

English Syllabus and Guidance Notes

Section A: Understanding non-fiction texts

You have 2 texts to read and 3/4 questions to answer. One of the questions will ask you to compare the presentation of the 2 texts with each other. You must answer all questions.

This section tests your Reading skills. The reading skills you are assessed on your ability to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the texts' purpose and audience: explaining the content and audience of the text
- Select evidence from the texts to support your answers: choosing appropriate quotations to use to support the points you make
- Make comparisons between the texts: explaining the ways in which a text is similar to, or different from, another text.
- Understand the techniques writers use: writing about the language and the way words have been used.

Tip: If you read the questions before you read the texts, this can save you time because you are reading purposefully – you already know what you should be looking for as you read.

Section B: Producing non-fiction texts (Inform, explain, analyse, argue, review etc.)

This section tests your Writing skills. You will be asked to write in response to one of the 'triplets' (as above). The writing skills you are expected to:

- Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively: writing so that the reader/examiner understands what you are saying and is interested in it.
- Demonstrate a clear idea of the purpose and audience: being able to write in a particular form (e.g. a letter or a newspaper article) and for a particular audience (e.g. older people or teenagers).
- Organise your writing: using sentences and paragraphs.
- Use a range of interesting words and sentence structures: using descriptive/varied vocabulary. You are aiming to keep the examiner interested in what you have to say.
- Punctuate and spell accurately: using a range of punctuation, such as question marks and semi-colons as well as full stops and commas, and showing you have accurate spelling.

Section C: Poetry

In this section you will be asked to answer questions relating to the poems provided on the exam paper; either compare two poems or comment on an "Unseen" poem.

Please see following pages for guidance notes

ADVICE FOR ENGLISH EXAM ONLY STUDENTS

The English exam is equivalent to a GCSE in English in terms of level and therefore, you will need to have the required level of English skills which will allow you to pass this exam.

If you feel confident enough with your written English and comprehension, you may choose to take the exam without completing the Home Study course.

The exam has been created to cover reading, writing and comprehension skills. A great way to prepare for the exam is to read as much as you can. The exam will assess your skills with reading a range of non-fiction texts, so your preparation can involve reading magazines, newspapers and web pages.

How you set out your writing in the exam is important for various reasons. You will need to produce writing that is:

- Neat, regular and clear
- Spelt accurately
- Correctly punctuated
- Set out in clear paragraphs
- Laid out and presented well
- Interesting

Apart from being good in themselves, such qualities in your writing will bring many benefits and advantages, both in the exam and afterwards.

- The examiner will form a positive impression of your work.
- They will not be slowed down or confused, as they will if the writing is hard to read and not written in proper sentences.
- How you write as well as what you write will be taken into account when your work is marked.

Please consider the following when you get to the exam:

- Read the exam paper very carefully at least twice before starting to write and plan your answers carefully before beginning.
- Take note how many marks each question is worth and make sure you write enough to get the maximum amount of marks.
- Please ensure you answer all questions as students often lose crucial marks by missing questions.
- Keep to the topic or subject of the question and do not go off the point.
- Check all spelling and punctuation.
- Keep a careful eye on the time.

Section A: Understanding non-fiction texts

The first time you read the non-fiction texts, you will probably be 'skimming and scanning' – in other words, getting a general sense of what the text is about.

When you are getting ready to answer the question(s), however, you need to read in a more careful, efficient way. You will get better marks if you comment on the use of precise parts of the text – words and phrases – with clear supporting evidence. It is really important to be specific rather than make generalised statements.

Read all questions carefully and answer them exactly. If bullet point "prompts" are provided, use them to structure your answer.

Consider underlining the important words in any question, so that you focus on them when responding. Respond in appropriate detail and in the right amount of time, so that you answer all the questions but still have enough time to answer Section B and C without having to panic.

Section B: Producing non-fiction texts

You will be asked to answer a question on any one of the writing triplets.

- Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe
- Writing to Review, Analyse, Comment
- Writing to Argue, Persuade, Advise

Your response in this section should be no more than 5-6 paragraphs in length. Quality is more important than quantity. You will be rewarded for your use of sentence structure, punctuation and spelling. Be aware

of this and leave some time to check your work for this, as well as good choice of vocabulary and paragraphing.

A well-structured piece of writing has a clear introduction, interesting ideas in the main section, and a strong conclusion.

Section C: Poetry

1. Read the poem a few times (in your head). It is important to hear the sound of the words to notice if there are any rhymes or alliteration.
2. It is sometimes useful to copy the poem out (if you have time). It forces you to focus on every word and the reason the poet chose each word.
3. Do not panic if you do not understand everything that is written in the poem. Focus on what you do understand.
4. Illustrate the points you make with examples from the text. Ensure you use quotation marks and explain clearly why you have used the quote.
5. Consider the mood of the poem. Is it happy, sad, funny, upbeat? How is this shown? Find at least one example.
6. Are there any rhymes? Is there a rhythm to the poem? How does this affect how it reads? Do you read it at a fast or slow pace? How does this fit with the subject it covers?

Look out for the following techniques. Show how they are used in the poem and what effect that has.

1. Alliteration – repetition of the first consonant sound in a phrase e.g. Peter Piper picked a peck of picked peppers.
2. Metaphor – comparisons that look at two things that are not alike in most ways but are similar in one important way e.g. we would have had more pizza if Tracy had not been such a pig.
3. Simile – a comparison which suggests that two things are alike e.g. she was like a rose. Often the word 'like' or 'as' is used e.g. her hair was like silk.

Many students worry about analysing poetry. In the exam you will be asked to analyse poems based on a theme e.g. feelings conveyed in the poem. You may also be asked to respond to an unseen poem.

Poems do not write themselves: be aware of the poet.

- Don't write: "It says that...."
- Do write: "The poet writes/claims/argues/states that...." Refer to "the poet" or "the author" or identify him or her by name (but check spelling of this).

If the poem is about a person, decide if this person is meant to be:

- The poet (literally or autobiographically),
- Someone a bit like him or her, or
- Someone completely different.

Avoid writing pronouns like "her" or "he" as these are confusing – the examiner may not know whom you mean, instead write "the man in the poem" or the "poet's friend" or whoever.

Where possible, make comparisons within and between poems. For example, show how the end contrasts with what goes before it, or show how a similar theme receives different treatment in two poems. Do not waste time in pointing out the very obvious.

Always end with a brief statement about whether you like each poem and why. A clear personal response will earn you some marks.

Quote briefly – use a single word or phrase to support your comments. You may refer to a whole stanza but should not copy this out. When quoting from the poem, use quotation marks. Whenever you use a quote, always explain in your own words what the quotation means and comment on its effect.

Please see below guide on key terms and features for the Poetry section

Examples of key terms to use in the poetry section:

In this poem the poet explores.....	The poet is concerned about.....
His/her poem questions.....	The poet uses this structure to.....
The poem has a powerful rhythm, for example...	The poet draws attention to the.....
The poet uses language to.....	The repetition of words like ____ suggests....
The poet uses interesting imagery which helps the reader experience.....	The poem appeals to me because
This poem is effective because.....	The poem I prefer is _____ because.....

Features of poetry essay writing

- Make a personal response to the poem
- Link the poems at the start of your essay around the theme in the question
- Discuss similarities and difference between poems
- Use short quotations to support your points
- Focus on detail in the poems
- Comment on vocabulary, expression and grammar
- Comment on ideas and feelings
- Comment on the effect of the poem on the reader
- Comment on structure and attach to meaning
- Conclude by linking the poems and offering your preference.