

OCR ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE (3828)

OCR ADVANCED GCE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE (7828)

Teacher Support

This Teacher Support booklet is designed to accompany the OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE English Literature specifications for teaching from September 2000.

Contents

1	About this guide	Page 1
2	Introduction	Page 2
	2.1 Literary studies and the study of literature	Page 2
	2.2 Teaching English in theory and practice	Page 2
	2.3 The place of internal assessment	Page 3
3	Assessment Objectives	Page 4
	3.1 What assessment objectives are and why they matter	Page 4
	3.2 Weightings	Page 5
	3.3 The specification grid	Page 6
	3.4 The assessment objectives assessed	Page 8
4	OCR English Literature	Page 13
	4.1 At a glance	Page 14
	4.2 Unit by Unit	Page 15
	4.3 Notes on Units (2707) and (2708)	Page 21
	4.4 AS coursework (2709)	Page 26
	4.5 Notes on Units (2710) and (2711) / (2712)	Page 28
	4.6 Synoptic Assessment (2713)	Page 30
5	Marking and Mark Schemes	Page 35
	5.1 The specifications as a whole	Page 35
	5.2 Question specific mark schemes	Page 36
6	Course planning	Page 40
7	Setting standards	Page 43
	7.1 Introduction	Page 43
	7.2 Exemplar scripts	Page 44
8	Further reading	Page 50
9	OCR Contacts	Page 52

1 About this Guide

This guide is designed to help English departments, and individual teachers, to introduce the new OCR Advanced Supplementary and Advanced GCE courses in English Literature. It is based on the intensive series of INSET events and Centre visits which OCR has undertaken since its specifications were approved in November 1999, and focuses on the questions which have been most frequently asked by those planning the introduction of the new courses. In meeting the needs of teachers, this guide

- contains information about the new philosophy of A level English Literature, as defined in QCA's Subject Criteria;
- examines the central importance of the Assessment Objectives for teachers, students and examiners;
- discusses each of the six units, and gives some examples of candidates' work to exemplify standards for the new Advanced Subsidiary;
- raises coursework issues and gives advice on departmental planning;
- focuses on the importance of synoptic assessment as the culmination of the course;
- offers suggestions for further reading and professional development.

Inevitably, however, no guide of this kind can answer every question that will arise. When such questions do crop up, the English Qualifications team at OCR will always be pleased to deal personally with enquiries and can be contacted on 01223 552960.

To give further support to teachers introducing the new English specifications, OCR offers a full programme of whole-day training courses at venues around the country. Details of these courses are in the OCR INSET Handbook, which has been sent to all Centres. In addition, Centres are welcome to request visits from senior OCR examiners and officers who can provide tailor-made courses to suit the needs of individual departments or groups of departments.

If you want further details of any OCR courses or would like to ask for a Centre visit, please contact the OCR Training and Customer Services department on 0121 628 2950.

2 Introduction

2.1 Literary Studies and the Study of Literature

“AS and A level specifications in English Literature should encourage students to develop their interest and enjoyment in literary studies through reading widely, independently and critically.”

So says the *Subject Criteria for English Literature*, published by QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority). This document sets out in detail what all the new specifications in English Literature must do (Aims), what they must contain (Knowledge, Skills and Understanding), and how they must be assessed (Assessment Objectives, Synoptic Assessment and Grade Descriptions).

Up to now most teachers of A level English will have thought of themselves as teachers of English Literature rather than of Literary Studies. This change in emphasis signalled by QCA is important but should not be seen as intimidating. It implies three things:

- **Ways of reading and frameworks for studying literature** must be an explicit part of what teachers teach and students learn. Teaching literature must now involve reflecting on *how* we read as well as *what* we read. Students must learn both the skills of interpretation and the skills of analysing and evaluating differing interpretations.
- **Close reading of texts** remains central to AS and A level study but this should be seen as the beginning, not as the end, of the process; and detailed study of a small number of individual texts should now be part of a course in which wider reading is essential, not an optional extra or a pious hope.
- **Putting literature, and the study of literature, in context** is now central to the subject as it is defined in the Subject Criteria. Exploring the relationships between texts, and the relationships between texts and the worlds in which they were written and are read today, will now be more important than studying texts in isolation.

Perhaps the keyword in all this is ‘context’, and the new specifications have had to place much greater emphasis on this aspect of literary study than in the past. In so doing, AS and A level English Literature qualifications will now be seen as a distinctive step beyond work done at GCSE and more closely aligned with the study of English at degree level today.

2.2 Teaching English in Theory and Practice

For some teachers this may provide a long-sought opportunity to introduce some of the insights of literary theory into their AS and A level teaching; others will want to continue to focus on traditional critical approaches to canonical texts. OCR specifications in English Literature are designed to encourage flexibility in choice of texts, topics and teaching philosophies, and it is therefore up to individual teachers and departments to develop approaches and policies in line with their own strengths and their students’ abilities. The OCR specifications do not require that students should have to study Theory as a discrete element of the subject, nor that they must acquire the specific technical vocabulary associated with some branches of Theory. On the other hand both teachers and students need to be aware that the QCA Subject criteria focus broadly on the following:

- **Plurality** – the awareness that, because texts can be read in different ways by different readers at different times and in different contexts, there is never a single meaning or a single ‘right answer’ that can be taught and learned. Students, as readers, must learn how to take account of other perspectives and interpretations in the process of reaching their own conclusions about texts and writers.
- **Intertextuality** – the awareness that writers do not write, nor do readers read, in a literary vacuum. The relationships between texts, and the comparisons that can be drawn between them, illuminate the processes of writing and reading. This is why it is now a requirement for all English Literature specifications to contain comparative study of whole texts.
- **Contextuality** – again, writers write and readers read within a number of contexts: literary, social, cultural, and historical. These affect the ways in which texts can be read, and candidates at AS must show their awareness of these influences, while at A2 they should be able to evaluate the significance of contextual influences on the way in which texts can be interpreted.

In each of these areas the primary focus remains on the texts. In the new OCR specifications the practice of close reading continues to be central to the study of Literature at AS and A level. So, too, does the emphasis on the traditions of English literature: most of the set texts are unashamedly part of the established canon. Not all, however: there are a number of new texts and new areas of study (biography, travel writing and post-colonial literature, for instance) which have been introduced.

Challenging the canon has become an important part of the business of literary studies today; through their choice of texts for coursework and their selection of topic for Synoptic Assessment (*Comparative and Contextual Study: Unit 2713*) Centres and candidates are invited, if they wish, to move into new areas of literary and textual exploration.

2.3 The Place of Internal Assessment

This flexibility of choice is a major feature of the OCR specifications, and coursework (internal assessment) is an important means of offering choice to English departments. The AS specification is constructed to allow complete freedom of choice of a fourth (coursework) text, which may be of any genre, type or period. Creative as well as critical approaches can be encouraged here, through the use of recreative response as a way of engaging closely with the language of the text. At A2, where the coursework is optional, candidates may choose to submit a folder containing two items of written work on one or more 20th century prose texts; alternatively they may prefer to submit a single extended essay. At both AS and A2, candidates and Centres may choose coursework texts that are directly linked to their selected synoptic topic area. Alternatively, they may decide to study texts that give additional breadth or focus to a particular course of study.

This degree of freedom of choice in texts and methods of internal assessment is unique among the new English Literature specifications. It arises from OCR’s view that departments, not Awarding Bodies, best know what will be appropriate and stimulating for their teachers and students. In these ways it is hoped that the study of English Literature can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all students – those who are taking AS as a fourth or fifth subject and those who hope to read English at university alike.

3 Assessment Objectives

3.1 What Assessment Objectives are and why they matter

In the past, most teachers and examiners have defined English Literature syllabuses either in terms of the set texts (Shakespeare, Chaucer, etc.) or of the papers to be taken ('Shakespeare and the Drama', 'Twentieth Century Writing', 'Complementary Study', 'Extended Essay' etc.). Implicitly or explicitly it has been understood that candidates are mainly assessed on their knowledge of the texts, and that they reveal this knowledge through their skill in writing essays either in examination or for coursework: *knowledge of texts demonstrated through literary and critical skills and understanding*.

In the new Subject Criteria, *knowledge* is only one third of the course content: the other two thirds are literary *skills* and *understanding* of literary concepts and contexts (again, the emphasis on literary studies, not just on the study of literature). In each unit candidates are assessed primarily not on how well they know the texts, but on how they use this knowledge to demonstrate a grasp of the skills, concepts and contexts set out in the Assessment Objectives: *literary and critical skills and understanding demonstrated through knowledge of texts*.

The Assessment Objectives are at the heart of the Subject Criteria and, in effect, represent the core of the subject. Set texts may change from year to year, Centres may switch from one Board to another, but the Assessment Objectives remain the same. For this reason it is essential that all teachers and students understand what the AOs demand and how they shape each element of the course. Although they are based on the Assessment Objectives for previous syllabuses (where they have played a much less prominent role), there are significant differences. It is worth reproducing them in full:

Candidates should be able to:	
AO1	communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression
AO2i	respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods
AO2ii	respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods, exploring and commenting on relationships and comparisons between literary texts
AO3	show detailed understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings
AO4	articulate independent opinions and judgements, informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers
AO5i	show understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are written and understood
AO5ii	evaluate the significance of cultural, historical and other contextual influences on literary texts and study

These may look rather daunting (and the three English subjects – Literature, Language, and Language and Literature – each have more AOs than any other subject at A level) but they can be summarised under the following headings:

AO1: literary and critical insight, organisation of material and written communication

AO2i: knowledge of texts in relation to genre and period, **plus (for A2)**

AO2ii: *comparative* study of texts

AO3: analysis of form, structure, language and their effects; focus on the writer

AO4: interpretation (ability to shape own interpretation, and to take account of/evaluate other people's); focus on the reader

AO5i: understanding of context of writing and reading, **plus (for A2)**

AO5ii: ability to *evaluate* the significance of contexts.

It is clear that there are certain strands linking these different objectives. Literary and critical insight, AO1, encompasses all the others, particularly AO3 and AO4; knowledge of genres and periods, AO2, focuses on the literary contexts while AO5 is concerned with social, historical and cultural contexts.

Note: AO2ii and AO5ii only apply to A2. Students taking Advanced Subsidiary English Literature only do not have to worry about these.

3.2 Weightings

To each of these assessment objectives, QCA has attached ranges of weightings. *Weightings are the proportions of the available marks from the qualification as a whole allocated to a particular assessment objective.* The assessment of a candidate's performance is based on how well he or she has met the assessment objectives across all the units of the qualification (three units for AS, six for the full A level). In other words, examiners award marks on the basis of how well the candidate meets the assessment objectives for each unit: the mark schemes are explicitly linked to the AOs.

Assessment Objectives thus determine everything. At the start of the process of developing their new specifications, each Awarding Body had to decide what weighting to give each AO within the allowable range. OCR decided to give equal weighting (20%) to each one. These weightings then had to be distributed across each unit, bearing in mind that some units are worth 20% of the total available marks (e.g. Units 2708 and 2713) and the others are worth 15%.

3.3 The Specification Grid

The following grid shows the relationship between assessment objectives and units of assessment. It specifies the weighting attached to the assessment objective in each of the units in AS and in A2.

AO	Unit 2707	Unit 2708	Unit 2709	AS %	Unit 2710	Unit 2711/ 2712	Unit 2713	A2 %	Advanced GCE %
1	5	10	5	20	5	10	5	20	20
2(i)		10	10	20					
2(ii)					5	5	10	20	20
3	5	10	5	20	5	5	10	20	20
4	10	5	5	20	10	5	5	20	20
5(i)	10	5	5	20					
5(ii)					5	5	10	20	20
AS/A2 A level	30% 15%	40% 20%	30% 15%	100 50%	30% 15%	30% 15%	40% 20%	100 50%	100%

(In the OCR specification for English Literature, all weightings are shown as either 5% or 10% per unit.)

The grid, in turn, shows what is the focus of each unit, and this is why it is so important for teachers and students to be

- aware of the skills and concepts associated with each AO;
- aware of the prominence given to each AO in each unit of the course.

This is equally important for examiners. In the first place, it determines the nature of the tasks to be set. For example, Unit 2710 (Drama and Poetry pre-1900) singles out AO4 as the most prominent objective. It is clear, therefore, that the main emphasis here must be on interpretation, even though all the other AOs also feature.

As a result, the grid defines the types of question that can be set in each paper. It would be inappropriate for a paper giving prominence to AO3 (close reading and focus on language) not to have questions that made candidates look closely at the way the writer has used language to shape meaning.

Finally, it determines the way in which the mark scheme for each unit is drawn up and must be used by the examiner or moderator. Full guidance on mark schemes and their application is given in Section 4 below, but for now it is worth noticing the following points.

In all the OCR English specifications, each externally assessed unit requires candidates to answer **two questions**.

