

2. Planning and research

Your teacher will have helped you study your text and taught you how to approach the topics. He or she will now advise you on how to carry out further research and plan for your task.

- During this phase you can work with others, for example discussing ideas and sharing resources on the internet.
- Your teacher can give you general feedback during this phase, but not detailed advice.
- You must keep a record of all the source materials you use, including websites.

3. Writing up the response

This will take place under timed, supervised conditions.

- It may be split into more than one session, in which case your teacher will collect your work at the end of the session and put it away until the beginning of the next. You will not have access to it between sessions.
- You may be allowed to take an **un-annotated copy** of the text into the session.
- You may be allowed to take in some brief **notes**.
- You may be allowed access to a **dictionary** or a **thesaurus**.
- You may be allowed to produce your assessment electronically, but you will not be allowed access to the internet, email, disks or memory sticks.
- During this time, you may not communicate with other candidates. The work you produce must be entirely **your own**.
- Your teacher will advise you on how much you should aim to write.

4. Marking

Your Controlled Assessment Task will be marked by your teacher and moderated (supervised and checked) by your exam board.

General examiners' note

Remember:

- you will get marks for responding to the task, but not for writing other material that is not relevant
- you must produce an **individual** response to the task in the final assessment, even if you have discussed ideas with other students previously.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN AQA ENGLISH LITERATURE

Your teachers will decide whether you should write about *Macbeth* in a Controlled Assessment Task (Unit 3) or an Examination (Unit 4). These two units are very different, so you need to be absolutely sure which one you are taking. If you are in any in doubt, ask your teacher.

Examiner's tip

Refer back to pages 200–1 for more about the assessment objectives you will be assessed on in Unit 3 Controlled Assessment or Unit 4 Exam.

UNIT 3 CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK

If you take this unit, you have to write about a Shakespeare play and one other text that your teacher will choose. It may be a novel, a selection of poetry, another play or even another Shakespeare play. The two texts will be linked in some way and you are expected to write about both.

THE TASK

AQA will give your teacher a number of tasks to choose from. There are two main topics:

1. Themes and ideas

These tasks might involve writing about power and conflict, the supernatural and fate, ambition, loyalty and treachery. For example: *Explore the ways writers present the supernatural in the texts you have studied* or *Explore the ways writers present and use ideas about loyalty in the texts you have studied*.

2. Characterisation and voice

These tasks might involve writing about relationships, the presentation of good or evil characters, or characters who change in some way. For example: *Explore the ways the texts present murderers in the texts you have studied* or *Explore the ways the texts show how people can be influenced by others in the texts you have studied*.

YOUR RESPONSE

- You have to complete a written response to ONE task. This should be about 2,000 words, but remember that it's quality not quantity that counts.
- You have FOUR hours to produce your work. Your teacher will probably ask you to complete the task over separate sessions rather than in a single sitting.

- Your teacher will give you plenty of time to prepare for the task. You can use any resources you like, but do keep a record of them (including websites). You must include a list of these at the end of your task.
- You can work in a small group to research and prepare your material but your final work must be all your own.
- Do watch different versions of the play. You can refer to the different versions when you write your response and you will be given credit for this.
- You can refer to brief notes when you are writing your response, but these must be brief. You must hand in your notes at the end of each session and on completion of the task. You can also use a copy of the play without any annotations.
- You can handwrite your response or use a word processor. You are allowed a dictionary and thesaurus or grammar and spell-check programs. You are NOT allowed to use the internet, email, disks or memory sticks when writing your response.
- You can do the Controlled Assessment Task in January or June. When you have finished, your teachers will mark your work and then send a sample from your school to AQA to be checked.

Examiner's tip

The Controlled Assessment Task is worth 25 per cent of your final English Literature mark – so it's worth doing it well.

HOW TO GET A GOOD GRADE

1. Select what you write about carefully. It is better to write a lot about a little. Concentrate on one scene in Shakespeare and one chapter in a novel or a single poem, or on two characters, one from a Shakespeare play and one from a novel.
2. Use short, relevant quotations. Every time you include a quotation, consider the language the writer has used and the probable effect on the audience.
3. Never retell the story. You and your teachers already know it. If you find yourself doing this, stop and refocus on the question.
4. Check your spellings, in particular writers' and characters' names.
5. Always remember that Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and the other characters in the play are not real. Do not write about them as if they are. They have been created by Shakespeare: he's the important person to consider.

