

The exam papers explained

The English Language GCSE is split into two exam papers:

- Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing
- Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Each paper has a reading section (Section A) and a writing section (Section B).

Remind yourself of the content of each exam then answer the questions that follow:

Paper 1, Section A: Reading

You will be asked to read one fiction text from the 20th or 21st century that will be approximately 500–800 words long. You will be asked four questions that will test your understanding of the text.

Paper 1, Section B: Writing

You will be asked to write a descriptive or narrative piece of writing from a choice of two. One of the questions will have a visual stimulus to help you generate ideas.

Paper 2, Section A: Reading

You will be asked to read one non-fiction text and one non-literary text – these will be drawn from the 19th century, and either the 20th or 21st century. You will be asked four questions that will test your understanding of the text.

Paper 2, Section B: Writing

You will be asked to write a text for a particular target audience on a theme that will have been introduced in the reading section.

For each paper, you are advised to spend 15 minutes at the start reading through the sources and questions. If you read the questions first then you can make notes as you read the sources. You should also leave time to check through your answers at the end.

- Which paper asks you to read a 19th century non-fiction or non-literary text?
 - Which paper (and section) asks you to use a visual stimulus?
 - What are you advised to do for 15 minutes at the start of each exam?
 - Do you have a choice for any of the questions? If so, which one?
 - How many questions in total will you be asked to complete for each exam?
 - What should you leave time for before the end of each exam?

As well as ensuring that you revise thoroughly, it is also vital that you plan effectively for the exam day itself by ensuring that you are physically and mentally prepared.

- Read the following advice and decide whether you think it is good advice (tick) or bad advice (cross).

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| A Have plenty of caffeine before the exam. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B Make sure that you include everything you have revised. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C Hydrate yourself – bring water to the exam. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D Breathe quickly during the exam to help with speed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E Make sure you write constantly for the whole exam. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F Make sure your writing is legible. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

You can't predict what the source material will be, nor can you guess what the writing question will be on; however, it is possible to revise the text types to develop your wider reading and writing skills.

- Complete the table with some examples of the types of reading and writing you have done or still need to do.

	Title	Genre	Audience	Purpose
Non-fiction				
Fiction				

Planning your exam time

Time management is a vital part of being successful in your exams. Using the reading time effectively, and allocating the correct amount of time per question, will enable you to show off your skills and maximise your chances of getting the result that you deserve.

1 Use your 15 minutes reading time at the start of the exam productively. Put the following statements in the order you think will be helpful. Number them from 1 to 5 with 1 being the task you do first:

- A Skim read the sources so you know roughly the main themes. ☐
- B Annotate the sources with brief notes that relate to the questions. ☐
- C Read the sources – especially the introductory information as it will provide you with important clues about the genre, form, purpose and target audience. ☐
- D Read the questions before you read the sources so you know what to look for. ☐
- E Ensure you have highlighter pens to pick out different features (though don't highlight indiscriminately – only parts that are relevant to the questions set!). ☐

Work out how long you should spend on each question according to the number of marks it is worth, e.g. a 4-mark question should take approximately 4 minutes to complete.

2 Complete the table below by working out how much time you could spend on each question.

Paper 1		Marks allocated	Time I should spend
Section A: Reading	Reading time		15 minutes
	Q1	4	
	Q2	8	
	Q3	8	
	Q4	20	
Section B: Writing	Planning time		5 minutes
	Q5	40	
	Checking my answers		5 minutes
Total time:			1 hour and 45 minutes

Paper 2		Marks allocated	Time I should spend
Section A: Reading	Reading time		15 minutes
	Q1	4	
	Q2	8	
	Q3	12	
	Q4	16	
Section B: Writing	Planning time		5 minutes
	Q5	40	
	Checking my answers		5 minutes
Total time:			1 hour and 45 minutes

Paper 1 Reading questions 1

It is important that you understand how each question is being assessed. The examiner will have a specific mark scheme that will be used to decide on the mark for your answer.

In **Paper 1, Section A: Reading Question 1**, you are assessed for:

Assessment objective 1

- (a) Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas
- (b) Select and synthesise evidence from different texts

1 Read the exam-style question below. **You don't need to answer it.** Instead, identify which part of assessment objective 1 the question tests. Circle your choice.

Paper

1

- 1.** Read again the first part of source 10, **lines 1 to 20**.
List **four** reasons why the children dislike visiting Mrs Dubose. **(4 marks)**

Question 1 will direct you to a specific part of the source and ask you to select specific information – there is no need for a detailed analysis.