In Units 2707, 2708, 2710 and 2712, **the tasks in Section A and Section B are of different kinds** (e.g. a passage-based analysis followed by an essay). Where this happens, each section may address different AOs. Thus while the grid above shows the weightings given to the unit as a whole; teachers, question-setters, students and examiners need to be aware that the weightings may vary from Section to Section.

Example

Unit 2707 (Drama: Shakespeare) targets the following Assessment Objectives:

AO1 5%; AO3 5%; AO4 10%; AO5i 10%.

In Section A candidates answer a passage-based question. This requires close reading and analysis (AO3) and the candidate must offer an independent judgement of the passage (AO4) as well as showing an awareness of relevant contexts (AO5i). Each of these three AOs is equally weighted at 5%.

In Section B candidates answer an essay question. Here the emphasis is on organisation of argument and clarity of communication (AO1), balanced again by the candidate's own interpretation of the text (AO4) and an awareness of relevant contexts (AO5i.) As in Section A, each of the three AOs is equally weighted at 5%.

Thus, the weightings for the unit as a whole are distributed across the two sections as follows:

Section	AO1	AO2i	AO2ii	AO3	AO4	AO5i	AO5ii
A				5%	5%	5%	
B	5%				5%	5%	
Total	5%			5%	10%	10%	

Note: AO2i is not specifically targeted in this unit.

Because in the OCR specification all AO weightings are either 5% or 10% per unit, it is possible (for convenience's sake) to show the same weightings in an alternative way:

2707	AO1	AO2i	AO2ii	AO3	AO4	AO5i	AO5ii
A				*	*	*	
B	*				*	*	
Total	*			*	**	**	

For the specification as a whole, the distribution across each unit and each section within a unit can be shown like this:

Unit	AO1	AO2i	AO2ii	AO3	AO4	AO5i	AO5ii
2707A				*	*	*	
2707B	*				*	*	
2708A	**	**		**	*	*	
2708B	**	**		**	*	*	
2709A	*				*	*	
2709B		**		*			
2710A	*		*	*	**		*
2710B	*		*	*	**		*
2711/ 2712A	*		*	*			
2711/ 2712B	*				*		*
2713A	*			**			*
2713B			**		*		*

From the student's, teacher's and examiner's point of view it is more important to know which AOs (if any) are the dominant ones in a unit or section rather than to worry about specific percentages.

3.4 The Assessment Objectives assessed

AO1: "Candidates should be able to communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression."

The 'knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study' are spelt out in the other AOs; here the emphasis is on the candidate's ability to communicate these things in writing. 'Using appropriate terminology' begs the question what terminology is appropriate for an A Level English Literature candidate. OCR has indicated the range of terms it expects candidates to be able to handle (See Specification, Appendix C), but it is worth repeating the point made above: the technical vocabulary associated with some branches of Theory is not required. Technical terminology has no intrinsic value: it is only useful when it helps an argument to be developed more clearly or an idea to be expressed more accurately.

Developing a critical argument is perhaps the key element underlying written communication in this AO. Beyond the emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar associated with GCSE, students at AS and A level will be assessed on their ability to shape a coherent argument and present it effectively. In all subjects, specifications must show how written communication will be assessed; the OCR English Literature Specification (Section 3.2.1) describes characteristic features of performance at different levels of achievement. **It is important for students, right from the start of the course, to be aware of the importance attached to clarity of written communication.**

AO2i: “Candidates should be able to respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods.”

The traditional A level emphasis on informed personal response is echoed here, although it is clear that the focus is now on understanding texts in relation to their time and genre (historical and literary contexts). In one sense, of course, a candidate who writes on Shakespeare, Mary Shelley and Toni Morrison while taking Units 2707, 2708 and 2712 is fulfilling the demands of this AO, but it is here in particular that knowledge and understanding of individual texts can be given credit.

Note: the phrase ‘literary texts’ – another question-begging term. Elsewhere in the Subject Criteria will be found the phrase ‘of sufficient substance to merit study at this level.’ Literary texts do not have to be culled only from the canon (still less from any canon defined as ‘texts traditionally set for A level’): in choosing texts for coursework or for wider reading in preparation for the synoptic unit teachers and candidates should feel free to explore new territory if they wish. The three genres defined in the Subject Criteria are Poetry, Drama and Prose – not exclusively fiction. Asking what makes a text ‘literary’ is exactly the sort of question the new specifications should prompt from students.

AO2ii: “Candidates should be able to respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods, exploring and commenting on relationships and comparisons between literary texts.”

Note: This only applies to A2; candidates taking AS will not be asked questions involving comparative study of whole texts. But this is not to say that they may not want to make cross-references to other texts: such an approach may be an appropriate way to show awareness of contexts – literary, cultural or historical.

Comparative study of whole texts has never been a core requirement at A level before, though individual syllabuses may have included it as an option (e.g. UCLES Topic Paper 4484). It is important to note that the task here is not simply to compare: candidates must reflect on how such study illuminates their understanding of the texts and on what relationships can be seen between them. In this specification, comparative study forms a key part of the synoptic assessment (Unit 2713), and will enable candidates to move beyond the individual texts under discussion to draw conclusions about the topic area to which the texts belong. (See Section 3.6 below for fuller discussion of the Synoptic Unit).

AO3: “Candidates should be able to show detailed understanding of the ways in which writers’ choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.”

For many teachers, this will be the most telling of all the assessment objectives. OCR agrees, which is why, at the outset, it gave this AO the maximum permitted weighting (20%) and assigned all the other AOs the same weighting. (This is in contrast to the Subject Criteria, which encouraged weightings of up to 25% for AO 2 and AO5 and up to 30% for AO4. By the same token QCA indicated that AO1 and AO3 could be as low as 10% each.)

The wording of the AO appears to focus unambiguously on the writer as the maker of meaning; 'choices' and 'shape' imply the creative impulse behind literary texts; but the reader (here, the candidate) is involved in this process, too, by responding to the internal characteristics of the text - literally the words on the page, their organisation and meaning. Put like this, 'understanding' as used in AO3 carries the traditional sense of the term 'critical appreciation' and must play a significant part in every one of the units of the OCR specification. Only Unit 2710 does not require candidates to focus at any point on the language of a specified passage or passages; but even here, answers should be firmly rooted in an understanding of how meaning is created in the texts under discussion.

Thus it is through this assessment objective that candidates consider the aesthetics of the literary process. Half of the Synoptic unit, 2713, is devoted to comment and appreciation where the candidate has to evaluate an unseen text in relation both to its genre and/or period (AO2) and to other relevant contexts (AO5). Although in this way it is recognised that texts do not exist in a vacuum, twice as much emphasis is still given to AO3 (see *figure 5* above), signalling the importance attached to it in the specification as a whole.

AO4: "Candidates should be able to articulate independent opinions and judgements, informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers."

By contrast with AO3, where the emphasis was on the creative act of writing, here the focus is on the interpretative act of reading. The word 'articulate' harks back to 'communicate' in AO1, and the 'independent opinions and judgements' should be linked to the 'responding with knowledge and understanding' required by AO2. Clearly, though, the process of interpreting texts demands an understanding of the way writers achieve effects and create meaning through language, form and structure (AO3); it is also likely to be informed by an awareness of contexts, literary and historical (AO2) and social and cultural (AO5).

Expressed like this, AO4 is as much an overarching objective as AO1, with its reference to 'the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study'. It can be argued that interpretation of texts is the primary activity required by students at A Level – indeed, that it is the primary task of literary criticism. It is not, of course, the primary task of literary theory, which is not text-centred in the same way. Thus, while it may well be valuable and enjoyable for A level English Literature teachers and students to learn to apply some of the perspectives of Theory (as, for example, anyone choosing post-colonial literature for the Synoptic Unit 2713 would be likely to do), Theory *per se* is not part of the OCR specification. Questions will not require students to be familiar with the specific terms and methodologies of particular schools or branches of Theory beyond what has already been spelt out in Section 1.2 above.

Two illustrations may be helpful here. Readers wanting to explore the concept of intertextuality might refer to Graham Allen's textbook on the subject, *Intertextuality*, published in the Routledge New Critical Idiom series (2000). The discussion is stimulating and provocative, and entirely theoretical: it seeks to position intertextuality at the centre of evolving debates about post-structuralism and post-modernism. By contrast, David Lodge's explanation of intertextuality in *The Art of Fiction* (Penguin, 1992, Ch. 21) is essentially practical: he demonstrates how an awareness of the relationship between texts can illuminate the process of reading, and he does this by showing Joseph Conrad's debt to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in a passage from *The Shadow Line*. Lodge's discussion would be entirely accessible and very useful to any A level teacher or student exploring the concepts embodied in AO2; Allen's book would not; it is designed for a different purpose.

Second, literary studies today have absorbed many of the insights of Theory (and of current social and political thinking) so that they are now part of the mainstream of the subject. Just as it is almost unthinkable today that a white actor should be 'blacked up' to play Othello, so it is impossible to discuss *The Merchant of Venice* without realising that it may be a much more difficult play for us than it was for Shakespeare. And anyone teaching *Jane Eyre* might well explore the different interpretations of the text than can be reached by placing it within different genres (the Gothic or the Victorian novel, for instance) or reading it from different perspectives, such as the feminist or post-colonial – especially if comparing it with *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Contrasting the views of early critics and reviewers of the novel with those of later commentators is a rewarding way to explore the idea of plurality (See Section 2.2 above) and to help candidates develop their own independent opinions and judgements *informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers*.

'Learning critics', therefore, is not required by the Subject Criteria; teaching critical perspectives is. Citing a particular critic in an examination essay *may* occasionally be useful to illustrate a different interpretation, but examiners will be looking to credit candidates who can genuinely show independent judgement arising from an informed response to the text(s) under discussion. Quoting and discussing the views of specific critics is more likely to be appropriate in coursework, where candidates can have ready access to critical texts and can acknowledge them properly in their references and bibliography.

Questions set in the different units may well put forward a critical view or views for candidates to discuss; they will not assume that candidates have read specific critics, nor will they refer to particular theoretical positions (structuralist, new historicist etc.).

Unit 2710 is the one which targets AO4 most strongly. Here, all the questions require candidates to test their own interpretation of a text in the light of a given critical viewpoint. It is important always to remember that AO4 puts the emphasis on the candidate's own interpretation first, with other interpretations by different readers coming second; not *vice versa*.

AO5i: "Candidates should be able to show understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are written and understood."

The contexts of writers' lives and times, of their other work and that of their contemporaries, on the one hand, and the contexts in which their work is received and read, on the other; these are the points of focus for AO5i. Teachers will have been used to deal with the former under the broad heading of 'background'. Again, there is a clear link with the historical context of 'periods' in AO2.

Characteristically, A level questions have hitherto tended to locate all texts in a continuing present so that (for instance) a question on Jane Austen's characterisation of Emma might have been couched in exactly the same terms as a question on Caryl Churchill's characterisation of Marlene in *Top Girls*. Such questions will continue to be asked, but candidates will expect to be more specific in discussing the historical contexts and the issues they provoke. Is the Knight really the 'verray parfit gentil' paragon he appears to be, or would Chaucer's original readers have detected an irony in his having been (as Terry Jones has argued) a highly paid mercenary? Or, how easy is it to be sure what attitudes an Elizabethan audience might have had towards Shylock as portrayed by Shakespeare?

In the OCR AS specification, in Units 2707 and 2708 candidates will be prompted to consider the place of such issues by the bullet points that will give guidance after each question. All bullet points will be linked directly to the assessment objectives that the question is targeting. (For fuller discussion of these units, and of question setting, see Section 4.3.)

AO5ii: “Candidates should be able to evaluate the significance of cultural, historical and other contextual influences on literary texts and study.”

Contexts, it should be noted, are not of value for their own sake, but only for their usefulness as a framework for responding to and understanding the text(s) under discussion. This is particularly important to remember when making the transition from AS to A2. Progression here (the increasing level of demand and sophistication) is achieved by moving from ‘Understanding of contexts’ to ‘evaluating the significance of contextual influences’ both on texts and on literary study itself. Evaluation in fact can be seen as the distinguishing characteristic of work at A2, since the demand of AO2ii is also evaluation – weighing up the significance of what can be learned through comparing texts. It is for this reason that the OCR Synoptic Unit 2713 focuses strongly on these Assessment Objectives by asking candidates to explore an area of literary significance through comparative and contextual study.

It will be seen, finally, that each of the assessment objectives 2 to 5 defines a different kind of context or contexts, and that each of these represents a different way of approaching the study of literary texts and topics. AO 2 addresses the relationship of texts to genre and literary period - Romantic, Modernist etc. (the literary context); AO3 deals with formal and linguistic issues (the context of writing); AO4 focuses on critical and interpretative issues (the context of reading); AO5 is concerned with broader background issues – historical, social, political etc. (the cultural context). Individually, and together, these contexts provide frameworks for the study of literature; they define the knowledge, skills and understanding that candidates need to develop and on which they will be assessed. They are clearly central to the teaching, study and assessment of the subject as defined by the Subject Criteria and in these OCR specifications. And it is through them, finally, that the apparent tension between ‘the study of literature’ and ‘literary studies’ can best be resolved.

