a single specific moment is one you can actually develop.
- Decide your viewpoint (first or third person, which tense) and which one or two senses will carry most of the writing, before you start the opening sentence.
- Plan a shape, not just content: where the focus starts, where it moves to, and where it ends. A plan that is only a list of things to mention tends to produce writing that is only a list too.
- A rushed two minutes of planning is not wasted time: it is bought back many times over when you don't have to stop halfway through to work out where the piece is going.

Key words

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| AO5 communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively; organise information and ideas using structural and grammatical features. | ☐ |
| AO6 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. | ☐ |
| EITHER / OR Section B's two task options, marked identically regardless of which is chosen. | ☐ |
| Scope how much ground a piece of writing tries to cover - usually, less is more in 45 minutes. | ☐ |

The two options for a single paper might read: EITHER 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar', OR, with two images, 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned.' Both allow a real or an imagined response. A student who has a clear, specific idea for the image-based option should take it; a student who already has a sharp idea for the plain prompt loses nothing by ignoring the images entirely. Neither option is the 'safe' or the 'ambitious' choice - they are simply two doors into the same task.

The clearest difference between a controlled answer and a weak one is usually whether the writer settled on one moment and developed it, or tried to cover too much ground - a whole day, a whole relationship, a whole journey from start to finish - and ran out of control, and often time, before the end.

Spot it Which plan is most likely to succeed in 45 minutes?

Four students plan a response to 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar.' Which plan is best suited to the time available?

- | | |
|--|--|
| (A) Focus on the first five minutes of arriving somewhere new: one specific detail that felt wrong, and the decision that followed from it | (B) Describe an entire holiday abroad, day by day, from arrival to departure |
| (C) Cover several different unfamiliar places visited over the years, comparing them | (D) List as many unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells as possible to show off vocabulary |

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Narrowing to one moment, with room to develop a single detail and a decision, is what makes the first plan work in 45 minutes. The other three all try to cover too much ground - a full holiday, several places, or an unfocused list - exactly the pattern that holds weaker answers back.

6

Part two · Imaginative writing

Choosing EITHER or OR

Use it

A plan that fits on a sticky note, made before a single sentence is written.

1. The idea

One moment, one place, one feeling. Not a list of everything you could describe.

2. Viewpoint and senses

Whose eyes. What they'd notice first, and which one or two senses carry it.

3. The shape

Where the focus moves: wide to close, calm to tense, outside to inside.

4. The ending

The line you're writing towards, decided before you start the first one.

Plan a response to EITHER 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar', using the four steps.

[0 marks]

Plan 1 The idea: the first five minutes in a new foster placement, not the whole stay. 2 Viewpoint and senses: first person, close; sound (an unfamiliar house settling at night) carries more than sight here. 3 The shape: start wide (the whole unfamiliar house), narrow to one detail (a door that doesn't lock the way the old one did), end on a decision, not a description. 4 The ending: deciding to leave the landing light on, without quite admitting why.

Plan

No marks are awarded for a plan itself, but every part of it should be visible in the finished piece: the single idea controls what gets included, the senses chosen control the imagery, the shape controls the paragraphing, and knowing the ending in advance stops the piece drifting or stopping abruptly.

It could be asked as

- Plan a response to the OR option instead, using the same four steps.
- Plan a response to a task of your own choosing, in the same real-or-imagined form.
- Take a plan you've already written and cut it down to one single controlling idea.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 8 got ___ / 8

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>6.1 How many marks is the Section B writing task worth in total, and how does that split?</p> <hr/> <p>6.3 Name the four things a two-minute plan should decide.</p> <hr/> | <p>6.2 Are EITHER and OR marked differently?</p> <hr/> <p>6.4 True or false: the EITHER and OR options are always a clean choice between description and narrative.</p> <hr/> |
|---|---|

7 Part two · Imaginative writing

Using an image without just describing it

Learn it

In sixty seconds

One of the two Section B options is always accompanied by two images. The images are a starting point for your own idea, not a scene to transcribe - and you may base your response on one image, both, or effectively neither, provided it still answers the prompt the images are attached to.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ The OR option in Section B is accompanied by two images. You are told you may base your response on one of them - not that you must use both, or describe either in detail.
- ☐ An image is a prompt for your own idea, not a scene to list. A response that works through an image feature by feature ('in this picture I can see...') describes the prompt rather than answering the task.
- ☐ The two images attached to a task are usually related but not identical - different angles on the same idea - which is itself a planning resource: a difference between them can suggest a moment, a choice, or a turning point.
- ☐ Nothing in the mark scheme rewards accurately describing an image. AO5 rewards organising your own ideas; an image that is only described, not used, does that work for you instead of you doing it.
- ☐ A strong image-based response is often indistinguishable, by the end of the second paragraph, from a response to the plain prompt - the image did its job in the planning, then the writing took over.
- ☐ If neither image suggests a clear idea within the first minute of looking at them, the plain EITHER option is usually the safer choice - there is no credit for using images you don't actually need.

Key words

Springboard a prompt used as a starting point for your own idea, rather than a fixed scene to reproduce. ☐

Transcribe to describe something exactly as seen, without adding interpretation or idea - what an image should not be used for. ☐

Turning point the moment a piece's situation or mood changes, often suggested by a contrast between two images. ☐

Two images attached to 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned' might show a clear motorway stretching ahead, and the same road half-submerged after flooding. A weak response describes both images in turn: 'In the first picture the road is clear. In the second picture there is a lot of water on the road.' A strong response uses the contrast between them as the turning point of its own story - the exact moment the plan stopped working - without ever directly describing either picture as a picture.

Edexcel's examiners have reported, repeatedly, that responses which treat an image as something to list rather than something to think with are one of the most common reasons an otherwise accurate piece of writing underperforms at AO5 - the content is correct, but it has not been organised into anything beyond a description of what is in front of the writer.

Spot it Which approach uses the images most effectively?

Two images show a clear road, then the same road flooded. Which approach to 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned' uses them most effectively?

- ☐ A Using the shift between the two images as the turning point in a narrative, without ever describing either image directly
- ☐ B Opening with 'In this picture I can see a road' and describing both images in order
- ☐ C Ignoring the images and the theme, and writing about an unrelated topic instead
- ☐ D Describing the flooded road in great visual detail, with no story or idea attached to it

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Treating the images as a prompt for an idea - here, the turning point of a journey - and then writing the idea itself is exactly what AO5 rewards. The other three either describe the prompt instead of answering it, abandon the task's theme entirely, or produce description with no organised idea behind it.

7 Part two · Imaginative writing

Using an image without just describing it

Use it

Two images for the same task - not two scenes to describe, but a contrast to think with.