This question tests: AO1(a) AO1(b)

In **Paper 1, Section A: Reading Question 2**, you are assessed for:

Assessment objective 2

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

2 Read the exam-style question below. **You don't need to answer it.**

Paper

1

- 2.** Look in detail at this extract from **lines 22 to 32** of the source.
How does the writer use language here to reveal the children's fear of Mrs Dubose?
You could include the writer's choice of:
- words and phrases
 - language features and techniques
 - sentence forms. **(8 marks)**

Question 2 will direct you to a specific part of the source and ask you for a longer answer that refers to the way a writer uses **language** to create particular effects.

(a) Circle the key information in the question.

(b) How long should you spend on this question?

3 Which assessment focus would you expect the following exam-style questions to be assessed on? Circle your choice.

(a)

How does the writer use language to help generate excitement in the text?

AO1(a) AO1(b) AO2

(b)

Identify four aspects of Mrs Dubose's character.

AO1(a) AO1(b) AO2

Paper 1 Reading questions 2

For Question 3 and Question 4 in **Paper 1, Section A: Reading**, it is important that you produce a developed, analytical response that reveals your understanding of the writer at work.

In **Paper 1, Section A: Reading Question 3**, you are assessed for:

Assessment objective 2

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

Read the exam-style question below. **You don't need to answer it.**

Paper

1

3. You now need to think about the **whole** of the **source**.

This text is taken from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

(8 marks)

Question 3 will ask you to refer to the whole of the source and comment on how the writer has used **structure** to create particular effects on the reader.

1 Tick the statements that you think apply to the question:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| A I need to look at a specific section from the source. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B I don't need to use evidence to support my analysis. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C I should comment on language and structure. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D I should spend approximately 8 minutes on this question. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E I should refer to the writer at work. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F I need to use comparison skills to answer this question. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G I need to consider the impact of the text on the reader. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In **Paper 1, Section A: Reading Question 4**, you are assessed for:

Assessment objective 4

Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references

Question 4 will ask you to refer to a particular section from the source and assesses your ability to evaluate the impact of the text on the reader. You are also encouraged to provide a personal response to the question, using textual evidence to support your analysis.

Read the exam-style question below. **You don't need to answer it.**

Paper

1

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, **from lines 29 to 51**.

A student, having read this section of the text said: "The narrator doesn't seem to take any responsibility for what happened."

To what extent do you agree? In your response, you could:

- write about your own impression of the narrator's involvement in the incident
- evaluate how the writer presents the narrator's involvement
- support your opinions with quotations from the text.

(20 marks)

2 Tick the statements that you think apply to this question:

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| A My personal opinion is not allowed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | D I should refer to a specific section of the | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B I need to use evidence to support my | | source. | |
| analysis. | <input type="checkbox"/> | E I should spend 20 minutes on the question. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C I should refer to the whole of the source. | <input type="checkbox"/> | F I need to evaluate the text critically. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Paper 2 Reading questions 1

There are a variety of question types in Paper 2, which also include a comparison of texts.

In **Paper 2, Section A: Reading Questions 1 and 2**, you are assessed for:

Assessment objective 1

- (a) Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas
- (b) Select and synthesise evidence from different texts

In Question 1, you will be directed to a specific part of the source and there will be some true and false statements listed. It is important that you carefully consider each possible statement and only shade the number of boxes you have been asked to shade.

Read the exam-style questions below. **You do not need to answer them.** Then answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

Question 1 has been completed by a student.

Paper

2

1. Read again **source 13b, lines 1 to 7**.

Choose **four** statements below which are TRUE.

- Shade the boxes of the ones that you think are true.
 - Choose a maximum of four statements.
- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| A People are deluded if they think no harm can come to a child if they get their own way. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| B Babies should get their own way until they are older. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C Babies are easy to manage. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D Children should be taught obedience. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| E Rules are there to be broken. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F Obedience is the first lesson to be taught. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| G Rules are not important to babies. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| H Well-managed babies understand the meaning of obedience. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(4 marks)

In Question 2 you will be asked to refer to two sources and you select relevant evidence from both sources to support your ideas.

Paper

2

2. You need to refer to **source 12a** and **source 12b** for this question.

Use details from **both** sources.

Write a summary of how both writers present the teaching profession.

(8 marks)

- 1 (a) Which question is asking you to make links between two texts?
- (b) How long should you spend on Question 1?
- (c) How long should you spend on Question 2?
- (d) Which question is asking you to focus on a part of the source?
- (e) How do you show your answer to Question 1?
- (f) Where has the student gone wrong in answering Question 1?
- (g) Which question is asking you to synthesise?

'Synthesise' means 'summarise'.