4 OCR English Literature

The following section should be read in conjunction with the Specification booklet, Section 5 and Appendices A and B, and with the published specimen papers and mark schemes. Further copies of these documents are available from OCR publications or may be downloaded from the OCR website:

www.ocr.org.uk

Please note that there are some modifications to the format of the question papers and style of questions as shown in the specimen papers (Units 2707, 2708 and 2713). These are summarised below, and explained fully in the discussions of the relevant units:

- In Unit 2707 (Drama: Shakespeare), Section B, there will be choice of two essay questions on each play;
- In Units 2707 and 2708 (Poetry and Prose) the bullet points following each question will be explicitly linked to the assessment objectives for the paper;
- In Unit 2713 (Comparative and Contextual Study) Section B, there will be a choice of three (not two) essay questions; the third question may be answered with reference to **either** of the two texts specified for study in each topic area.

4.1 OCR English Literature AS/A Level at a Glance

<p>Unit 2707 (AS) 2 hrs 15%</p> <p>Drama: Shakespeare</p> <p>Candidates select one play, and answer two questions: one passage-based and one essay. <i>(Closed text)</i></p>	<p>Unit 2710 (A2) 2 hrs 15%</p> <p>Poetry & Drama (pre-1900)</p> <p>Candidates answer two questions, one from each Section (A: Poetry; B: Drama). At least one question must be on a text published pre-1770. <i>(Closed text)</i></p>
<p>Unit 2708 (AS) 2 hrs 20%</p> <p>Poetry and Prose</p> <p>Candidates answer two questions, one on a poetry text, the second on prose. At least one text must be pre-1900. Questions will require close study and critical appreciation of set passages from prepared texts. In their answers candidates must discuss the set passages in relation to the text as a whole. <i>(Open text)</i></p>	<p>Unit 2711 or 2712 (A2) 15%</p> <p>Prose (post-1914)</p> <p>Internal Assessment (<i>coursework</i>) (Unit 2711) OR Written Paper (Unit 2712) 2 hrs (<i>Open text</i>)</p> <p>Candidates study one or more prose texts not previously used in Units 2708 or 2709. <i>Internal:</i> a folder (max. 3000 words) containing either two items of writing or an extended essay. <i>External:</i> Candidates answer two questions, one passage-based and the other an essay, either on the same or on a different text.</p>
<p>Unit 2709 (AS) 15%</p> <p>Literature Complementary Study</p> <p>A folder (guideline 1500-2000 words) containing two items of writing on a single text chosen by the candidate. <i>(This must be a fourth text, not one of the three previously studied for Unit 2707 or 2708.)</i> One item should focus on the text as a whole; the second should involve a close reading and critical discussion of a single selected passage. <i>(This may take the form of a recreative response with commentary.)</i></p>	<p>Unit 2713 (A2) 2hrs 20%</p> <p>Comparative and Contextual Study (Synoptic)</p> <p>Candidates answer two questions on a single topic area (<i>see below</i>), one question from each section. A: close study of an unseen passage or passages related to the set topic areas B: essay questions involving comparative and contextual study of at least two related texts. <i>Satire; Gothic Tradition; Victorian Novel; the Great War in British Literature; 20th. century American Literature; Post-Colonial Literature. (Closed text)</i> 15 minutes will be allowed for initial reading before the question paper is issued.</p>

4.2 OCR English Literature AS/A Level unit by unit

AS Unit 2707	Title of Unit: DRAMA: Shakespeare						A Level Weighting 15%
External: written	Type of Paper: Closed Texts		Available: January and June			Time: 2 hours	
Rubric: Candidates answer two questions, one from each section. Each answer must relate to the same play.							
Description of Unit: Set Texts from January 2001 until at least January 2003. Set Texts <i>Richard II</i> <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> <i>Othello</i> <i>The Winter's Tale</i> Section A One passage-based question will be set on each play. (The passages will be printed on the question paper.) Candidates will be asked a single question on each passage, with guidance on suggested lines of approach. Section B A choice of two essay questions will be set on each play, again with guidance on suggested lines of approach. In Section A tasks will focus on the ways Shakespeare's form, structure and language create meaning and prompt a range of possible responses from an audience. Candidates will be required to discuss the passage in relation to the play as a whole. In both sections candidates will be expected to show awareness of the relation of their chosen play to Shakespeare's other work and to the theatre of his day, and will be assessed on their ability to present independent opinions and judgements in response to the questions asked, and (in Section A) to the evidence of the text or passage they are discussing.							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
AS Weighting %	5			5	10	10	

AS Unit 2708	Title of Unit: POETRY AND PROSE						A Level Weighting 20%
External: Written	Type of Paper: Open Texts		Available: January and June			Time: 2 hours	
Rubric:							
Candidates answer two questions, one from each section. One answer must be on a POETRY text and the other on a PROSE text. At least one answer must be on a text published pre-1900.							
Description of Unit:							
Section A: Poetry							
<i>Pre-1900</i> Geoffrey Chaucer: <i>The General Prologue</i> (C.U.P.) John Donne: (<i>ed. Enright</i>) (Everyman's Poetry) Alfred, Lord Tennyson: (<i>ed. Baron</i>) (Everyman's Poetry) William Wordsworth: <i>Poems</i> (Everyman's Poetry)							
<i>Post-1900</i> Judith Baxter (ed.): <i>Four Women Poets</i> (C.U.P.) Robert Frost: <i>Selected Poems</i> (O.U.P. Student Texts) Ivor Gurney: <i>Selected Poems</i> (Everyman's Poetry) Ted Hughes: <i>New Selected Poems 1957-1994</i> (Faber)							
Section B: Prose							
<i>Pre-1900</i> Jane Austen: <i>Emma</i> (Wordsworth Classics) Emily Brontë: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Wordsworth Classics) Charles Dickens: <i>Hard Times</i> (Wordsworth Classics) Mary Shelley: <i>Frankenstein</i> (Wordsworth Classics)							
<i>Post-1900</i> Pat Barker: <i>Regeneration</i> (Penguin) L.P. Hartley: <i>The Go-Between</i> (Penguin) James Joyce: <i>Dubliners</i> (Penguin) Ian McEwan: <i>The Child in Time</i> (Vintage)							
On each text candidates have a free choice of two questions. The (a) question will identify a passage or poem for comment. (Page references to specified editions will be given.) The task will require discussion of the set passage in terms both of the particular effects of the writing and of its relation to the text as a whole. The (b) question will identify an appropriate topic and ask the candidate to select from the text a passage or poem (or passages/poems) for discussion in relation to the designated topic. The emphasis of both types of task will be on critical understanding of the text and on the ability to select appropriate textual evidence for comment and analysis, again in relation to the text as a whole.							
QCA Criteria require that for open texts papers, only the prescribed editions of texts may be used in the examination room. (See OCR Specification, Section 4.1.1 for guidance on annotation of texts.)							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
AS Weighting %	10	10		10	5	5	

AS Unit 2709	Title of Unit: LITERATURE COMPLEMENTARY STUDY					A Level Weighting 15%	
Internal: Written	Type of Paper: Coursework		Available: January* and June			guideline 1500-2000 words	
Rubric:							
Candidates submit a folder of <i>two</i> items of written work discussing a text of the candidate's choice not previously studied for Units 2707 or 2708 . One item should focus on the text as a whole. The second should involve a close reading and critical discussion of a single selected passage (this may take the form of a recreative response with commentary).							
Description of Unit:							
<i>The aim of this unit is encourage candidates to develop their own literary interests by wider reading which will complement that required elsewhere in the specification, and to extend the choice of texts available for Centres to teach. It also offers opportunities for recreative writing, provided that this work meets the requirements of the Assessment Objectives for the unit (see below).</i>							
To fulfil this aim and to meet the requirements of the Subject Criteria for Advanced Subsidiary GCE English Literature, the folder must therefore focus on a fourth text (i.e. not on one already discussed in Units 2707 or 2708). To avoid overlap, the text chosen must not appear on any of the set text list for Units 2707 - 2708 or for Units 2710 - 2713. It may be from any genre or period, but must be of sufficient substance to merit study at this level. Candidates (particularly, for example, those taking AS only) may wish to choose a text from an area not covered elsewhere in Units 2707-2708 (e.g 20 th . century British drama, literary biography etc.). Alternatively, candidates who will subsequently be taking Unit 2713 (A2) may wish to select a text relevant to the topic area they will choose for their synoptic study.							
One item in the folder must discuss the selected text as a whole work. The second item must respond in detail to a single selected passage from the text. (A copy of the original passage must be included with the submission.) For this second item candidates may either submit a close reading and critical discussion or an item of recreative writing supported by a commentary. Recreative writing must clearly constitute a response to a particular poem or passage of prose or drama from the selected text; this could involve a continuation of the original passage, or writing in the style of the original. The commentary must discuss the relationship of the candidate's writing to the original text.							
Tasks set must be of appropriate demand, and must enable candidates to meet the requirements of the Assessment Objectives for the Unit. Folders are internally assessed by Centres and externally moderated by OCR.							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
AS Weighting %	5	10		5	5	5	

* **Note: This unit is not available in January 2001.**

A2 Unit 2710	Title of Unit: POETRY AND DRAMA (pre-1900)				A Level weighting 15%		
External: written	Type of Paper: Closed Text		Available: January* and June*		Time: 2 hours		
Rubric: Candidates answer two questions, one from each section (A: Poetry, B: Drama). At least one answer must be on a text published pre-1770*.							
Description of Unit: Set Texts from January 2002 until at least 2004 Section A: Poetry Geoffrey Chaucer: <i>The Pardoner's Tale</i> * (Cambridge School Chaucer) Andrew Marvell: <i>Selected Poems</i> * (Everyman's Poetry) John Milton: <i>Paradise Lost</i> Books 1 and 2* Alexander Pope: <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> * Samuel Taylor Coleridge: <i>Selected Poems</i> (Everyman's Poetry) Emily Dickinson: <i>Selected Poems</i> (Everyman's Poetry) Section B: Drama William Shakespeare: <i>King Lear</i> * William Shakespeare: <i>The Tempest</i> * Ben Jonson: <i>Volpone</i> * John Vanbrugh: <i>The Relapse</i> * Richard Sheridan: <i>The Rivals</i> Oscar Wilde: <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> On each text candidates will be given a choice of two questions, each requiring them to discuss their own evaluation of the poetry or play in the light of other opinions relating to the individual author and the text (AO4), and in relation to the contexts in which it can be placed (AO5ii). They will be expected to show that they have progressed from AS to A2 by the depth they demonstrate in discussing the ways in which language, form and style are exploited by writers (AO3) and by the knowledge and understanding they exhibit of literary texts of different types and periods (AO2ii). Progression will also be demonstrated by a sophisticated use of appropriate critical terminology and by a full and sharply focused response to the questions set (AO1). This is a closed text examination; Centres and candidates are therefore free to make their own choices of edition for each set text, and OCR does not wish to prescribe editions. However, for Section A, Poetry, the economically priced editions noted above will be regarded by examiners as providing an appropriate selection of the work of each poet. If other editions are used, it may be helpful to consult the contents of the given editions, to ensure representative coverage.							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
A2 Weighting %	5		5	5	10		5

* Note: This unit is not available in January 2001 and June 2001.