Image 1: a clear, open motorway stretching ahead.

Image 2: the same road, half under flood water.

The gap between the two images is the idea - not either image on its own.

Using the two road images, plan the turning point of a response to OR 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned.' Do not describe either image directly. [0 marks]

Plan The turning point: not the flood itself, but the exact moment the driver first doubts the satnav's instruction to keep going. Before: confident, steady pace, long sentences. The moment: a single short sentence, no image named. After: the decision to turn back, and what is lost by not reaching the original destination.

Plan

Neither image is described at any point in the plan - both are used only to supply the shape of the idea (steady, then a sudden turn), which is exactly what AOS rewards an image prompt for doing.

It could be asked as

- Use a contrast between two images as the turning point of a narrative or description.
- Write a response to the OR option without naming either image at all.
- Identify what idea a pair of images suggests, before deciding whether to use them.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 6 got ___ / 6

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

7.1 Must a response to the OR option use both images, one, or neither?

7.2 What does the mark scheme reward about an image: using it, or describing it?

7.3 Name one way two related images can be used for planning.

7.4 If neither image suggests a clear idea quickly, what should you do?

8 Openings that do real work

Part two · Imaginative writing

Learn it**In sixty seconds**

An opening has one job: to put the reader inside a specific moment, not to announce the topic or describe the prompt. The strongest openings could only belong to the piece that follows them - nothing generic, nothing that could open any piece on a similar theme.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ An opening line should be specific to your piece, not generic enough to open almost any response on the same theme.
- ☐ Avoid writing about the task itself: 'This is a story about a time I felt unfamiliar somewhere' announces the topic rather than entering it.
- ☐ Starting in medias res (in the middle of an action or moment) drops the reader straight into the piece, with any context filled in afterward rather than set up first.
- ☐ A single, sharply observed detail can open a piece more effectively than a wide establishing description - a detail suggests a whole scene; a wide shot can read as a list.
- ☐ Decide your narrative viewpoint in the first line and hold it: first person or third, past or present tense, whose thoughts you have access to.
- ☐ An opening does not have to be dramatic to work. A quiet, exact detail, placed with confidence, often does more than a sentence straining for impact.
- ☐ The strongest openings are often written, or rewritten, last - once the rest of the piece is planned, it becomes much easier to see what the first line actually needs to do.

Key words

Hook an opening detail or line designed to draw the reader in immediately. ☐

In medias res starting in the middle of the action, rather than before it begins. ☐

Narrative viewpoint the consistent perspective (person and tense) from which a piece is told. ☐

Establishing shot an opening that sets the wider scene before narrowing in - useful, but risks becoming a list if overused. ☐

Two openings for the same task: 'This story is about the time I got lost in a city I didn't know.' announces the topic and goes nowhere. 'The street names had stopped making sense three turnings back, and Priya was no longer sure which direction the station even was.' starts inside a specific, slightly uncomfortable moment, with a precise detail (the street names, three turnings) that implies the whole situation without explaining it.

An opening that stays conscious of the task itself - describing an image, naming the theme, announcing the kind of piece it is about to be - is exactly the generic, undifferentiated start the strongest responses avoid from the very first word.

Spot it Which opening does the most work in one line?

Four students open a response to 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar.' Which opening line does the most work?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ A The street names had stopped making sense three turnings back, and Priya was no longer sure which direction the station even was. | ☐ B This story is about the time I got lost in a city I didn't know. |
| ☐ C Being somewhere unfamiliar can be a stressful and disorientating experience for a young person. | ☐ D Priya went on holiday to a new city and decided to explore it on her own. |

Cover this, choose, then read

A. The credited opening starts inside a specific, slightly wrong-footing moment (streets that stopped making sense) that implies the situation without announcing it. The second line states the topic. The third is a general statement, not a story. The fourth is a generic start with nothing distinctive about it.

8

Part two · Imaginative writing

Openings that do real work

Use it

Four possible first lines for the same prompt, ranked by how specific they are to this piece rather than to the topic in general.

Weakest: states the topic. "This story is about the time I felt out of place somewhere new."

Weak: a general statement. "Moving somewhere new can be a difficult experience."

Stronger: a wide scene, but still generic. "The city was busy and loud and completely unfamiliar."

Strongest: one sharp, specific, unexplained detail. "The street names had stopped making sense three turnings back."

Write an opening line (not a full response) for: 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar.'

[0 marks]

Draft 1: "Today was a day I will never forget." **Problem:** this is a phrase most readers have met before; it announces significance rather than earning it. **Draft 2:** "The street names had stopped making sense three turnings back, and Priya was no longer sure which direction the station even was."
Why it's stronger: it is specific to one character and one small, escalating problem, it implies the bigger situation without stating it, and it raises a question (will she find the station) the rest of the piece can choose to answer or leave open.

Draft

There are no marks for an opening line alone, but AOS's higher levels reward a register and voice that fit the purpose and audience with real confidence from the first sentence - a generic opening makes that much harder to demonstrate even if the rest of the piece is strong.

It could be asked as

- Write two alternative opening lines for the same prompt, and say which is stronger and why.
- Rewrite a generic opening ('This story is about...') as a specific, in-the-moment one.
- Write an opening line for the OR option instead, without naming either image.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / ? got ___ / ?

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

8.1 Name one kind of opening that reads as generic rather than specific to one piece.

8.2 What does 'in medias res' mean?

8.3 Why might the strongest opening line sometimes be written last?

8.4 Name two things to decide about viewpoint in your opening line.

9 Shape across the whole piece

Part two · Imaginative writing

*Learn it***In sixty seconds**

A05 rewards organisation as well as content: structural features used deliberately, and writing arranged into coherent, linked paragraphs. Planning a shape - where the focus starts, a turning point, and where it ends - is what separates a controlled piece from one that simply runs on.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ A new paragraph signals a shift in time, place, focus, or mood - organisation is an A05 skill, assessed separately from the sentence-level accuracy A06 covers.
- ☐ A turning point - the moment a piece's mood or situation changes - is usually most effective when placed deliberately, rather than stumbled into partway through.
- ☐ Pacing across a whole piece can be controlled by paragraph length as well as sentence length: several short paragraphs in a row can speed up a climax; one longer paragraph can slow a reflective moment.
- ☐ A piece doesn't have to resolve everything by its final line. An ending that leaves one thing deliberately open can be more sophisticated than one that ties up every thread.
- ☐ Discourse markers that link paragraphs ('by the time', 'it was only afterward that', 'underneath all of this') do real structural work - more than markers that only operate inside a single sentence.
- ☐ A single structural idea, used well - one turning point, one shift in focus, one change of pace - outperforms several structural tricks used without control.
- ☐ Structure is planned, not discovered mid-sentence, which is why choosing a shape belongs in the two minutes before writing starts, alongside the single controlling idea.