SAMPLE CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK

Explore the ways writers present characters who are influenced by others.

Here are extracts from responses written by two students. Both are writing about the dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Act 1 Scene 7.

Extract 1 Grade C response

In this scene Lady Macbeth makes sure that her husband will do exactly what she wants him to do. Macbeth wants to stop the murder and says 'We will proceed no further'. He tells his wife that King Duncan has honoured him and he wants to enjoy his new importance. Lady Macbeth is having nothing of it. She's only after one thing and that's to be Queen. She calls him a coward and compares him to a cat that wants fish but doesn't want to get his paws wet. She means that Macbeth wants to be king but doesn't want to do anything dangerous to become king. Macbeth replies that he is a real man and will dare to do anything. But he is still worried about what will happen if they fail. Lady Macbeth dismisses this idea as being impossible 'we'll not fail'. By the end of the scene Macbeth has been persuaded to carry on with the plan. The audience is now waiting for the murder to be committed.

Relevant textual detail

Explains effect

Could be developed more

Very sudden ending – needs much more development

Sustains explanation

Good point with relevant quotation

Examiner's comments

- The student clearly understands some of Shakespeare's ideas and uses of language in the speech.
- Not all points are fully explained and backed up; for example, Lady Macbeth's accusation of cowardice.
- There is a general understanding of how Lady Macbeth influences her husband, although the effects on Macbeth and the audience are not considered in much detail.
- This is a Grade C response. To improve, this student needs to develop ideas in more detail and to link these details to a more thoughtful consideration of the scene.

Extract 2 Grade A response

The entry of Lady Macbeth interrupts her husband's soliloquy. The word 'side' is left unsaid although the meaning is clear: at this point of the play Macbeth is clearly presenting to the audience the concept that 'Vaulting ambition' may well bring dangers. The interruption leads to a series of fractured pentameters as Shakespeare creates tension. This is heightened both by the way questions are answered with others to create a sense of confusion and also the way in which Duncan is referred to as 'he', showing how both characters prefer euphemism to clear statement. The questions are ended by Macbeth's statement 'We will proceed no further in this business'. Again 'business' is a euphemism. Macbeth also uses 'we'. This may suggest that he believes that he and his wife are joint conspirators in the murder and are a bonded team, yet it may also suggest that Macbeth has begun to imitate Duncan's use of 'the royal we': Duncan has spoken of 'our graces towards him' in the previous scene. These have become 'Golden opinions from all sorts of people'. Macbeth believes himself to be universally admired and liked. Being held in high esteem is very important to him. Some people, for example his wife, might see that as a form of weakness.

Clear,
detailed
statement

Awareness
of effect on
audience

Exploration
of language

Insight
into theme

Analytic use
of detail

Insight into
motivation

Examiner's comments

- The student shows a clear engagement with Shakespeare's ideas and the attitudes of Macbeth.
- There is evidence of a sophisticated interpretation and a perceptive exploration of Shakespeare's use of language.
- The student has written a lot about a little but has also explored some of the themes of the text as a whole.
- This is a Grade A response.

UNIT 4 EXAMINATION

If you take Unit 4 in your AQA English Literature course then you will answer a question on a Shakespeare play in an examination. Your answer is worth 20 per cent of your total Literature mark and you will need to spend about 40 minutes on this question.

The Shakespeare question will always have **two** parts. Each is worth ten per cent of your total mark so you must spend equal time on them.

- Part (a) of each question will ask you to write about a specific extract that is printed in the exam paper. This extract may be a monologue (spoken by one character) or a part of a scene where two or more characters are talking.
- Part (b) of each question will ask you to write about the same topic but relating to a different part of the play (there will not be a printed extract in the exam paper to refer to).

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

- Part (a) How does Shakespeare show Lady Macbeth's thoughts and feelings in the extract below?
- Part (b) How does Shakespeare show Lady Macbeth's feelings in a different part of the play?

LADY MACBETH: The raven himself is hoarse

...

To cry, "Hold, hold!"

(see page 39 lines 37–53 for full quotation)

Examiner's tip

The first part of each question asks 'How does Shakespeare . . .?' The 'how' is important. It means you must consider Shakespeare's use of language, referring to specific words and phrases and the effects these create.