A2 Unit 2711/ 2712	Title of Unit: PROSE (post-1914)					A Level Weighting 15%	
Internal or External	Type of Paper: Coursework or Open Texts		Available: January* and June*		External: 2 hours		
<p style="text-align: center;">Rubric:</p> <p><i>Internal (Unit 2711):</i> Candidates produce a folder (maximum 3000 words) containing either two items of writing on one or more post-1914 prose texts not previously studied for Units 2708 or 2709 or an extended essay.</p> <p><i>External (Unit 2712):</i> Candidates answer two questions. The first question will require candidates to select a passage from the prescribed text and discuss it in relation to the set task and to the text as a whole. The second will require an essay answer, either on the same or on a different prescribed text.</p>							
<p style="text-align: center;">Description of Unit:</p> <p>Candidates choose at least one prose text (fiction or non-fiction). For internal assessment (Unit 2711), they have a free choice of appropriate texts published since 1914; for external assessment (Unit 2712) they must select a text or texts from the following list:</p> <p>Vera Brittain: <i>Testament of Youth</i> (Virago) Louis de Bernières: <i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i> (Vintage) Angela Carter: <i>The Bloody Chamber</i> (Penguin) D.H. Lawrence: <i>The Rainbow</i> (Penguin) Rian Malan: <i>My Traitor's Heart</i> (Vintage) Toni Morrison: <i>Beloved</i> (Virago) Paul Theroux: <i>The Great Railway Bazaar</i> (Penguin) Evelyn Waugh: <i>A Handful of Dust</i> (Penguin)</p> <p><i>QCA Criteria require that for open text papers, only the prescribed editions of texts may be used in the examination room.</i></p> <p>The same assessment objectives (see below) apply to both the internal and external assessment alternatives. The main requirement will be to communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study and to the discussion of their chosen text(s) (AOs1, 2ii), but all Assessment Objectives must be addressed and this must be taken into account when tasks are set for internal assessment. Thus, for instance, candidates should show some understanding of the genre (biography, travel writing, short-story etc.) and other contexts in which the text can be placed (AOs2ii, 5ii), and they should show - through close study of particular passages - an awareness of how a writer's choice of language and form shapes meaning (AO3). An awareness of how other readers may respond to a text (AO4) will help to define their own judgements.</p> <p><i>For external assessment,</i> candidates must answer two questions, one from each section. Section A will ask questions based on the relationship between an appropriate passage, or passages, to be chosen by the candidate, and the text as a whole; Section B will offer a choice of two essay questions on each text.</p>							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
A2 Weighting %	10		5	5	5		5

*** Note: This unit is not available in January 2001 and June 2001.**

A2 Unit 2713	Title of Unit: Comparative & Contextual Study					A Level Weighting 20%	
External: written	Type of Paper: Closed Text		Available: January* and June*			2 Hours	
Rubric:							
Candidates must select one topic area and answer two questions, one from each section. Section A will require comment on and appreciation of unseen poems, passages of prose and/or extracts of plays related to the six topic areas specified below. Section B will consist of a choice of essay questions requiring comparative and contextual study of at least two texts relevant to the chosen topic. at least one of the texts must be from the prescribed list.							
Description of Unit:							
Candidates choose one of the following contextual areas and texts:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satire (Swift: <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>; Atwood: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>) • The Gothic Tradition (Lewis: <i>The Monk</i>; Hill: <i>The Woman in Black</i>) • The Victorian Novel (Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i>; Hardy, <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>) • The Great War in British Literature (Faulks: <i>Birdsong</i>; Blunden, <i>Undertones of War</i>) • 20th. Century American Literature (Williams, <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>; Walker, <i>The Color Purple</i>) • Post-Colonial Literature (Ondaatje: <i>The English Patient</i>; Roy, <i>The God of Small Things</i>) 							
Candidates answer two questions (one from Section A and the other from Section B) both on the same topic area.							
This is the Synoptic Assessment for the Advanced GCE specification. In addition to discussing ONE NEW TEXT from those listed above, candidates must refer to AT LEAST ONE OTHER APPROPRIATE TEXT (which may include the text listed above) or any appropriate text(s) studied in previous units, together with other wider reading. As part of the background study and wider reading for this Unit, Centres and candidates may wish to develop their own anthologies of related material; they may also wish to use other appropriate sources of material, such as the <i>Cambridge Contexts in Literature</i> series (See Specification, Section 7.)							
This unit is to be seen as the culmination of the course. Candidates have the opportunity, through detailed exploration of a topic of their own or their Centre's choosing, to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skill in literary study (AO1). This unit encourages wider reading: it requires candidates to show their understanding of the importance of literary, historical and cultural context (AO5ii), to present independent opinions and judgements, informed by an awareness of how to evaluate other possible interpretations (AO4), and to show by comparative study an understanding of how texts relate to each other (AO2ii). In Section A they are required to demonstrate their skill at close reading of unseen material (AO3), and to relate this to their own reading in the topic area. In Section B , they must select one question and base their answer on a comparative study of <i>one specified text</i> (see list of titles above) with <i>at least one other text of their own choice</i> . In their answer they must again show their understanding of the ways literary, historical and cultural contexts affect the reading of texts (AO5ii). This unit thus demands a synthesis of the knowledge and skills acquired during the course as a whole, enabling candidates to show their grasp of the scope and application of literary study in relation to both new and familiar texts.							
AO	1	2i	2ii	3	4	5i	5ii
A2 Weighting %	5		10	10	5		10

* **Note: This unit is not available in January 2001 and June 2001.**

4.3 Notes on Units 2707 and 2708

4.3.1 Unit 2707: Shakespeare

Shakespeare is the only named author specified in the Subject Criteria. Although it is compulsory to study one of his plays at AS, there is no requirement to study a further Shakespeare text at A2. However, he is set as an optional text in Unit 2710 (and can, indeed, be studied as a coursework text for Unit 2709).

It is clearly not in a candidate's interest to be limited to studying again a text already studied for GCSE or Key Stage 3; all the same, a candidate's essay may well benefit from cross-reference back to a text studied earlier or as part of wider reading. For instance, in writing about *The Merchant of Venice* as a comedy, candidates would clearly be at a potential advantage by being able to show an understanding of Shakespearean comedy through referring to another play or plays. If a Centre were to prepare *Richard II*, it would make sense for candidates to have at least some awareness of other plays in the History cycle. Through planning of this kind (see also Section 5, course planning, below) candidates can be helped to meet AO5, 'understanding of the contexts in which texts are written and understood'.

The above comments are not meant to imply that Centres must teach at least a second Shakespeare play in full and in depth to complement candidates' chosen text. They do, however, imply that the kind of introductory Sixth Form course offered by many departments, with an emphasis on wider reading, will now assume even greater importance.

Section A consists of a passage-based question, addressing AOs 3, 4 and 5i. The passage will be printed on the question paper. The text used for setting will be the Alexander Shakespeare, but since this is a closed-text paper candidates and Centres may use whichever edition they wish.

Section B will now offer a choice of two essay questions on each text. (The Specification and the specimen papers indicate that there will only be one essay per text.) It is hoped that this element of choice will benefit candidates. These essays will address AOs 1, 4 and 5i, and candidates will therefore need to remember that clear organisation and presentation of argument (not to mention accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar) will be rewarded under AO1.

4.3.2 The Purpose of Bullet Points

In both sections, the questions will contain two elements: the question itself (the instruction to candidates) and a set of bullet points (guidance to candidates) focusing on the assessment. In a refinement to the system as shown in the specimen paper, bullet points will now flag particular AOs as follows:

AO1: 'Set out clearly ...' (organisation and communication)

AO3: 'Look closely at ...' (focus on language)

AO4: 'Explain your own views about ...' (interpretation)

AO5i: 'Comment on the place of issues such as ...' (context)

It is not intended that candidates should use these bullet points as a substitute for an essay plan; indeed, it is almost inevitable that anyone doing so would write a clumsily-organised essay. For example, it is likely that a good answer will combine AO3 and AO4, so that close focus on the language of the passage in Section A will lead to an informed opinion about how the passage illuminates the play as a whole.

Nor are the bullet points meant to inhibit candidates from pursuing their own lines of argument in addition to the identified areas of concern. Provided that the resulting essay genuinely answers the question and shows that the candidate has addressed the assessment objectives for that section of the paper, it can be fully rewarded. Clearly, though, a candidate who ignored all aspects of context in a question which targeted AO5i would not be answering the question adequately and could not expect to score as highly as someone who had done so.

Note: In all passage-based questions in all units, QCA has insisted that the task must enable the candidate to relate the set or chosen passage to the text as a whole – a further sign of the importance attached to contextualisation.

4.3.3. Unit 2708

In both sections of this unit, all the assessment objectives are addressed, with particular emphasis on AOs 1, 2i and 3.

When planning for this unit, Centres must remember that at least one of the texts (either poetry or prose) on which candidates write must have been published pre-1900.

For this open text paper, particular editions have been specified and it is from these that all page, Chapter and line references in question papers will be taken. All these editions are in print at the time the specification was introduced, and in the list that follows, ISBN numbers are given in every case. Centres that wish to use an alternative edition may do so provided that

- the edition proposed is comparable in terms of editorial material, notes, glossaries etc. (No editions that contain suggested essay plans or other aides-memoire will be permitted);
- prior permission has been obtained from OCR;
- all candidates from a Centre are using the same edition.

Where a different edition is used, it is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure that candidates are given the equivalent page, chapter or line references at the start of an examination.

Candidates are allowed to make brief marginal annotation **in the body of the text itself** – that is, excluding end-papers, introductions and other editorial sections of the edition. Annotation should amount to no more than the glossing of individual words or phrases, or to single cross-referencing. Nothing that amounts to an essay plan or to a series of linked cross references is allowed. Wherever candidates quote from or consciously cite an editor, critic or other source they must acknowledge that they are doing so.

OCR hopes that Centres will appreciate the need for such regulations, to guard against the increasing risk of plagiarism. Over-reliance on such textbook annotation is easily detectable and usually leads to a poor answer.

Note: These regulations also apply to Unit 2712.

The purpose of an open book examination is to give candidates the chance to use their texts constructively to develop their arguments and to show their understanding of the text and the set task. The passages are not printed, and so candidates may well be asked to refresh their memory of a longer passage than could be set in a closed-text paper. Because the task always asks the candidate to relate the passage(s) to the text as a whole, it cannot be treated as an unseen, and really good knowledge of the complete text is essential.

In each section in Unit 2708 there will be a choice of two questions on each text. One will identify a passage or passages for discussion; the other will invite candidates to make their own selection of appropriate extracts. Unless other guidance is given in the question, candidates should feel free to choose a passage or passages of any length appropriate to the task set (i.e. probably not a whole chapter of a novel – indeed, a paragraph or page may suffice, depending on the question set). Terms such as ‘episode’ or ‘scene’ should be taken to mean a completed action, dialogue encounter etc. no matter how short.

It will be helpful for candidates to indicate at the start of their essay which poem(s) or passage(s) they have chosen.

Bullet points will again be used for all questions, in the same way as has been described for Unit 2707 (See Section 4.3.2 above) For Unit 2708, a single bullet point will focus on AOs 1, 2i and 4, introduced by the instruction ‘. Explore and explain clearly your views on ...’

4.3.4 Prescribed editions for Unit 2708

- The editions set for study, ISBN numbers included, are shown below.
- Any change from the original specification is shown in bold.
- Centres wishing to nominate alternative editions should read the guidance given in section 4.1.1 of the specification.

SECTION A: POETRY

Pre 1900

CHAUCER Geoffrey, ‘**The General Prologue**’ to the *Canterbury Tales* (CUP)

Either 0521046297 (ed. Winny) *or* 0521595088 (ed. Kirkham)

DONNE John, ed. Enright, (Everyman’s Poetry) 0460879014

TENNYSON Alfred, Lord, ed. Baron, (Everyman’s Poetry) 0460878026

WORDSWORTH, William (Everyman’s Poetry) 0460879464

Post 1900

BAXTER Judith (ed), *Four Women Poets* (CUP) 0521485452

FROST Robert, *Selected Poems* (OUP) 0198320027

GURNEY Ivor, *Selected Poems* (Everyman’s Poetry) 0460877976

HUGHES Ted, **New Selected Poems 1957-1994** (Faber) 0571173780

SECTION B: PROSE

Pre 1900

AUSTEN Jane, *Emma* (**Wordsworth Classics**) 1853260282

BRONTE Emily, *Wuthering Heights* (**Wordsworth Classics**) 1853260010

DICKENS Charles, *Hard Times* (**Wordsworth Classics**) 1853262323

SHELLEY Mary, *Frankenstein* (**Wordsworth Classics**) 1853260231 * Any proposed alternative must be the 1831 version.

Post 1900

BARKER Pat, *Regeneration* (Penguin) 0140123083

HARTLEY L.P., *The Go-Between* (Penguin) 0140282661

JOYCE James, *Dubliners* (Penguin) 0140622179

McEWAN Ian, *The Child in Time* (**Vintage**) 0099755017 * The Picador edition is now out of print but has exactly the same page numbers.

Poetry Texts: poems set for study

Unless otherwise stated, the whole text is set for study and candidates should be able to draw on a sufficient range of poems in terms of themes, approaches, styles and developments.