Key words

A05 organisation structural and grammatical features used to support the coherence and cohesion of a piece. ☐

Turning point the moment a piece's mood, direction or situation changes. ☐

Discourse marker a word or phrase that signals the relationship between ideas or paragraphs. ☐

Pacing the controlled speed at which a piece of writing seems to move. ☐

A shape for 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned': paragraph one, the journey beginning normally, confident pace, longer sentences; paragraph two, one small sign something is wrong, signalled by a discourse marker ('it was only once the rain started that...'); paragraph three, the turning point itself, where the plan fully breaks down; paragraph four, short, landing on a single image rather than a tidy resolution. No individual structural feature here is unusual - a turning point, a pace change, an open ending - but using exactly one of each, in a planned order, is what separates a controlled A05 structure from a piece that simply narrates events as they occur to the writer.

Edexcel's reports describe a recurring structural weakness in weaker responses: a piece that proceeds as a straightforward chronological account, start to finish, with no deliberate shift in focus, pace or mood beyond 'and then this happened, and then this happened.'

Spot it Which structural approach is most deliberately controlled?

Four students structure a response to 'a journey that did not go as planned.' Which approach shows the most deliberate structural control?

- ☐ A Open at a confident, steady pace; narrow to one small warning sign, signalled by a discourse marker; reach a clear turning point; end on a short, open final image
- ☐ B Describe the whole journey in the order it happened, from start to finish, with no shift in pace
- ☐ C Jump between several unrelated journeys without settling on one
- ☐ D Describe the ending first, then explain everything that led up to it in a long list

Cover this, choose, then read

A. One deliberate structural shift - steady to narrowed, then a turning point, then a short open ending - is what sets the first option apart. The others are organised by simple chronology, by switching subjects rather than developing one, or by a list-like explanation with no real shape.

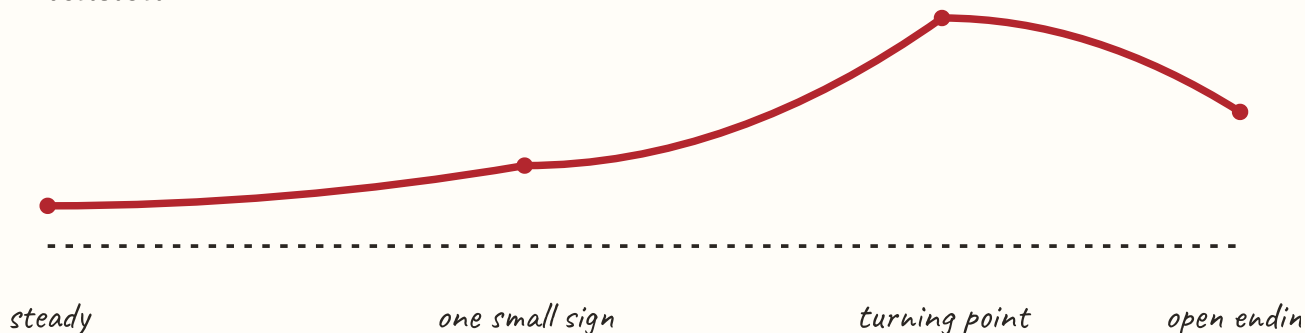
9 Shape across the whole piece

Part two · Imaginative writing

Use it

A shape for a 45-minute piece: not a plot summary, a tension line with one deliberate turn.

tension



Plan the structure (not the full text) of a response to OR 'Write about a journey that did not go as planned.' [0 marks]

Plan Paragraph 1: confident departure, steady pace, third person, past tense. Paragraph 2: one small warning sign - a diversion sign ignored - a deliberate shift in focus, signalled by a discourse marker ('it was only once the rain started that...'). Paragraph 3: the turning point, where the road floods and the plan fully breaks down. Paragraph 4 (short): the decision to turn back, and the orchard gate left unvisited.

Plan

No single structural feature here is unusual on its own - a focus shift, a turning point, a pace change - but using exactly one of each, in a planned order, is what separates a controlled AOS structure from a piece that simply narrates events as they occur.

It could be asked as

- Plan the structure of a response using one deliberate time shift instead of a turning point.
- Identify the turning point in a piece of your own writing, and check whether it's placed where you intended.
- Rewrite a chronological, 'and then' structure as one with a deliberate shift in focus instead.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

9.1 Which assessment objective marks paragraphing and structure?

9.2 Name one way to control pacing beyond sentence length.

9.3 What structural weakness do Edexcel's reports describe most often?

9.4 Does a piece need to resolve everything by its final line?

10

Showing a feeling instead of naming it

Part two · Imaginative writing

*Learn it***In sixty seconds**

A05 rewards imaginative communication, not decoration. Show a feeling through a detail or an action rather than naming it outright, use one or two carefully chosen images rather than several competing ones, and reach for the word that is accurate for the moment, not the most impressive one available.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● *knew it* ① *shaky* ○ *missed*

- Show, don't tell means conveying a feeling through a concrete detail or action, rather than stating the feeling directly. 'Her hands wouldn't stay still' shows nervousness; 'she was nervous' tells it.
- Showing is not a rule to apply to every sentence - naming a feeling directly, once, at the right moment, can land harder after a passage of showing than another layer of imagery would.
- One well-chosen image, developed, is stronger than three competing images in the same sentence. Imagery that piles up without a controlling idea behind it reads as unplanned rather than rich.
- Choose the word that is accurate for this exact moment over the word that sounds most advanced. A word reached for because it sounds impressive, rather than because it is the clearest available, signals register over meaning.
- Imagery should match the register and purpose of the piece. A phrase that sounds borrowed from a very different kind of writing can sit oddly against the rest of your own voice.
- Sensory detail works best when specific to the exact scene: not 'it smelled strange' but the one smell that belongs to this precise place and moment.

Key words

Show, don't tell conveying a feeling or idea through detail and action, rather than stating it outright. ☐

Register the level of formality and the kind of vocabulary suited to a purpose and audience. ☐

Controlling idea the single idea that governs which images and details belong in a passage. ☐

Overwriting using more, or showier, imagery than a moment actually needs. ☐

Compare: 'The street was confusing and frightening and felt like a maze designed to trap me.' This reaches for three images in one sentence (confusion, fear, a maze) and develops none of them. Against it: 'Priya checked the same street sign for the third time, as though reading it again might change what it said.' One image, developed with one small, specific, repeated action, says more by saying less, and never has to name the feeling directly at all.

An extreme or dramatic image reached for because it sounds impressive, rather than because it is earned by the writing around it, is a close cousin of a weakness Edexcel's reports do describe directly: vocabulary chosen to sound advanced rather than because it is the clearest word for the exact moment.

Spot it Which description shows rather than tells, without overreaching?

Four students describe a character's confusion in an unfamiliar place. Which description does the job most effectively?

- Ⓐ Priya checked the same street sign for the third time, as though reading it again might change what it said.
- Ⓑ She felt extremely confused and disorientated and unsure of herself.
- Ⓒ Her mind was a storm of panic, howling and raging with no way out.
- Ⓓ She felt a strange, unsettling, overwhelming, almost unbearable sense of confusion.

Cover this, choose, then read

A. Showing confusion through a specific, small, repeated action, and trusting the reader to read the feeling from it, is what earns credit here. The second tells the feeling directly with no image at all. The third reaches for a dramatic, overworked metaphor that risks sounding contrived. The fourth piles up four adjectives where one precise detail would do more work.

10

Part two · Imaginative writing

Showing a feeling instead of naming it

Use it

Three sentences on the same idea, each doing a different amount of work.

Tells: “She felt confused and unsure of herself.”

Overwrites: “Her mind was a storm of panic, howling and raging with nowhere left to turn, consuming her entirely.”

Shows, with restraint: “Priya checked the same street sign for the third time, as though reading it again might change what it said.”

Rewrite the following so it shows rather than tells, without overreaching: ‘The house was strange and made Tom feel very uneasy.’

[0 marks]

Rewrite: “Tom counted the doors along the landing twice, certain there had been one fewer the first time.”

Rewrite

The rewrite removes both adjectives (‘strange’, ‘uneasy’) and replaces them with one specific, slightly impossible detail that implies unease without naming it, and without reaching for an extreme or borrowed image. A common over-correction is to replace a flat ‘telling’ sentence with an overwritten one – the aim is control, not volume.

It could be asked as

- Rewrite an overwritten sentence of your own so it uses one controlled image instead of several.
- Write a ‘tells’ version and a ‘shows’ version of the same feeling, and compare them.
- Identify the controlling idea in a paragraph you’ve written, and check every image belongs to it.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 6 got ___ / 6

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

10.1 What does ‘show, don’t tell’ mean?

10.2 Why might naming a feeling directly sometimes be the stronger choice?

10.3 Name one weakness that overreaching imagery shares with the vocabulary weakness Edexcel’s reports describe.

10.4 Why can an unusual, impressive-sounding word sometimes cost marks rather than earn them?

11

Part two · Imaginative writing

Sentence variety for effect

Learn it

In sixty seconds

AO6 names sentence structures directly, alongside vocabulary, spelling and punctuation - it is not only about correctness, but about a genuine range used for effect. Vary sentence length and form deliberately, and use a wider range of punctuation than full stops and commas, accurately.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● knew it ● shaky ○ missed

- ☐ AO6 names sentence structures directly, alongside vocabulary, spelling and punctuation: it rewards range and control used for effect, not only correctness.
- ☐ Vary sentence length on purpose across a paragraph: several similarly-length sentences in a row can read as flat, however accurate each one is individually.
- ☐ A simple sentence after two or three longer ones can land with real force - the same technique Section A's language-and-structure question rewards analysing in a writer's extract.
- ☐ A colon can introduce a list, an explanation, or a single sharp idea: used accurately, it signals confident control of sentence-level punctuation.
- ☐ A semicolon joins two closely related independent clauses without a conjunction; using one correctly is one of the clearest signals of a wide punctuation range.
- ☐ A piece doesn't need every punctuation mark to reach the top band - it needs a genuine range, used accurately, chosen because it serves a specific sentence rather than because it's there to be shown off.
- ☐ Reading a sentence back in your head is the fastest check for whether its length and form actually match the effect you intend.

Key words

- AO6** a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. ☐
- Sentence variety** a deliberate mixture of sentence lengths and forms across a piece. ☐
- Colon** a punctuation mark introducing a list, an explanation or an elaboration. ☐
- Semicolon** a punctuation mark joining two closely related independent clauses. ☐

A single paragraph that uses only compound sentences joined by 'and' can be just as monotonous as one that only uses short simple sentences - range means genuine variety of form, not simply avoiding one kind. A strong paragraph might run: one longer, multi-clause sentence to establish a moment; a short sentence to land one detail; then a sentence using a colon to introduce a specific, concrete list.

Edexcel's reports note a lack of confidence in varying sentence types as a recurring weakness: many students can write accurately within one preferred sentence form, but do not deliberately vary that form across a piece. Range has to be planned for; it rarely appears by accident under exam conditions.

Spot it Which shows the widest range of sentence forms?

Four versions describe an unfamiliar street at night. Which shows the widest, most controlled range of sentence forms?

- ☐ A The street had emptied by the time the last shop shuttered its windows, leaving only the hum of a streetlamp behind. Nothing moved. She checked three things at once: the map, her phone, the time.
- ☐ B The street was empty. The shop had closed. It was quiet. She checked the map.
- ☐ C The street had been busy, and now the shop had closed, and it was quiet, and she checked the map.
- ☐ D The street was extremely, remarkably, unusually empty and silent after the busy, noisy evening.

Cover this, choose, then read

A. The credited version mixes a longer sentence, a short one, and a colon-led list - genuine variety. The second is a run of short simple sentences; the third strings clauses together with 'and'; the fourth piles up adjectives instead of varying structure.

11

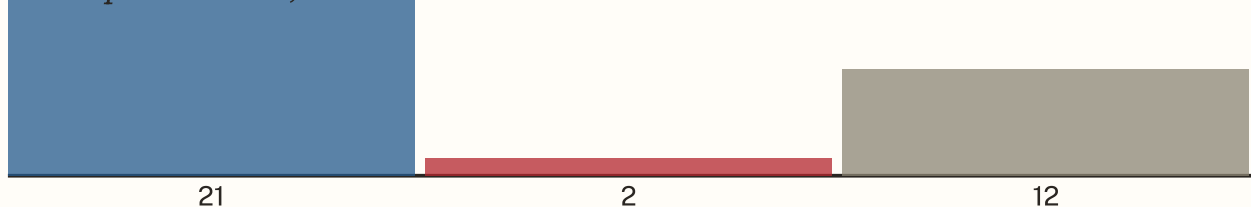
Part two · Imaginative writing

Sentence variety for effect

Use it

Sentence lengths across the credited answer above - long, short, then a colon-led list.

words per sentence, in order



Rewrite this flat paragraph so it shows a genuine range of sentence forms: ‘The kitchen was quiet. Dad had gone to work. The dishes were still in the sink. I didn’t know what to do.’

[0 marks]

Rewrite: “The kitchen had gone quiet the way it only did once everyone else had left for the day, the kind of quiet with weight to it. Dad’s mug still sat by the sink. The dishes waited exactly where they’d been left: two plates, a pan, a spoon balanced on its edge. I didn’t know whether to wash them, or wait, or just leave the house too.”

Rewrite

The rewrite keeps the same content but varies form: a longer opening sentence with a subordinate clause, a short simple sentence, a sentence built around a colon-introduced list, and a final sentence using a triple structure (whether to... or... or...) instead of a flat statement.

It could be asked as

- Identify the sentence forms used in a paragraph you’ve written, and rewrite it to add one you haven’t used.
- Write a paragraph using at least one colon and one semicolon accurately.
- Take a paragraph of only short sentences and combine some of them for variety, without losing the original effect.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

11.1 Where in AO6’s own wording does sentence variety appear?

11.2 What does a semicolon correctly join?

11.3 Why can a paragraph of only compound sentences joined by ‘and’ still lack range?

11.4 What do Edexcel’s reports say is a common weakness linked to sentence variety?

12 *Part two · Imaginative writing* Spelling, grammar and proofreading

*Learn it***In sixty seconds**

AO6 also covers accurate spelling, secure Standard English grammar, and consistent sentence demarcation. A short, planned proofread at the end - checking your own common error patterns, not reading for enjoyment - recovers marks that are otherwise given away for free.

Facts to know

Try it, then colour the circle: ● *knew it* ● *shaky* ○ *missed*

- Sentence demarcation means marking where a sentence starts and ends clearly and correctly: a capital letter, an end punctuation mark, and nothing run on past it without a connector.
- A comma splice joins two complete sentences with only a comma: 'The street was empty, she checked her phone.' Fix it with a full stop, a semicolon, or a conjunction.
- The commonest homophone slips in timed writing are there / their / they're, its / it's, and your / you're - each pair means something different, and a slip changes the meaning, not just the spelling.
- Standard English means the grammar expected in formal written contexts: consistent tense, consistent pronoun use, and avoiding features that belong to speech unless used deliberately in dialogue.
- Spell ambitious vocabulary correctly, or don't use it. A shorter, accurately spelled word is worth more than a longer one spelled wrong, which can draw attention to the error rather than the vocabulary.
- A proofreading pass should be targeted: check the two or three error types you know you make, rather than re-reading for enjoyment, which tends to catch far less under time pressure.
- Leaving three to five minutes at the end specifically for proofreading, separate from writing, is more effective than trying to proofread as you go - the two tasks use different kinds of attention.

Key words

Demarcation clearly and accurately marking the start and end of each sentence. ☐

Comma splice incorrectly joining two complete sentences with only a comma. ☐

Homophone a word that sounds the same as another but has a different spelling and meaning. ☐

Proofreading a final, targeted check for a writer's own common error patterns. ☐

A useful proofreading order: first, check every sentence actually ends where you meant it to (demarcation and comma splices); second, check your own two or three repeat offenders (a particular homophone, a tense you sometimes slip out of); third, and only if time allows, check the spelling of any word you hesitated over while writing it. Trying to do all three at once, while also re-reading for content, tends to catch less than doing them in order.

Homophone confusion, comma splices and tense slips are easy to make and just as easy to miss while reading for sense rather than for accuracy - which is exactly why a short, targeted final check, rather than a general re-read, is well placed to catch them, even under time pressure.

Spot it Which sentence has no technical accuracy error?

Which of these four sentences has no error in spelling, demarcation or agreement?

- (A) The street, empty now that the last shop had closed, felt entirely unfamiliar to her.
- (B) Their was no one left on the street, it was completely empty.
- (C) She didn't know who's phone it was she could hear ringing.
- (D) The street were empty and the shop's had all closed early.

Cover this, choose, then read

A. The credited sentence demarcates correctly, uses a subordinate clause accurately, and has correct agreement throughout. The first confuses 'there/their' and is a comma splice. The second confuses 'whose/who's'. The third has wrong subject-verb agreement ('street were') and a wrongly apostrophised plural ('shop's').

12

Part two · Imaginative writing

Spelling, grammar and proofreading

Use it

A targeted three-pass proofread, in order, rather than one unfocused re-read.

Pass 1 – demarcation: does every sentence start with a capital letter and end with the right mark, with no comma splices?

Pass 2 – your own repeat errors: check the one or two patterns you know you make (a homophone, a tense slip).

Pass 3 – ambitious spelling: any word you hesitated over while writing it, if time allows.

Proofread and correct this paragraph: 'Its been a long day, the kind where you're legs ache by evening. The street were empty, they're wasn't anyone left to ask for directions.' [0 marks]

Corrected: "It's been a long day, the kind where your legs ache by evening. The street was empty; there wasn't anyone left to ask for directions."

Corrected

Four separate fixes: 'Its' to 'It's' (it has been); 'you're' to 'your' (possessive, not 'you are'); 'were' to 'was' (subject-verb agreement - 'the street' is singular); the comma splice fixed with a semicolon, alongside 'they're' corrected to 'there'. Each is a different error type, which is exactly why a targeted, ordered proofread catches more than a single general re-read.

It could be asked as

- Proofread a paragraph of your own writing for one error type at a time.
- Write three sentences deliberately using there/their/they're correctly, to check you know the difference under no time pressure.
- Identify your own two most frequent error types from a previous piece of timed writing.

Cover both pages and write your sixty seconds from memory

predict ___ / 7 got ___ / 7

Quick-fire. Answers are on page 38

12.1 What is a comma splice?

12.2 Name the three commonest homophone slips in timed writing.

12.3 Why is a targeted proofread more effective than a general re-read?

12.4 What does AO6 ask for beyond accuracy alone?

Skills

Terms examiners expect

All 45 key words from across this guide, in the order they first appear, so you never have to hunt back through a topic to check a definition. Using a term accurately earns credit under AO2's 'relevant subject terminology' – using one inaccurately, or naming a device a quotation doesn't actually show, does not.

Term	What it means
AO1	identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
Explicit	stated directly in the text - no inference needed.
Line reference	the specific line numbers a question restricts you to.
Single-word answer	Question 1's usual format: one word or short phrase, narrowly marked.
Own words	restating a detail in your own phrasing rather than quoting it directly.
Separate point	a detail distinct from any other point already made - repetition earns nothing extra.
Acceptable answer	the mark scheme's term for one of several valid ways to express a given point.
AO2	explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects, using subject terminology.
Connotation	an association or feeling a word carries beyond its literal meaning.
Simile	a comparison using 'like' or 'as'.
Metaphor	describing one thing as if it were another, without 'like' or 'as'.
Personification	giving a non-human thing human qualities or actions.
Structure	how a text is organised and arranged, as distinct from the words chosen within it.
Focus shift	a change in what the writing pays attention to.
Pace	the speed at which events or detail seem to move, often controlled by sentence length.
Level 1 cap	the mark scheme rule that an answer covering only language or only structure cannot score above the bottom level.
AO4	evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
Evaluate	weigh up a text and reach a judgement about it, rather than only describing it.
Critical judgement	a reasoned assessment of how well something is achieved, not just a summary.
Whole-extract question	a question whose evidence may be drawn from anywhere in the source, not one named section.
AO5	communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively; organise information and ideas using structural and grammatical features.
AO6	use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.
EITHER / OR	Section B's two task options, marked identically regardless of which is chosen.

Term	What it means
Scope	how much ground a piece of writing tries to cover - usually, less is more in 45 minutes.
Springboard	a prompt used as a starting point for your own idea, rather than a fixed scene to reproduce.
Transcribe	to describe something exactly as seen, without adding interpretation or idea - what an image should not be used for.
Turning point	the moment a piece's situation or mood changes, often suggested by a contrast between two images.
Hook	an opening detail or line designed to draw the reader in immediately.
In medias res	starting in the middle of the action, rather than before it begins.
Narrative viewpoint	the consistent perspective (person and tense) from which a piece is told.
Establishing shot	an opening that sets the wider scene before narrowing in - useful, but risks becoming a list if overused.
AO5 organisation	structural and grammatical features used to support the coherence and cohesion of a piece.
Discourse marker	a word or phrase that signals the relationship between ideas or paragraphs.
Pacing	the controlled speed at which a piece of writing seems to move.
Show, don't tell	conveying a feeling or idea through detail and action, rather than stating it outright.
Register	the level of formality and the kind of vocabulary suited to a purpose and audience.
Controlling idea	the single idea that governs which images and details belong in a passage.
Overwriting	using more, or showier, imagery than a moment actually needs.
Sentence variety	a deliberate mixture of sentence lengths and forms across a piece.
Colon	a punctuation mark introducing a list, an explanation or an elaboration.
Semicolon	a punctuation mark joining two closely related independent clauses.
Demarcation	clearly and accurately marking the start and end of each sentence.
Comma splice	incorrectly joining two complete sentences with only a comma.
Homophone	a word that sounds the same as another but has a different spelling and meaning.
Proofreading	a final, targeted check for a writer's own common error patterns.

Skills

A full response, marked: the strong version

Written for this guide, in response to EITHER 'Write about a time when you were somewhere completely unfamiliar. Your response could be real or imagined.' This is roughly what 45 minutes, including two minutes' planning, can produce at the top of Edexcel's levels for both AO5 and AO6. The box below each paragraph explains why.

The key didn't turn on the first try, and Maya told herself that was the lock's fault, not a sign of anything. It gave on the second attempt, the way most things eventually did if you were patient with them, or pretended to be.

AO5 A specific small action and a guarded feeling, from the first word – no describing the house, no announcing the topic.

AO6 A longer opening sentence followed by a shorter one, each doing different work: deliberate variety, not accidental.

The hallway smelled of someone else's cooking, not unpleasantly, just unfamiliarly, and three closed doors stood between her and whichever one was supposed to be hers now: a cupboard, a bathroom, a bedroom, though nothing on any of them said which was which.

AO5 One controlling idea – the ordinary business of a house made strange by not knowing it – runs through several details, rather than several competing ones.

AO6 A colon introduces the list of three doors: a deliberate, accurate use of a punctuation mark beyond full stops and commas.

She found her room by process of elimination, and found, on the narrow bed, a towel folded into a shape too neat to have been hers. She unfolded it. For a moment, just one moment, that felt like the only thing in the house she'd actually chosen to do.

AO5 A clear structural turning point – from passive discovery to one small, decisive action – placed deliberately in the middle of the piece, not stumbled into.

AO6 The parenthetical 'just one moment', set off by commas, isolates the decision for emphasis, used once rather than repeated until it loses its force.

By the time she'd hung up her one coat, the room looked exactly as unfamiliar as it had when she walked in. It was, she thought, a start, even if it didn't yet feel like one.

AO5 A short final paragraph after three longer ones changes the pace deliberately. The situation isn't resolved, but it is left on a specific, open note – no forced neat conclusion.

AO6 Past tense and third-person viewpoint, held consistently from the first line to the last.

Skills

A full response, marked: a weaker version

The same prompt, written to show roughly a Level 2 response. It isn't a bad piece of writing – it's accurate, and it's on topic – but it shows most of the AO5 gaps a mid-range answer tends to show.

This is a story about a time I moved somewhere new and felt really unfamiliar and out of place. The house was strange and I didn't know where anything was. There were lots of doors and I didn't know which room was mine. It felt really weird and uncomfortable being somewhere I didn't know. I think moving somewhere new can be a difficult and unsettling experience for anyone. Eventually I found my room and put my things away. Overall it was a strange day and I didn't really feel at home, but I suppose that takes time when everything around you is so unfamiliar.

What keeps this in Level 2, not higher

Gap	What the stronger version does instead
Opens by announcing the topic ('This is a story about...') rather than entering a scene.	Opens inside a specific action and a guarded feeling, with the situation implied rather than named.
Lists what's present (doors, an unfamiliar house) in the order it's noticed, like a tour.	Builds one controlling idea (the ordinary made strange) and chooses details that all serve it.
Tells the feeling directly ('felt really weird and uncomfortable') rather than showing it.	Shows the feeling through a specific action (unfolding a towel that wasn't folded by her).
Ends on a general statement about moving house rather than this piece's own events.	Ends on a specific, open final image that belongs only to this piece.
Sentence forms barely vary: mostly simple sentences, with little change in length.	Mixes long, short and colon-led sentences on purpose, across all four paragraphs.

Try it yourself

Take one sentence from the weaker version and rewrite it using a technique from Topics 8 to 12 – a specific detail instead of a list, a shown feeling instead of a told one, or a varied sentence form. Then do the same with a second sentence.

Skills

What Edexcel's examiners saw students get wrong

Paraphrased from Edexcel's Examiner's Reports for 1EN0/01 (June 2022 and June 2023). The struck-through text describes the weaker approach reported; the green text is what was credited instead.

Q1: the line numbers. ~~a detail taken from outside the line numbers given.~~ the single word or phrase the mark scheme actually names, from inside the given lines.

Q2: one point only. ~~answering with only one valid point when the question asks for two, or taking one of them from outside the given line range.~~ two separate, concrete details, both found inside the lines given.

Q3: language only. ~~a response considering only language, however detailed, which cannot progress beyond Level 1.~~ both language and structure addressed together, on the same passage.

Q3: structure only. ~~a response considering only structure, with language mentioned only in passing or not at all.~~ a specific language point and a specific structural point, each explained and connected.

Q4: proportion. ~~focusing only on the most dramatic moment and overlooking the wider setting of the extract.~~ evidence drawn from across the whole extract, not just its most eventful moment.

Q5/6: using the image. ~~listing the details visible in an image, in the order they appear, like a tour.~~ treating the image as a prompt for an idea of the writer's own.

Q5/6: staying inside the scene. ~~writing consciously about the task itself, such as naming the image or the prompt.~~ writing as if fully inside the scene from the very first line.

Q5/6: scope. ~~a recount-style structure covering a whole day, a whole relationship, or a whole journey start to finish.~~ one moment, developed, with a deliberately chosen shape.

Q5/6: real or imagined. ~~treating the task as though it demands a true story specifically.~~ a real or an imagined response, equally creditable – the task explicitly allows either.

A06: vocabulary. ~~a word reached for because it sounds impressive, not because it fits the register.~~ the word that is most accurate and clearest for this exact moment.

A06: sentence variety. ~~one preferred sentence form, used accurately but without variety across the piece.~~ a deliberate range of sentence lengths and forms planned in before writing.

General: section order. ~~starting with Section B before Section A, which breaks the thematic link between the reading extract and the writing task.~~ working through Section A first, so the extract's themes can feed directly into Section B.

Practice

Practice: the source

A fresh extract, with its own four Section A questions overleaf and a Section B task after. Read it through once before you start.

Source: The Return. This extract is from the opening of a novel, used for the practice questions. Captain Aldous has returned to his family home after an absence of eleven years, uncertain of his welcome.

1 Aldous had rehearsed the walk from the gate to the front door a hundred
 2 times in his mind during the voyage home, and found, now that he was
 3 actually making it, that none of his rehearsals had accounted for how
 4 short the drive really was, nor for how little time this left him to
 5 decide what he meant to say.

6 The house itself had changed less than he expected, which was somehow
 7 more unsettling than if it had changed a great deal. The same ivy
 8 occupied the same corner of the east wall, grown perhaps a little
 9 thicker; the same uneven flagstone, third from the step, still sat proud
 10 of its neighbours and still, from the look of the moss worn away along
 11 one edge, caught the unwary foot exactly as it had always done. He
 12 stepped over it from old habit before he had consciously remembered it
 13 was there.

14 He had written ahead, of course, but a letter sent from a ship at sea
 15 could not be relied upon to arrive before the ship itself, and so he
 16 climbed the three steps to the door without any real certainty that his
 17 arrival was expected, or indeed desired, by anyone still living within.
 18 He raised his hand to the knocker and found it already tarnished with
 19 disuse, as though no one had announced themselves at this door in a very
 20 long while, and the thought troubled him more than he had anticipated it
 21 would.

22 It was not a servant who answered but his sister Caroline, and for a
 23 moment neither of them spoke, she regarding him from the doorway with an
 24 expression he could not immediately read, caught somewhere between the
 25 eleven years that had passed and the brother she had evidently expected,
 26 on some level, never to see again. He saw, in the half-second before
 27 either of them found words, that she had become a woman he did not
 28 entirely know, which was only fair, he supposed, since he had become a
 29 man she could hardly have expected either.

30 "They told us the ship went down off the cape," she said at last. Not a
 31 greeting. A fact laid down between them, as though it required answering
 32 before anything else could be said.

33 "The ship did go down," he answered. "I did not go down with it. There
 34 is a difference, though I grant you the telegraph office seems not to
 35 have grasped it."

36 She did not laugh, though something in her face moved that might, in
 37 another moment, have become a laugh. "Mother wears black for you every
 38 Sunday. Has done for the better part of a year."

39 "Then I had better go in and stop her, before the habit sets too firmly
 40 to be broken."

41 "She is not here," Caroline said, and something in the flatness of it
 42 told him this was not a simple accident of timing. "She has gone to your
 43 grave, Aldous. There is a stone. Father had it cut eight months ago,
 44 when the Admiralty confirmed the sinking, and she goes every Sunday
 45 after church, rain or no rain, and stands in front of it for the better
 46 part of an hour."

47 Aldous found, standing on the step he had crossed a thousand times as a
 48 boy, that the house which had changed so little around him had
 49 nonetheless become a place he no longer quite knew how to enter, for the
 50 simple reason that somewhere beyond the orchard wall there was now a
 51 stone with his name cut into it, and he had no rehearsed words at all
 52 for what a man was meant to say to his own grave.

Practice

Practice: Section A, questions 1 and 2

- 1
- From lines 1–5, identify a word or phrase that shows Aldous had thought carefully about this moment in advance. [1 mark]

- 2
- Give two things, from lines 6–12, that show the house had changed very little while Aldous was away. [2 marks]

Mark your answers on page 39.

Practice

Practice: Section A, questions 3 and 4

3 Look at lines 30–35. How does the writer use language and structure to show the tension between Aldous and Caroline? *[6 marks]*

4 You now need to think about the whole of the source. In this extract, there is an attempt to create a sense of a homecoming that is not straightforward. Evaluate how successfully this is achieved. *[15 marks]*

Practice

Practice: Section B

- 5 EITHER** write about a time when you returned to a place after being away for a long time. Your response could be real or imagined.
- (24 marks for content and organisation, 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]*
- 6 OR** look at two images of a closed door, one from outside and one from inside. Write about a moment when someone's reaction was not what you expected. Your response could be real or imagined. You may wish to base your response on one of the images.
- (24 marks for content and organisation, 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]*

Two minutes, before you write a word

1. The idea

One moment, one place, one
feeling. Not a list of
everything you could describe.

2. Viewpoint and senses

Whose eyes. What they'd notice first, and which one or two senses carry it.

3. The shape

Where the focus moves: wide to close, calm to tense, outside to inside.

4. The ending

The line you're writing towards,
decided before you start the
first one.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is a vertical margin line on the left side, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled document.

Answers

Quick-fire answers

1 Finding one explicit detail

- 1.1** Explicit and implicit information and ideas; Question 1 tests the explicit half.
- 1.2** 1 mark, and usually only one accepted answer.
- 1.3** False - it must come from the named lines.
- 1.4** Because the fuller phrase still earns the mark if the key word is in it, but takes longer to write for the same single mark.

4 Structure, and combining it with language

- 4.1** No higher than Level 1 (1–2 marks) - both language and structure are required for Level 2 and above.
- 4.2** A short sentence after several long ones can mirror a shift in pace or mood.
- 4.3** 6 marks.
- 4.4** A change in what the writing pays attention to.

2 Finding several things, in your own words

- 2.1** 2 marks - one for each separate, valid point.
- 2.2** Either - your own words or a quotation are both accepted.
- 2.3** Giving only one point when two are needed, or taking a point from outside the given line range.
- 2.4** False - it is usually slightly longer, since two separate points need to be found.

5 Evaluating the whole extract

- 5.1** 15 marks - the single highest-value question in Section A.
- 5.2** AO4: evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
- 5.3** No - it covers the whole extract.
- 5.4** Track how the named effect builds across the whole extract, in stages, and reach a sustained judgement about it.

3 Language, word by word

- 3.1** Say what a word means, what it connotes, then what effect that has on the reader.
- 3.2** It pushes the comment toward content (what happens) rather than language (how it is said).
- 3.3** An association or feeling a word carries beyond its literal, dictionary meaning.
- 3.4** No - it always requires structure to be considered alongside it.

6 Choosing EITHER or OR

- 6.1** 40 marks: 24 for content and organisation (AO5), 16 for technical accuracy (AO6).
- 6.2** No - both are marked against exactly the same criteria, for the same 40 marks.
- 6.3** The one controlling idea, the viewpoint and senses, the shape, and the ending.
- 6.4** False - both typically allow a response that could be real or imagined.

Answers

Quick-fire answers, continued

7 Using an image without just describing it

- 7.1** Any of these - you may base your response on one image, both, or effectively neither.
- 7.2** Using it as a prompt for your own idea - description of the image itself earns nothing.
- 7.3** The contrast or difference between them can suggest a turning point or a choice.
- 7.4** Consider the plain EITHER option instead - there is no credit for using images you don't need.

10 Showing a feeling instead of naming it

- 10.1** Conveying a feeling or idea through concrete detail or action, rather than stating it outright.
- 10.2** Because, used sparingly after a build-up of showing, a direct statement can land harder than another layer of imagery.
- 10.3** An extreme or dramatic image reached for effect, rather than earned by what surrounds it - like a word reached for because it sounds advanced.
- 10.4** If it isn't the clearest or most accurate word for the moment, it signals reaching for register over meaning.

8 Openings that do real work

- 8.1** An opening that describes the image or announces the topic, rather than starting inside a specific moment.
- 8.2** Starting in the middle of the action, with context filled in afterward.
- 8.3** Because it works best once you already know exactly where the whole piece is going.
- 8.4** Person (first or third) and tense (past or present) - and then keep both consistent.

11 Sentence variety for effect

- 11.1** 'A range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect.'
- 11.2** Two closely related independent clauses, without a conjunction.
- 11.3** Range means genuine variety of form, not just avoiding short sentences - repeating one form, even a longer one, is still monotonous.
- 11.4** Writing accurately within one preferred sentence form, without deliberately varying it across a piece.

9 Shape across the whole piece

- 9.1** AO5 - organisation, not AO6.
- 9.2** Paragraph length - several short paragraphs can speed up a climax; one long one can slow a reflective moment.
- 9.3** A straightforward chronological account with no deliberate shift in focus, pace or mood.
- 9.4** No - a deliberately unresolved ending can be more sophisticated than one that ties up every thread.

12 Spelling, grammar and proofreading

- 12.1** Joining two complete sentences with only a comma, where a full stop, semicolon or conjunction is needed.
- 12.2** There/their/they're, its/it's, and your/you're.
- 12.3** It checks for specific, known error types in a planned order, rather than relying on noticing errors by chance while reading for sense.
- 12.4** A genuine range of vocabulary and sentence structures, used for clarity, purpose and effect - not just correctness.

Answers

Your tracker

Colour a circle when it's done. Return two days later, and a week later.

Topic	Learn it	Use it	Recall box	Quick-fire	2 days later	1 week later
1 Finding one explicit detail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 Finding several things, in your own words	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 Language, word by word	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 Structure, and combining it with language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 Evaluating the whole extract	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 Choosing EITHER or OR	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 Using an image without just describing it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 Openings that do real work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 Shape across the whole piece	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Showing a feeling instead of naming it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 Sentence variety for effect	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 Spelling, grammar and proofreading	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lost marks on the practice questions? Go here

Question	Go to	Pages
Practice Q1 (explicit detail)	Topic 1	4–5
Practice Q2 (several details)	Topic 2	6–7
Practice Q3 (language and structure)	Topics 3 and 4	8–9, 10–11
Practice Q4 (evaluate)	Topic 5	12–13
Practice Q5/6 (writing)	Topics 6 to 12, and the full marked response	14–15–26–27, 29–30

Answers

Practice: Section A, marked

- 1** “rehearsed”. The mark scheme accepts only this word (or the fuller phrase it sits in): Aldous had planned the walk and what to say ‘a hundred times’ before arriving. [1 mark]
- 2** Any two of: the ivy occupied “the same corner of the east wall”; the same flagstone still “caught the unwary foot exactly as it had” always done; he stepped over it “from old habit” without needing to think. [1 mark each]
- 3** Level 3 (5–6 marks) would explain: the short, blunt statement “They told us the ship went down off the cape” is not a greeting but, as the extract itself says, “A fact laid down between them” ✓, which structurally delays any warmth between the siblings until it has been dealt with; Aldous’s reply plays on the literal and the formal, “The ship did go down” against “the telegraph office seems not to have grasped” the distinction, a dry, deflecting use of language that avoids the emotional weight of the moment; and the clipped, short exchanges (no long speeches from either character) structurally mirror two people who have not yet worked out how to talk to each other again.
- 4** A strong answer tracks the idea in stages across the whole extract and reaches a sustained judgement, rather than agreeing or disagreeing by default. It might argue this is achieved very successfully: the opening shows Aldous’s careful rehearsal failing him the moment he actually arrives; the unchanged house (“The same ivy”, the same flagstone) makes his own absence feel like the only thing that has changed; and the homecoming is undercut entirely by Caroline’s revelation of the grave, which means Aldous returns to find he has already been mourned, so the ‘homecoming’ is not an arrival at all but a correction of a death that was never true – about as unstraightforward as a homecoming can be.

Practice: Section B

There is no single correct version of an imaginative response, so none is given here. Instead, mark your own attempt against the method on the full worked response (pages 29–30): did you plan one controlling idea before you wrote the first line, did your paragraphing show a deliberate shape rather than a tour or a recount, and did you vary your sentence forms on purpose? Ask a partner or teacher to check your reading against the same three questions.

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