Ted Hughes, *New Selected Poems 1957 – 94*

The following poems are set for study:

<p>From <i>The Hawk in the Rain</i> Wind (p 14) Six Young Men (p 17)</p> <p>From <i>Lupercal</i> Mayday on Holderness (p 23) November (p 36) Thrushes (p 39)</p> <p>From <i>Wodwo</i> Her Husband (p 56) Ghost Crabs (p 58) Scapegoats and Rabies (<i>all parts, pp 65 – 69</i>) Out (<i>all parts, pp 72 – 74</i>) Skylarks (p 78)</p> <p>From <i>Crow</i> Crow Tyrannosaurus (p 93) Crow's Account of the Battle (p 95) Crow's Elephant Totem Song (p 105) Crow's Blacker than Ever (p 110)</p> <p>From <i>Cave Birds</i> The Knight (p 123)</p> <p>From <i>Season Songs</i> A March Calf (p 131) The River in March (p 132)</p> <p>Sheep (p 136)</p> <p>From <i>Gaudete</i> Calves Harshly Parted from their Mamas (p 154)</p>	<p>From <i>Remains of Elmet</i> Football at Slack (p 157) Moors (p 160) Rhododendrons (p 161) Sunstruck (p 162) Cock–Crows (p 167) Heptonstall Old Church (p 171)</p> <p>From <i>Moortown Diary</i> Rain (p 175) Dehorning (p 176) Tractor (p 179) A Memory (p 191)</p> <p>From <i>Earth–Numb</i> A Motorbike (p 194)</p> <p>From <i>Flowers and Insects</i> Where I Sit Writing My Letter (p 225)</p> <p>From <i>What is the Truth?</i> New Foal (p 235) The Hen (p 266)</p> <p>From <i>River</i> Ophelia (p 249) An Eel (p 259)</p> <p>From <i>Wolf watching</i> Walt (both parts pp 275 – 276)</p> <p>From <i>Uncollected</i> You Hated Spain (p 294) The Tender Place (p 297) Opus 131 (p 310)</p>
---	--

4.4 AS Coursework: Unit 2709

This section should be read in conjunction with the Notes For Guidance on Coursework, Appendix B, in the Specification document.

4.4.1 Choosing texts

By the time candidates have completed Units 2707 and 2708 they will have met all but one of the core requirements for AS: prose poetry and drama, including a Shakespeare play and another pre-1900 text. All that remains is a fourth text of any genre. The only restriction is that a chosen text may not be one that appears on the set text lists for any of the other units in the specification.

Apart from this, the OCR specification offers Centres and candidates complete freedom in selecting this fourth text. For those taking English Literature AS but not continuing with Units 2710, 2711/2712 and 2713 (the A2 units) no other factors need influence their choice. The following are some of the opportunities that arise:

- a text from an area not covered in Units 2707 or 2708 (e.g. modern drama);
- a non-fiction prose text (e.g. travel writing or autobiography);
- a second text by an author studied for a previous unit;
- a text, introduced as wider reading, that has appealed to the candidate.

For those, however, continuing with A2, Unit 2709 may provide an opportunity to study a text which will later be valuable for the Synoptic Unit, 2713.

Example 1

A Centre that is going to enter candidates for twentieth century American Literature, studying *The Color Purple* as one of the comparative texts in Unit 2713, focuses on American writing as part of its introduction to A Level Literature and wider reading course. By January of Year 12 (Lower Sixth) all the students have read *The Great Gatsby* and discussed a video production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* As part of their induction course on the Assessment Objectives they have explored the skills of close reading (AO3) and concepts of context (AO5) through studying some poetry by Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell.

The members of the group are given a free choice of any of these texts for their coursework and, in consultation with their teacher, evolve titles that will enable them to write effectively about their chosen text and meet the assessment objectives for the unit. One or two may also (again in consultation with their teacher) opt to write about relevant texts that they have read themselves outside of their course - e.g. *Catch-22* or *Underworld*.

Example 2

A group that is going to study post-colonial literature will be focusing on *The God of Small Things* in Unit 2713. It has already used *The English Patient* as a text to introduce students to some of the skills and concepts in the Assessment Objectives, and is going to use V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* as a coursework text for Unit 2711. Not all the candidates will be continuing with the full A level course but the teacher has decided to focus on a single text for AS coursework, one that will provide useful wider reading for the chosen topic area, and so the whole group works on *Staying On*, with everyone writing one assignment about a passage specified by the teacher and then developing their own titles for the essay on the whole text.

Both the above examples assume that the Centres have decided to use the AS coursework as a chance to do work either directly or indirectly linked to the area chosen for the Synoptic Unit. However, it would be quite appropriate for a Centre to decide that it would provide adequate preparation for the Synoptic Unit through the choice of texts in other units and through prescribed wider reading. Texts for AS coursework, therefore, could be chosen for breadth, contrast, student interest or some other factor.

4.4.2 Compiling the folder

Each folder must contain two items of work. One item will focus on the text as a whole and will address AOs 1, 4 and 5i. The second item will focus on a selected poem or poem / passage (or poems / passages) and will address AOs 2i and 3. AO2i is the dominant AO for this second item, so it will be important for the set task to allow the candidate to relate the passage to the text as a whole, while showing an appropriate understanding of the text in relation to its time and genre.

Example

A candidate studying the poetry of W.H. Auden might choose to write about the poem 'As I Walked Out One Evening'. An essay with the following title –

A close reading of 'As I Walked Out One Evening' to show its relation to other poetry written by Auden in the Nineteen Thirties

- would signal clearly that the task was focusing on AO2i and AO3.

OCR does not require Centres to submit coursework titles for prior approval, but is happy to advise on whether proposed titles are appropriate, if Centres are in doubt. Always the criteria must be:

- Is the task framed in such a way as to enable the candidate to meet the relevant assessment objectives?
- Is the task manageable?

It is important to bear in mind that the guideline word length for the whole folder is 1500 – 2000 words. It is strongly recommended that candidates are discouraged from exceeding this total.

OCR is introducing an system of regional consultants who can advise on any aspect of the specification, including coursework issues. Alternatively, questions can always be directed to the English Qualifications Team at OCR (see Section 9).

Instructions for the marking and moderating of coursework folders are given in the Specification booklet, Appendix B. OCR is producing a Coursework Administration Pack for each specification containing coursework. This pack will contain copies of all relevant forms and instructions for completion.

4.5 Notes on Units 2710 and 2711/2712

4.5.1 Unit 2710 Poetry and Drama (pre-1900)

In planning and teaching this unit, teachers must make clear to candidates that they need to cover both poetry and drama, and that at least one of the texts must have been published before 1770 (defined by QCA as pre-Romantic). There are opportunities for further study of Shakespeare; Chaucer and Milton, metaphysical poetry, Jacobean tragedy, Restoration Drama as well as texts from the Augustan period will also feature. For the period 1770–1900, the emphasis will be on Romantic and Victorian poetry; drama texts published before 1900 by writers such as Oscar Wilde and G.B. Shaw will also be set.

All the assessment objectives feature in this unit, with special emphasis on AO4; thus all the questions deal with issues of interpretation, and candidates will be asked to evaluate a critical viewpoint in relation to their own understanding of the text: the thrust of a question will always be to encourage candidates to focus on their own understanding of how texts can be interpreted. The following example of a question on *The Tempest* will illustrate this principle:

The Prospero-Caliban relationship can be seen as a reflection of European man's first encounters with the American Indian.' How helpful is this interpretation to what you take The Tempest to be about?

Note: there are no bullet points in questions set for Units in A2.

Here, the question offers a critical perspective on the play that is both controversial and yet central to any discussion of the play today. It offers a clear historical and cultural context, the significance of which candidates must assess (AO5ii). In doing so, they must define their own interpretation of the play's meaning and weigh up the extent to which the view offered either confirms or conflicts with theirs (AO4).

This is the key aspect of the question (in line with the particular emphasis on AO4 in this unit). In addressing it candidates will have to present a clearly structured argument (AO1) showing a good knowledge of the text (AO2ii) - possibly with reference to other of Shakespeare's late plays (if they want to argue, for instance, that reconciliation is a more important issue than colonialism). The fact that AO2ii features in this unit does not mean that comparison of texts is a requirement of any of the questions; that aspect of the assessment objective is dealt with in Unit 2713. However, appropriate cross reference – if it helps the candidate to present an argument more convincingly or to assess the text in its literary or historical contexts– will be given credit.

This is a closed text paper, without any passage-based questions; but, as always, candidates will be expected to support their arguments with appropriate reference to, and analysis of, the language used. In the question on *The Tempest*, for instance, discussion might well focus on the way Prospero and Caliban talk to each other and about each other.

4.5.2 Units 2711 and 2712: Prose (post-1914)

These notes should be read in conjunction with the Guidance on Coursework in Appendix B of the Specification booklet.

This is the only place in the specification where alternative routes can be taken: candidates may write about contemporary prose **either** through internal assessment (Unit 2711, coursework) **or** in an externally assessed open-text examination (Unit 2712). The assessment objective weightings are the same, and the choice of text(s) can be the same. Alternatively, for coursework, candidates may write about any appropriate twentieth or twenty-first century prose text or texts, provided that they have not previously studied it for Units 2708 or 2709 and that it is not one of the texts set for the Synoptic Unit, 2713.

In both the written paper and for coursework, candidates may concentrate on just one text, or write about two texts. If taking the open-text paper, or submitting two items in their coursework folder, then one task must focus on close reading of a chosen passage or passages (AO3) and its relation to the text as a whole (AO2ii). If candidates are taking the extended essay option, then they must ensure that at least one part of the essay clearly addresses AO3 through close study of the way in which language and form are used to create meaning.

It is worth repeating, at this point, the weightings for each section of this unit:

2711/2712	AO1	AO2i	AO2ii	AO3	AO4	AO5i	AO5ii
A	*		*	*			
B	*				*		*

This shows that the task set for the essay in Section B (or the essay on the whole text in the coursework folder) will need to direct the candidate towards AO4 and AO5ii (interpretation and evaluation of contextual influences). It also reminds those preparing the extended essay that, for this unit as a whole, it is AO1 that carries the dominant weighting. It will thus be very important for an extended essay to be carefully organised in terms of structure and development of argument.

The maximum limit of 3000 words for the coursework folder - whether reached by combining two items or by a single extended essay - should not be exceeded. That figure should include the bibliography and any other references or notes. A bibliography of works cited or consulted should always be included.

Instructions for the marking and moderating of A2 coursework folders are given in the Specification booklet, Appendix B. OCR is producing a Coursework Administration Pack for each specification containing coursework. This pack will contain copies of all relevant forms and instructions for completion.

4.6 Synoptic Assessment (Unit 2713): Comparative and Contextual Study

4.6.1 Synoptic Assessment and course planning

Synoptic assessment is the culmination of the Advanced GCE course. It has helped to shape the OCR specification, in particular through the selection of texts for each unit. As far as possible the choice has reflected the six topic areas that are set for the synoptic unit.

In the same way, the synoptic unit is where the planning of the OCR course should start, for the choice of topic area (or areas – some Centres may wish their candidates to prepare more than one) may influence choice of texts both for the externally assessed units and for coursework. Some texts may be chosen specifically with a view to their being revisited as part of candidates' comparative study. Before that, the choice of topic(s) may also help to shape thinking about the most appropriate form of induction course, or introduction to A level English literature, that students should receive.

In preparing a topic area teachers and students are focusing on issues of context and genre, together with literary, historical and cultural issues. These provide a framework for the study of individual texts and for the comparative study of a pair of texts – or more than two: the comparative study does not limit candidates to discussing two books only. It is important to note, though, that with this form of synoptic assessment a two-way process is involved: the study of the topic area illuminates the texts and the study of the texts increases the candidate's understanding of the topic area. For example, knowing how the Victorian novel developed will help candidates in comparing, say, *Jane Eyre* with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. At the same time, reflecting on the relationship and differences between these two novels will help to deepen understanding of how the novel (and the social and psychological tensions explored by novelists during the period) grew in literary and cultural importance during the nineteenth century. And a candidate who had also read *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (either as wider reading or, perhaps, for coursework) would be able to bring additional insights to bear.

It is important, though, that the Synoptic Assessment should not so dominate choice of texts as to limit the range and variety of literature encountered during the course as a whole. Returning to the above example, a candidate might complete the course having studied the following to ensure a good spread of texts:

Unit 2707: *The Merchant of Venice*

Unit 2708: *Four Women Poets* and *Emma*

Unit 2709: *Jane Eyre* (coursework)

Unit 2710: *The Pardoner's Tale* and *The Rivals*

Unit 2712: *The Bloody Chamber*

Unit 2713: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and an anthology of Victorian writing (created by the Centre) as background reading.

A different approach could be adopted by a Centre choosing Satire as its Synoptic Topic:

Unit 2707: *Othello*

Unit 2708: *Poetry of Donne* and *The Child in Time*

Unit 2709: *A Clockwork Orange* (coursework)

Unit 2710: *The Rape of the Lock* and *Volpone*

Unit 2711: *A Handful of Dust* and *Scoop* (extended essay)

Unit 2713: *Gulliver's Travels* with *The Handmaid's Tale*, *A Modest Proposal* and *Candide* as wider reading.

A third approach, not using coursework as preparation for the Synoptic Unit, could be adopted by a Centre choosing the Gothic Tradition:

Unit 2707: *The Winter's Tale*

Unit 2708: *Tennyson* and *Wuthering Heights*

Unit 2709: *The Waste Land* (coursework)

Unit 2710: Coleridge and *The Tempest*

Unit 2712: *The Bloody Chamber*

Unit 2713: *The Woman in Black* with *Northanger Abbey* and a selection of Gothic poetry and short stories as wider reading.

4.6.2 The structure of the paper

All written examinations for externally assessed units in this specification last two hours. For Unit 2713, fifteen minutes of reading time will be allowed before the actual questions are distributed. During this time candidates may read and begin to annotate the passage about which they will write in Section A.

The primary focus of this task is close reading, comment and appreciation (AO3) of an unseen passage related to the prepared topic area. Candidates will therefore be expected to bring their knowledge and understanding of the genre and/or of the relevant period and of other contextual factors (AO5ii) to bear in discussing the passage. They may (but do not have to) make cross reference to other texts in support of their argument. Accurate communication, including effective use of quotation and appropriate terminology (AO1) will also be rewarded.

In Section B two texts are nominated for each topic area. Candidates must write on at least one of these texts, comparing it with one or more other texts of their own choice in response to the set task. They may compare it:

- **either** with the other text (e.g. *Middlemarch* with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*);
- **or** with a text they have previously written about (e.g. *Birdsong* with the poetry of Ivor Gurney [2708]);
- **or** with a text they have prepared but not yet used (e.g. *The Monk* with *Dracula*);
- **or** with any combination of these, if comparing more than two texts (e.g. *The English Patient* with *Savages* [2709] and *Waiting for the Barbarians*).

There will be a choice of **three** questions on each topic area (**not two**, as shown in the specimen papers). Two will refer to the named texts, the third will enable a candidate to write about either or both of the set texts. The questions will always focus on an aspect of the topic area, to be explored through comparative study of the texts, rather than focusing on the texts themselves. Thus, for instance, a question would not ask candidates simply to compare George Eliot's presentation of Dorothea in *Middlemarch* with another heroine from a second novel. It might, however, ask candidates to discuss the representation of women in Victorian fiction by contrasting Dorothea with another character or characters. This Section gives prime emphasis to AO2ii (exploring relationships and comparisons between texts); it also addresses AO4 (interpretation) and AO5ii (evaluation of the significance of contextual influences).

4.6.3 Preparing the Topic areas

The following lists, though not prescriptive or restrictive, are intended to give some idea of the range of relevant issues candidates might cover in preparing their chosen topic area. Individual teachers and groups of students may well wish to extend their study into other relevant areas.

Satire

Types of satire: political, social, personal

Augustan satire: the cultural and historical contexts

Utopias and dystopias

Forms of satire: lampoon, parody, caricature etc.

Vocabulary of satire: bathos, mock-heroic etc.

Irony as a weapon of satire

Modern modes of satire

Satirical poetry and drama

The Gothic Tradition

Origins of the Gothic tradition; Romanticism and the Gothic

Transgression

Archetypes, dreams and the Unconscious

Modern Gothic writing

Gothic in poetry and drama

Religion, Science and pseudo-science

Parodies of the Gothic

Gothic heroes and heroines; Gothic villains

The Victorian Novel

Conflicts: city and country / tradition and progress / parents and children

Representation of women / representation by women

Religious attitudes and attitudes to religion

Money and class

Industry

The novel of education

Narrative and closure

Structure: serialisation, 'three-decker novels' etc.

The Great War in British Literature

The War remembered and the war imagined

Civilians and soldiers

'The other side': perceptions of the enemy

Women and the War

Changing representations of the War in prose and poetry

The canon of Great War literature

The aftermath of War

Ideas of 'Englishness' and national identity in Great War writing.

Twentieth Century American Literature

The pursuit of happiness: idealism and materialism

Civil rights :colour and gender / the legacy of slavery

Multi-ethnic and multi-cultural perspectives

Illusion and reality

War and Peace: Vietnam and the Peace Movement

The City

Feminism

America and the world: historical perspectives.

Post-Colonial Literature

'The Empire Writes Back': imperialism and its aftermath

De-centring and displacement

Otherness and hybridity

Challenging ideas of 'Englishness'

Independence and neo-colonialism

Implications of English as the medium of expression

Transculturalism

Post-colonial critical perspectives on writing of the past.

All these topic areas are represented in the specially commissioned series *Cambridge Contexts in Literature*, published by Cambridge University Press and endorsed by OCR. For publication details, see Section 7 in the specification.

5 Marking and Mark schemes

5.1 The Specification as a whole

All questions in the OCR English specifications are marked out of 30. Each unit, therefore, will have a raw mark total of 60.

Candidate's raw marks will be converted into Uniform Marks taking into account the weighting of various units.

Unit	A Level weighting	Maximum Uniform Mark
2707	15%	90
2708	20%	120
2709	15%	90
2710	15%	90
2711 / 2712	15%	90
2713	20%	120

When results for each unit are reported, candidates will receive both a grade and a Uniform Mark out of a maximum of either 90 or 120, as above.

The Uniform Mark grade boundaries for the A Level are set as follows:

A: 480+ B: 420-479 C: 360-419 D: 300-359 E: 240-299 U: 0-239

The mark bands that have been drawn up by OCR for English Literature will link as closely as possible to these grade ranges as shown below.

Grade and Total (600)	%	Band	Essay mark (30)	Raw Total (60)	UMS threshold (90)	UMS threshold (120)
A (480)	80+	1	24+	48+	72	96
B (420)	70+	2	21+	42+	63	84
C (360)	60+	3	18+	36+	54	72
D (300)	50+	4	15+	30+	45	60
E (240)	40+	5i	12+	24+	36	48
U (239-)	39-	5ii/U	9+/8-	18+/17-		

It is essential to bear in mind that there is not an absolute correlation between Bands and Grades: different factors may lead to slight changes in the raw mark threshold from session to session. (Comparison of standards from one session to another might, for instance, lead the E threshold to be set at 23, or 24 – or even marginally higher or lower.) However, in a modular system of assessment, where marks from each unit are aggregated to give a final total out of 600, it is vital that all published marks are completely consistent. Hence, wherever a raw mark threshold is set at any session (January or June) in any year, the mark that is published is always converted into a Uniform Mark Scale where A is always 80% +, B always 70% +, and E always 40% +.

5.2 Question-specific mark schemes

Mark schemes are written for examiners, to guide their marking: they are not teaching notes, though they should be helpful to both teachers and students. Teachers teach students, whom they get to know well over possibly a period of several years, and whose progress they encourage. They thus have an overall view of a student's standard and potential: these are what forecast grades are based on. Examiners know nothing about candidates as individuals; indeed, very shortly it is likely that scripts will be made so anonymous that not even the gender of candidates, let alone their names or the name of their Centre, will be known. The judgements examiners make, therefore, are based solely on the evidence of the script in front of them. The instructions to examiners, which preface all the OCR English mark schemes, should be read on this basis.

All the question-specific mark schemes are closely linked to the Generic Mark Scheme published in the Specification document. This point is made clear in the instructions on the front cover of each mark scheme:

The Mark scheme for this, as for all units, is derived from, and must be read in conjunction with, the **generic mark band descriptions** published at Section 3.1.1 in the Specification document. Reference must also be made to the **band descriptions for Written Communication**, published at Section 3.2.1 in the Specification document.

The Mark scheme provides unit-specific notes of guidance and question-specific band descriptions for each relevant Assessment Objective indicating both skills and likely content. Marking must be based on assessment of performance against each relevant Assessment Objective.

All questions target AOs 1, 2i, 3, 4 and 5i.

Written Communication must be assessed under Assessment Objective 1.

The above example comes from Unit 2708. Notice the reminder to examiners about the assessment of written communication under AO1.

The next part of the mark scheme reminds examiners of the rubric for the paper and reprints the relevant assessment objectives from the Subject Criteria. It also sets out the weightings given to each AO as shown in the specification grid (see Section 3.3). Then come the following guidance notes and instructions:

Awarding Marks

Each question is worth 30 marks.

For each answer, a single overall mark out of 30 must be awarded, as follows:

- Refer to the question-specific mark schemes below, for descriptions of levels of skill and likely content;
- Using 'best fit', locate the answer in the appropriate mark band;
- Bearing in mind the weighting of the key AOs (see above), place the answer within the band and award the appropriate mark out of 30.

Please mark **positively**. Use the lowest mark in the band **only** if the answer is borderline/doubtful.

Please use the **full range** of marks, particularly at Band 1.

When the complete script has been marked:

- If necessary, follow the instructions concerning rubric infringements;
- Add together the marks for the two answers, to arrive at the total mark for the script;
- Cross-check this mark against the generic markband descriptions – does the overall mark fairly reflect the achievement demonstrated in the script? Review the marking of individual questions, if necessary.

Notice the emphasis on the following:

- Positive marking – examiners should look to reward candidates for what they have achieved rather than to penalise them for what they have not;
- The principle of 'best-fit' – the assessment of a subject such as English always involves balancing strengths and weaknesses: focusing on individual assessment objectives must not lead an examiner to lose sight of the overall quality of an essay. (This principle is enshrined in QCA's Subject Criteria grade descriptions, 7.1: "The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the examination may be balanced by better performances in others.")
- Examiners must make an **overall** judgement first, and then refine that judgement by assessing the candidate's performance in the **dominant** AO or AOs for that section of the paper. (For example, in Unit 2710, precisely where candidates' work will be placed within a particular band will depend on their performance in relation to AO4, the key assessment objective for that Unit.)
- The need for examiners to relate their judgement of a script as a whole back to the standards defined in the Generic Mark Scheme.

Next comes the guidance on the marking of each individual question. The question is reprinted, followed by brief notes on the task to remind examiners how the question directs candidates to particular assessment objectives. Then comes the description of likely features of performance at different levels, defined again with reference to the assessment objectives.

The OCR mark schemes identify six bands, with Band 5 divided into 5i and 5ii to indicate likely performance just above and just below the Grade E threshold (**Note:** there is no grade N in the new specifications.) Full descriptions are given for performance in Bands 1, 3 and 5i. The descriptors for the other Bands are treated generically: thus, a candidate achieving a Band 2 performance will have met all the demands of the lower Band 3, and be showing some (but not sufficient) of the qualities to be found in the higher Band 1.

The following example shows the mark scheme for Question 12(a) in the specimen paper for Unit 2708:

MARY SHELLEY: *Frankenstein*

Q12 (a)	<p>Refer to Chapter 16 of <i>Frankenstein</i>. Comment on Shelley’s presentation of encounters between the monster and people, and their effect on each other.</p> <p>In your answer you should consider the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human actions and reactions • Ways in which the narrative shapes the reader’s responses and develops themes • Role in the meaning of the novel as a whole, including the significance of the demand for a female companion
----------------	---

<p>Notes on the task:</p> <p>Candidates must show a good knowledge of the novel and an understanding of the significance of this chapter in it (AO2i); they will also get credit for their ability to focus closely on Shelley’s presentation (AO3) of encounters between the monster and others. Organisation of material, presentation of argument and clarity of communication will also count strongly (AO1)</p>

Band	Marks	Descriptor
------	-------	------------

1	<i>Answers that are penetrating and original.</i>	
	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucid expression in a relevant and well organised answer (AO1) showing sophisticated and sensitive understanding (AO4) of the encounters of the monster and human reactions, with effective evidence drawn from the text.
	29	
	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit and sensitive analysis of the means by which the encounters are presented and the ways in which the narrative achieves its emotional and dramatic effects including alienation, incomprehension, pathos and shock and the loneliness and lust suggested by the request for a female companion (AO3).
	27	
	26	
	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit and developed discussion and evaluation of the significance of the episode in relation to reading of the novel as a whole (AO2i) and of Shelley’s ideology, psychology and understanding of human nature (AO5i).
24		

2	<i>Answers that are proficient and well focused</i> and which should:	
	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully meet the criteria for Band 3 • Begin to show evidence of achievement against the criteria for Band 1
	22 21	

3	Answers that show a competent level of understanding:	
	20 19 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expression in a coherent answer (AO1) showing secure and personal understanding (AO4) of the encounters of the monster and human reactions, quoting relevantly and with some discussion of the quotations used. • Perceptive analysis of the means by which the encounters are presented and by which Shelley shapes readers' responses and themes including the use of the request for a female companion, in appropriate critical language (AO3). • Competent discussion of the effects of the chapter in relation to the whole novel (AO2i) and of Shelley's concerns and interpretation of human nature (AO5i).

4	Answers that are basically sound but sometimes uneven and which should:	
	17 16 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully meet the criteria for Band 5 • Begin to show evidence of achievement against the criteria for Band 3

5i	Answers that are just adequate as a response to the task set:	
	14 13 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally clear expression in an answer that shows some attempt at coherent organisation (AO1) demonstrating an adequate level of personal understanding (AO4) of the encounters and human reactions, with some supporting evidence drawn from the text. • Reasonable attempt at analysis of means by which the encounters and the loneliness of the monster are presented and readers' responses achieved, in acceptable critical language (AO3) • Basic discussion of the effects of the episode in relation to reading of the novel as a whole (AO2i) and acknowledgement of Shelley's view of humanity (AO5i).

5ii	Answers that are, on balance, not adequate to the task set but which:	
	11 10 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show occasional evidence of achievement against the criteria for Band 5i

U	Answers which do not reach the standard defined for band 5 because they:	
	8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not offer an adequate attempt to answer the question or complete the task (ie do not sufficiently address the relevant AOs) and/or • do not demonstrate sufficient evidence of the knowledge, skills and understanding required; and/or • are not written with sufficient clarity or accuracy to make meaning and argument coherent

6 Course Planning

Some key decisions affecting course planning may be determined by Centre, rather than departmental, policy. Of these, the use of the January examination session is the most obvious and important. Some Centres have decided not to use this session in Year 12; others have encouraged it (especially where candidates may be taking up to five AS subjects); some have insisted upon it, so that re-sits (if needed) can be taken while an AS candidate is still studying the subject.

Regardless of such issues, however, it will be clear that teaching the new specifications will require careful planning by English departments, by individual teachers and, indeed, by students themselves. Two major planning issues have already been stressed:

- the need for A level course planning to start with the Synoptic Unit, and to work back from the choice of topic area or areas;
- the need to ensure that teaching and learning focuses on the skills and concepts embodied in the Assessment Objectives as well as on the texts themselves.

It follows from both of these that students should not simply work their way through the course one or two texts at a time; at every stage they need to understand where the texts fit into the different units and how they will be assessed. Only thus can they prepare properly for the types of question that will be set in the examination. Two brief examples will illustrate this point:

Example 1: Shakespeare

A candidate studying *Othello* for Unit 2707 will need to be aware that half the total marks for the Unit are awarded for a passage-based question where the emphasis will be equally on AOs 3, 4 and 5i; in the second half of the unit the essay question will focus on AOs 1,4 and 5i.

The same candidate studying *The Tempest* in Unit 2710 will be assessed primarily in response to AO4, with all the emphasis on issues of interpretation rather than a close focus on language; there will be no passage-based question in this paper.

The same candidate, if studying post-colonial literature as a topic for the Synoptic Unit (2713), might well refer to *The Tempest* - and, perhaps, *Othello* - in the context of post-colonial perspectives and in relation to *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* (2712).

Here, then, Shakespeare plays are approached from three quite different angles by the same candidate according to the unit being examined. Teachers will want to continue teaching such texts for their own sakes in ways they believe inherently worthwhile. Effective teaching should not be undermined by the demands of assessment and, in developing its new specifications for English Literature, OCR has tried hard to ensure that teaching and assessment can complement each other; On the other hand, teachers must (as always) prepare their students for the particular form of assessment in which these texts will feature. Not to do so, not to focus on how to *use* the texts as well as how to *read* them, would be to put candidates at a serious disadvantage.

Example 2: Middlemarch

Studying a text as complex and bulky as *Middlemarch* is always a challenge for teacher and student alike. In the Synoptic Unit, 2713, however, candidates would not be preparing for passage-based contextual questions demanding detailed knowledge of every chapter in relation to the text as a whole. They would be preparing to compare the book with at least one other text to illustrate certain features of the Victorian novel as a genre. This is the only context in which the book would feature and so demands a quite different form of preparation from the conventional approach more likely to be used when studying the novel in isolation.

Two things follow from these examples. First, there is the need to understand the contexts in which individual texts will be examined within the specifications, and to appreciate the implications for teaching and learning. Second, there is the need for departments to work out carefully, *in advance*, how much time they need to devote to the following:

- introducing GCE Advanced literary studies (induction / understanding of the Assessment Objectives – knowledge, skills and concepts / wider reading);
- teaching individual texts;
- introducing the chosen topic area(s) for the Synoptic Unit;
- preparing candidates for the contextualised unseen (Unit 2713, Section A);
- teaching comparative study.

None of these elements of the course is optional, and all must be given sufficient time during the course, whether it lasts one year, two years or more. (The shelf life of an individual unit result is limited only by the shelf-life of the specification as a whole – which is likely to run for about five years before further reforms to the examination system require revisions to be made.)

Centres have so many individual factors to take into account in course planning that no one example will be adequate. The following illustration, however, aims to mirror the first year of a 'typical' two-year course as closely as possible. It is based on the following assumptions:

- there are twelve weeks of effective teaching time in term one of Year 12 (Lower Sixth), ten in term two and probably no more than four weeks in term three before the exam season really begins (though most AS and A level examinations will taken place in June, not May);
- a group will have two teachers throughout the course;
- the school/college will not be entering candidates for any AS modules in January;
- the first half of term 1 will be an introductory course; the teaching of the set texts will begin in the second half of the term;
- teaching will resume for Lower Sixth formers after the AS exams have been taken;
- the Centre has chosen Twentieth Century American Literature as its synoptic topic, and is going to teach the following texts for AS: *Othello* (2707), *Emma* and Ted Hughes (2708), *A View From the Bridge* or *Catch-22* (coursework 2709). For A2 (not illustrated in the plan) candidates will prepare Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* and Jonson's *Volpone* (2710), *Beloved* (2712) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* as main texts for 2713, with *The Color Purple* as a reserve text)

Note: with the above choice of texts it would also be quite possible for candidates to prepare for Satire as an alternative to Twentieth Century American Literature. (*The Handmaid's Tale* would be substituted for *The Color Purple*.) Some Centres have indicated that they would like to prepare their candidates for more than one synoptic area and this is, of course acceptable. **However, in the examination itself candidates must answer both Section A and Section B of Unit 2713 on the same topic area.**

Term 1 (12 weeks effective teaching time)

1	Introduction to Drama as a genre (focus on AO2i): background and wider reading	Introduction to Poetry (emphasis on poetry of different periods (AO2i) and on close reading (AO3))
2		
3		
4	Introduction to Shakespearean drama: issues of context (AO5) leading to	Introduction to fiction as a genre (AO2i); and emphasis on forms of narrative (AO3) leading to
5		
6		
7	Othello	Emma
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
(development of literary skills & insight, on interpretation, and contexts AOs 1,4 and 5i)		(emphasis on interpretation AO4, understanding of irony, structure (AO3) and other technical concepts and terms (AO1))

Term 2 Ten weeks

1	Ted Hughes	Introduction to Synoptic topic area(s): background and wider reading
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8	Othello	Coursework: study of texts and production of folder written communication: organisation and presentation (AO1), understanding of text in relation to genre and period (AO2ii)
9		
10		
Focus on knowledge of text (AO2i) close reading (AO3) and interpretation (AO4)		
Focus on Section A skills: close reading/interpretation/context		

Term 3: four or five weeks pre-exams; three or more weeks post exams

1	<i>Othello</i> : Section B: essay writing/interpretation/context	Coursework completion
2	<i>Ted Hughes</i> : focus on open-text question practice	<i>Emma</i> : focus on open-text question practice
3		
4		
5	Final revision	
6	GCE	
7	Advanced Subsidiary	
8	Examination period	
9	Introduction to A2	Synoptic Topic:
10	Wider reading and focus on AOs 2ii and 5ii	preparation for A2: background and wider reading
11		

Individual Centres and teachers would need to adapt such a plan to their own circumstances and ways of working; they may, for instance, prefer to complete their teaching of an individual text in a single block of time. But this scheme aims to show how and when an induction course, preliminary work towards the Synoptic Unit and focusing on the Assessment Objectives throughout the course can all be incorporated into teaching before the AS examinations. It also suggests when and how background and wider reading can be made an integral part of the course plan.

Centres offering a full A level course need to take into account the demands of A2 during the AS part of the course, even though some of their candidates may not continue into the second year.

7 Setting standards

7.1 Introduction

This section focuses on exemplar work for AS. Examples of work produced by candidates taking Units 2707 and 2708 in January 2001 will be published in due course with commentaries on how they were marked, and used in INSET meetings. A2 exemplar material will also be published and used in OCR INSET meetings.

In existing modular A level examinations, all modules are assessed at full A level standard, irrespective of when during the course a candidate takes the examination. With these new specifications the AS is worth 50% of the total marks available for the award of a full A level, but assessed at an intermediate standard appropriate for candidates who have completed one year of a two year post-16 course.

Thus the three units in AS specifications are all assessed at one standard and the three units of A2 are assessed at another, yet the overall level of the qualification is to set at the same standard as existing A levels. It follows then that, if AS is at a standard lower than the existing A level, A2 must be at a standard higher than that demanded at present.

For English Literature courses offered by all the Awarding Bodies, this will be reflected not in more stringent marking (though issues such as quality of language will now be explicitly addressed through AO1) but in

- more demanding assessment objectives, in particular AOs 2ii and 5ii
- more demanding tasks set for synoptic assessment.

For both Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE English Literature, however, the key assessment issue is progression. AS courses must show that candidates have progressed significantly beyond the level of knowledge, skills and understanding expected at GCSE and, at A level, candidates must again demonstrate that they have progressed beyond the standard of AS.

Inevitably, these standards will be measured against achievement in responding to the demands of the assessment objectives, and the Generic Mark Scheme in the OCR English Literature Specification document (Section 3.1.1) shows how this is to be done. It sets out, for each of the Bands, the differences in evidence of achievement that can be expected between AS and A2.

7.2 Exemplar scripts

7.2.1 Example 1: Unit 2708

An essay for Unit 2708 on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The title is Q12(a) in the Specimen Paper; the mark scheme for this question is that given above (see Section 5.2.):

Refer to Chapter 16 of *Frankenstein*. Comment on Shelley's presentation of encounters between the monster and people, and their effect on each other.

In your answer you should consider the following aspects:

- **Human actions and reactions**
- **Ways in which the narrative shapes the reader's responses and develops themes**
- **Role in the meaning of the novel as a whole, including the significance of the demand for a female companion.**

This essay meets all the demands of the assessment objectives as defined in Band 1, and would have received a mark of 28. (**Note:** in this unit the dominant AOs are 1, 2i and 3; 4 and 5i must also feature.) The essay is not flawless – a biblical misquotation and misattribution for example, produced as an important piece of supporting evidence – but on the principle of 'best-fit' this essay deserves its high mark. It demonstrates convincingly the importance of the chapter within the context of the novel as a whole (AO2i) and it is alert – through the choice of telling quotation and allusion to the text – to Shelley's creation of meaning through language and narrative technique (AO3). This is demonstrated implicitly rather than explicitly, but is clear and can be rewarded nevertheless. The candidate's interpretation of the text in the light of Shelley's own circumstances and ideology (AOs 4 and 5i) is convincing and reflects the degree of literary insight (AO1) she has achieved and accurately communicated in this essay.

Candidate's essay:

Chapter 16 explores the effect the monster has upon man, specifically the reaction of the DeLaceys to his abrupt appearance. However, perhaps more importantly than this, is the effect of their horrified reaction on the evolution of the monster's nature and soul. Undoubtedly, the monster's rejection by man is finalised in this chapter, and the consequences of this event are to play an essential part in the theme of the novel, and indeed in the reaction of the reader. The reader sees the deterioration of any goodwill held by the monster towards mankind, and his rapid descent into villainy and 'evil'. Readers' emotions quickly turn from being sympathetic, to feelings of revolt and anger at the monster's actions. However, when examined, these emotions are seen to be relatively rational, and certainly not without due cause. The consequences of such a reaction from the DeLaceys forces a realisation upon the monster, that he is forever to be alone and this serves to quicken his 'deterioration'. This realisation has significant importance as a part of the novel as a whole, as it prompts the monster to demand female companionship by the hands of Frankenstein. This demand, a reflection of Shelley's own feelings towards male domination, and the metaphoric desolation shown in the novel as a result of such repression, proves to be a major theme throughout the novel. As she writes at the very end of the chapter, loneliness must be cured, the implication being that the cure should preferably be female:

"I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me."

However, this refers not only to the recurring theme involving the necessity of the female figure, but also to the effect that man's reaction to abhorration has on the evolution of the monster's personality

Chapter 20 perhaps sums up the effect of such an intervention:

"I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn."

The implication here is that without such an intervention, there would have been a chance for the monster to have evolved wholly good. After all, the monster is relatively 'young' and it could be said that he had a child's mind. Shelley, like Hobbs and Swift, seems to be putting forward the accusation that men are simply "scavengers" - all capable of evil, but directed towards goodwill through selfish desires. Here however, this is slightly subverted, showing that a man will grow up as he is taught to. If lacking the traditional parental care (although "Frankenstein" concentrates more on the maternal care), the child will grow up to be evil. This is represented in the monster's reaction to rejection. He is seen to be even child-like in the killing of the boy within the chapter:

"I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph; clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I too can create desolation'"

The monster has lacked the maternal figure to guide his growth, and knows not the wrong in his actions. He has been guided only by the revolt of others at his appearance, and his reaction to this is to act in like kind. He sees no reason for 'goodness':

"There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies?"

The monster's reasoning is perhaps one with which a reader could sympathise, but his consequent actions serve to alienate the reader from the monster's plight. His horrific murder of William pushes any inkling of sympathy from their minds, and they now turn ill-feelings in his direction. Hence, man's effect on the monster has irreversibly influenced the reader's response to the monster. His turn to evil does however, play an essential role in the novel, seeing as he uses the evil he has learnt to ruin the life of Frankenstein (as the monster states - "I declared ever-lasting war against the species."). Another theme also springs from man's rejection of the monster, and this could be said to be a religious theme, reflecting God's eviction of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. This is upheld by continuous references to Adam:

"I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine?"

(Psalm 45 - "My God, My God, why has he forsaken me?")

However, one of the most important themes which is induced, is that concerning the role of the female. It is in this chapter that the monster first demands his companion:

"- one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me..... This being you must create."

This yearning for female companionship coincides with a series of female deaths, emphasising Shelley's thematic point. It seems she is implying desolation (at the extreme) occurs after a lack of females. The monster, having no mother, and no female companion, is turned to what could broadly be termed as 'evil'. The deaths of Elizabeth and Justine have profound effects on the life of Frankenstein, pushing him deep into despair. Hence, the monster's demand reflects what is continuously referred to throughout the novel. That is, that the female figure is essential, reflecting Shelley's rejection of society (in her time) being primarily male dominated.

Therefore, Chapter 16 is an essential thematic point in the novel - not only representing man's 'fallen nature' (through the monster's susceptibility to hatred and evil), but also reflects Mary Shelley's disgruntlement at her own situation. The reactions of man towards the mutation they saw in the monster, also seems to reflect a common human reaction to that which is different. The monster's reaction to this in turn, could be said to reflect the shallowness of such rejection, and be an extreme reflection of the consequences of such ill-feelings.

Shelley is expanding upon the monster's once virtuous nature, showing him to have an almost Christlike experience. The monster gives his heart to the world and it has rejected through ignorance, prompting an abandonment. This is the best represented in Chapter 24, providing a summary of the consequences of the actions and reactions of both man and monster:

"My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy, and when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture such as you cannot even imagine."

7.2.2 Example 2: Coursework folder

This folder is the work of a candidate in a Centre preparing students for the Twentieth Century American Literature Synoptic topic. His folder is on the poetry of Robert Lowell.

For Task A (where he has to focus on AOs 1, 4 and 5i) the candidate's title is "Is Lowell's poetry more effective when he is writing about America than when he is writing about himself?" This is an appropriate task, giving plenty of opportunity for the candidate to show his ability to develop an independent opinion and to place Lowell's poetry in different contexts, cultural, historical and personal. The essay does attempt to focus on the question, to contextualise Lowell's poetry appropriately and to take account of other readers' interpretations. But there is also evidence that the candidate has not absorbed adequately some of the views he has encountered: such a statement as 'For Lowell free verse meant sanity and control' needs (particularly in coursework) to be much more fully explored and assimilated. In relation to the AOs and the Generic Mark Scheme, the Centre was correct to award this essay a **mark of 19** (mid Band 3).

Task B - A study of 'The Altar' to show how characteristic it is of Lowell's poetry; focus on AO2i; also on AO3 - received a lower **mark of 16** (Band 4). The analysis of the poem is rather repetitive and needs to be more clearly focused; although there is a lot of attention to diction, there is none to form. Some statements are simplistic ('Lowell also brings in his intellect with the Latin phrase' and show the limits of the candidate's understanding of the poem. The relating of the poem to the wider body of Lowell's work in *Selected Poems* is confined to the general comments in the opening paragraph; some of these are questionable and again suggest a lack of real awareness of scope of Lowell's work. Some of the weaknesses identified here should have been ironed out in the process of drafting and revision of this as coursework. The organisation of the material in this essay could be more helpful: the lack of a proper conclusion is a real weakness.

The folder as a whole falls slightly short of the recommended 1500 – 2000 word range. The candidate is not penalised for this since, at AS, this range is a guideline only. However, it is clear that a fuller answer (particularly to Task A) might have enabled him to score more highly.

TASK A. Is Lowell's poetry more effective when he is writing about America than when he is writing about himself?

"It has often been said that Lowell's poetry is more effective when he is writing about America than he is writing about himself." I do not agree with this view because all his poems are personal and about him. I think he writes best when he writes about things he knows best and that is himself. He said "Alas, I can only tell my own story." and "This open book... my open coffin". In Life Studies Lowell is writing confessional poetry about his own family. This book published in 1959 was his highest achievement and he is not confessing and writing about the sins of all of America because he certainly doesn't know them all and that is not his responsibility. But even with the subject 'I' he speaks of the general arena of life as background. Lowell could be considered a 'scapegoat' because he shows the sins of the world and 'has been through everything' but he is most effective when writing about himself because that's what he knows.

He said to Helen Vendler 'I'd like them to say I was heartbreaking.' and that is the effect of his poetry on the reader, he breaks our heart. He is not interested in people thinking all of America is heartbreaking and he doesn't want the country to break people's heart. Lowell cannot have this effect because he is a personal poet.

Lowell talks of American history and tradition in 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket' and 'For the Union Dead'. For Lowell it was a test to keep his intellect and history knowledge out of Life Studies. He did not want to write about history or theology so he could make a personal connection to the reader. In 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket' he shows his views on how modern America has lost its way. And 'For the Union Dead' about Boston life and Cornell Shaw shows his own struggle to come to terms with modern life and modern values. Both these poems show Lowell's personal horror at the destruction of war and a critique of modern America. Even when Lowell is writing about American History he can't help but show his own feelings.

Life Studies was written about his life in a readable style with the spontaneity and resourcefulness of free verse. The metre and rhyme give these poems resonance and reality. For Lowell free verse meant sanity and control. T S Eliot said 'No verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job.' He wanted every word to work.

For Lowell 'suicide was a constant temptation' his friend Hillinghurst said. 'Skunk Hour', 'Waking in the Blue', and 'Home after three Months Away' are about his own thoughts on suicide. He said 'Somewhere in my mind was a passage from Sartre or Camus about reaching some point of final darkness where the one free act is suicide.' Also 'Softwood' shows his familiarity with drugs when he says 'knowing each drug that numbs alters another nerve to pain'.

Lowell speaks with a naked ego and a knowledge of himself he shows a deeper understanding of himself than most people have. With his intellect and life and schooling he may think he has a similar understanding of American history, culture and tradition but he may not have the courage to write so freely about something other than himself. He sees more, feels more and speaks more bravely about himself than most people can. He can write about his most desperate and sordid personal experience with full dignity. He writes with more enthusiasm about himself because he doesn't think he can be contradicted whereas people have different views on general American ideas and he has studied himself so much with his doctors at McLeans in the 1950's and the Priory in 1975.

TASK B. A close study of 'At The Altar'. How characteristic is it of Lowell's poetry?

"At the Altar" in Selected Poems by Robert Lowell is characteristic of Lowell's poetry. This is the fourth and last part of his poem "Between the Porch and the Altar". Like all of Lowell's poems he shows a struggle in mind and soul. Lowell speaks personally with 'I' and he broadens his ideas to the general arena of life. All Lowell's poems are about him and his philosophical questions. He shows us his broad view of religion and how it affects his own human condition.

Lowell begins "At the Altar" with 'I' and we get the feeling of a personal poem right away and he soon uses 'my' speaking of his 'girl' as his possession without us knowing who she is but she is something of Lowell's. They are sitting at a 'gold table' and we see Lowell is aristocratic, dignified and wealthy like he is. The girl's eyelids, he says, burn, and we feel she has some of the pain and anguish Lowell has and maybe that is from spending time with him. Her 'eyelids burn with brandy' and she could be tired from staying up nights with him or she could be an alcoholic like Lowell. Lowell always presents traditions like colouring Easter eggs. With this pagan tradition we see his broad view on religion and it is also a playful tradition that he may be familiar with from colouring Easter eggs with his children. Also his mind might be in a 'whirl' and discoloured by the 'light' that was his drinking and he may be confused. It seems beautiful and respectful that he can watch the dancer and appreciate her beauty and take such leisure time. But this passes quickly with a 'flash' and we are reminded of his ups and downs and we feel cold from the image of the ice she's skating on.

The Northern Lights are considered one of the most beautiful things in the world and they are constantly changing and only last so long. He mentions the stars above him which often are reminiscent of a broad sense of religion and time. He considers himself 'a fallen Christmas tree' and we are reminded of his Catholic faith. A fallen Christmas tree was once loved dearly by a whole family that worked hard on it and now its day has past it is no good to anyone. His car races and then the road is empty like him moving from one of his highs to a low and empty feeling much like the change in the view of the Christmas tree. Lowell racing through the lights gives us a sense of his speed, danger and Lowell living on the edge he is also endangering the other person in their car. They are slowed by another car and a pile of wood that could be a threat to them. He says he wants to get away from his family who presumably love him and he shows he feels trapped or 'tied' he is unsatisfied with his life with them. He blames someone else for being tied to them and he could be thinking about his life from God. He moves with time like the windshield that moves through the dark night that needs 'tail-lights' to see. He wants to move away from the past and the cities he has left. He 'recoils' and we feel him retreating back to his depression and he is at a gothic church and the feel is broad sense of religion and he may be looking for some kind of answer from some kind of religion. With 'blocks' we are reminded of the blocks on sailboats he would sail in his better days and the lines would pass through. The clocks tell the time and he admits 'I am dying' without hesitation. This is inevitable but he doesn't seem like he wants to live. His body and health are descending like the 'shocked stones'. The stones descending on glass will break the glass like Lowell will hurt someone by dying, and some of his loved one's feelings might 'snap and splinter'. He is ready to be dead at a church and imagines his burial mass we also think of the mass that would be his dead body and the Massachusetts state, because Mass does have a capital letter, that he has lived in. Lowell also brings in his intellect with the Latin phrase. He seems to appreciate and comforted that someone 'watches him for Mother' and we are reminded of the Virgin Mother. We are reminded of the turns of his life and his 'burns' like the eyelids of the girl he's with burn.

Lowell shows us his thoughts on such serious matters and keeps our attention with the rhyme on every pair of line.

8 Further Reading

To help teachers and students with the preparation of the new A levels in English Literature and of these new OCR specifications in particular, Cambridge University Press has launched a new series, endorsed by OCR, called *Cambridge Contexts in Literature*. The following titles are already in print or scheduled to appear before Summer 2001.

*Already published:

* <i>American Drama 1900-1990</i>	Don Shiach
* <i>American Prose and Poetry in the 20th Century</i>	Caroline Zilboorg
* <i>The Great War in British Literature</i>	Adrian Barlow
* <i>The Gothic Tradition</i>	David Stevens
* <i>The Victorian Novel</i>	Barbara Dennis
<i>Shakespearean and Jacobean Tragedy</i>	Rex Gibson
<i>Satire</i>	Jane Ogborn, Peter Buckroyd
<i>Post-Colonial Literature</i>	Christopher O'Reilly
<i>Twentieth Century British Drama</i>	John Smart
<i>Metaphysical Poetry</i>	Richard Willmott
<i>The Modern Short Story</i>	Frank Myszor

Two books which students (and teachers) may find valuable are the following:

Robert Eaglestone, *Doing English*, Routledge, 2000

A guide both to sixth formers and undergraduates as to where English literature and literary studies stand today, it is also a polemical attack on A level English which, the author believes, has been 'pickled in educational formaldehyde' for the past fifty years.

Rob Pope, *The English Studies Book*, Routledge, 1998

A remarkable and helpful guide for students: it covers the whole spectrum of contemporary language-and-literature studies. Hard not to admire, even where one does not agree with it.

For teachers, more than for A level students – at least in the earlier stages of the course, the following books are recommended:

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, Manchester University Press, 1995

Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Prentice Hall Europe, 2nd Ed. 1999

Both are very well written and good at demystification.

Jon Davison and John Moss (eds.), *Issues in English Teaching*, Routledge, 2000

Likely to be on recommended reading lists for PGCEd students from now on; radical reappraisals of the state of English across the curriculum – and especially post-GCSE.

Roger Knight, *Valuing English*, David Fulton Publishers, 1996

Brian Cox (ed.) *Literacy Is Not Enough*, Manchester University Press, 1998

Two books which challenge some of the new orthodoxies (e.g. as set out forcefully in *Issues in English Teaching*) and which reassert the value of literature as a creative and enriching art.

9 OCR Contacts

Subject Officer for A Level English Literature (syllabus-specific queries only)

OCR
Mill Wharf
Mill Street
Birmingham
B6 4BU

Tel: 01223 552960

Training and Customer Support (INSET enquiries)

OCR
Mill Wharf
Mill Street
Birmingham
B6 4BU

Tel: 0121 628 2950
Fax: 0121 628 2940
Email: tcs@ocr.org.uk

OCR Information Bureau (other queries)

Tel: 01223 553998
Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk