

# AS Level English Literature

## F661 AS English Literature, Poetry and Prose 1800-1945 – High banded Candidate style answer

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by senior OCR *Examiner's*, with the input of Chairs of *Examiner's*, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “medium” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

### Question 4

**“As if the earth in one unlooked-for favour  
Had made the certain earth returned their love.”**

**Bearing in mind Frost’s presentation of the relationship between people and nature in ‘Two Look at Two’, consider ways in which the poem set relates to the methods and concerns of other poems in the selection. In your answer, make close reference to language, imagery and verse form.**

Love and forgetting might have carried them  
A little further up the mountain side  
With night so near, but not much further up.  
They must have halted soon in any case  
With thoughts of a path back, how rough it was  
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;  
When they were halted by a tumbled wall  
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,  
Spending what onward impulse they still had  
In One last look the way they must not go,  
On up the failing path, where, if a stone  
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;  
No footstep moved it. 'This is all,' they sighed,  
Good-night to woods.' But not so; there was more.  
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them  
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.  
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.  
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,  
Like some up-ended boulder split in two,  
Was in her clouded eyes; they saw no fear there.  
She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.  
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,  
She could not trouble her mind with too long,

She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.  
 'This, then, is all. What more is there to ask?'  
 But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.  
 A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them  
 Across the wall as near the wall as they.  
 This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,  
 Not the same doe come back into her place.  
 He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,  
 As if to ask, 'Why don't you make some motion?  
 Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.  
 I doubt if you're as living as you look.'  
 Thus till he had them almost feeling dared  
 To stretch a proffering hand -- and a spell-breaking.  
 Then he too passed unscared along the wall.  
 Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.  
 'This must be all.' It was all. Still they stood,  
 A great wave from it going over them,  
 As if the earth in one unlooked-for favour  
 Had made them certain earth returned their love.

[30]

Candidate style answer	Examiner's commentary
<p><i>The relationship between people and nature is one which often seems to preoccupy Frost: many poems (for example 'Birches', 'The Sound of Trees', 'Desert Places') place people in a natural landscape, as does 'Two Look at Two'. Frost writes in a simple, conversational register here, using a relaxed and natural blank verse form (as he does in 'Mending Wall'); the effect is to create a quiet and peaceful atmosphere, where the people (not named and not individualised) become an entirely fitting part of the natural scene: "She saw them in their field, they her in hers".</i></p> <p><i>The poem begins and ends with the word 'love', and can be read at one level as a love poem. The opening of the poem, suggesting that 'Love and forgetting might have carried' the lovers up the mountainside, suggests that the first 'two' of the poem are wrapped up in each other, giving little attention to the world of nature. There is danger here too - partly man-made - to be seen in the darkness, with the 'tumbled wall' and 'barbed-wire binding'; the 'failing path' is tempting but forbidding. The scene is entirely naturalistic and convincing, but - as so often in Frost - holds the tantalising possibility of a symbolic reading (the lovers should not stray from the safe path they are on into the wild landscape beyond). The paths in 'The Road Not Taken', by contrast, are more heavily symbolic. Nature in that poem consists entirely of the two paths in the undergrowth representing a choice for the one person of the</i></p>	<p>The writer registers the question at the opening of his answer.</p> <p>This is an efficient method of showing awareness of context (AO4); more elaborate references to other poems will follow.</p> <p>The writer moves quickly into detailed AO2 analysis, showing a command of appropriate terminology (AO1).</p> <p>The writer shows a sophisticated awareness that there can be more than one way of reading a poem.</p>

*poem, the speaker, who has to decide which way to go – ultimately a life-changing decision. The form of the poem, with its tight stanzaic structure and strict rhyme scheme, fits its more portentous tone:*

*“I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.”*

*Less confident and decisive, the first fourteen lines of ‘Two Look at Two’ deal with the lovers’ uncertainty and then their disappointment (“‘This is all,’ they sighed”); this anti-climax gives way to the central encounter in the poem between ‘people and nature’ – the lovers and the deer. From line fifteen, the poem offers a symmetrical picture of the human world meeting the animal world which reflects its title ‘Two Look at Two’: the doe and the buck mirror the two lovers, and the pairs look at each other across a wall. The barrier is an interesting feature of the poem, and may remind the reader of the opening of another poem by Frost: “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall”. In that poem, ‘Mending Wall’, Frost writes “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know*

*What I was walling in or walling out,*

*And to whom I was like to give offense.”*

*In ‘Two Look at Two’, the wall doesn’t so much suggest division as emphasise the symmetry of the two couples, showing the unusual harmony between people and nature in this poem. Just as the woman struggles to see “what stood still” – the doe – so the buck notices the stillness of the people – “I doubt if you’re as living as you look”. The poem seems simple and conversational but is patterned with repetition (for example, the line “Across the wall, as near the wall as they” is repeated) in a way which suggests some meaning and ritual to these simple events. The piece is given shape by the expectations and reactions of the lovers: “This is all”; “This, then, is all”; “‘This must be all.’ It was all.” Their initial disappointment and retreat from the path up the mountain is replaced by the ‘great wave’ going over them – nature has given them recognition in the dance-like significance of their experience, making them “certain earth returned their love”. There is a spiritual feeling in the relationship between people and nature here – the lovers are swept up in the ‘great wave’ to become a part of nature.*

*Not all of Frost’s poems communicate this remarkable harmony between humanity and the natural world. In ‘A Leaf Treader’, the*

This is excellent contextual discussion, showing familiarity with another poem but also helping to offer insights into the set poem (AO2/AO4).

Again, the writer shows how the same idea is used very differently in two different poems, combining treatment of AO2 and AO4.

The writer shows a grasp of the poem as a whole with this comment on its structure (AO2).

The writer makes appropriate use of the terms of the question, demonstrating that the essay is still on track.

Here, a more developed discussion of another poem is introduced, showing a contrasting treatment of the same theme (AO4).

speaker struggles with the autumn leaves, treading them down in a mood which is 'fierce from fear'. The relationship between the speaker and nature seems filled with anger, as he feels himself aging and getting nearer to death with the passing of the seasons. Autumn is often used by poets to symbolise aging and death, but rarely with the sense of enmity and hostility which comes over in this poem, where the speaker has heard the leaves 'threatening under their breath'. Where the lovers in 'Two Look at Two' are happy to give themselves to the mystical experience of encountering the doe and the buck, the speaker in 'A Leaf Treader' is determined not to give way to the leaves' 'invitation to grief'. The conclusion of the poem sees the speaker doggedly continuing to trample down the snow too, in a futile attempt to prevent time passing and his own aging. The relationship between people and nature is treated in different ways by Frost. Nature seems to have overwhelming and irresistible strength, but people apparently have a choice as to whether or not to give themselves to the experience nature offers; in 'Two Look at Two', the lovers are caught up in the encounter with nature and made happier by it.

Brief quotations are effectively woven into the texture of the writer's own prose.

The overview offered in the conclusion is more determined than earlier in the essay, and takes the argument on.

<b>Question 8 (a)</b> <b>'In <i>The Age of Innocence</i>, social pressure is presented as irresistible.'</b> <b>How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>[30]</b></span>	
<i>Candidate style answer</i>	<i>Examiner's commentary</i>
<p><i><u>The social pressures confronted by the characters of <i>The Age of Innocence</i> are not those of 1920, when the novel appeared, but of old New York in Wharton's 1870s childhood. Wharton's contemporary, Walter Berry, told her 'We are the last people left who can remember New York and Newport as they were then, and nobody else will be interested' – but they were. Wharton packed the book with objects, customs and behaviour of the time, much as Scorsese was to do in his lavishly decorated film of the novel, and the result was that the novel won for Wharton the Pulitzer Prize in 1921.</u></i></p> <p><i><u>Wharton referred to herself as an 'ethnographer' in relation to <i>The Age of Innocence</i>; she sought to recreate and present an unfamiliar world for a generation of readers who would be more in sympathy with Dallas, Newland Archer's son who appears at the end of the novel, than with the New Yorkers of the 1870s. The world she describes is certainly characterised by complex social rules and their attendant pressure. The novel opens with an account of a performance of <i>Faust</i> at the Academy of Music in New York; the narrative reports that the audience is described by the daily press as 'exceptionally brilliant', revealing that the opera is more important as a social event than as an artistic experience. The reader first meets Newland Archer turning up late at the opera, simply because it 'was not the thing' to arrive early – from the first we see Newland governed by social pressure, even if, in this case, the pressure is not necessarily 'irresistible'.</u></i></p> <p><i>The great significance of social pressure in Newland's life relates, of course, to his relationships with May Welland and her cousin, Ellen Olenska. His engagement and marriage to May are everything that old New York expects of him, but his relationship with Ellen intervenes even before his engagement is made public. Repeatedly during the novel, Newland has opportunities to abandon May and embark on a freer, more fulfilling life with Ellen, but these opportunities pass him by in favour of a</i></p>	<p>Again, the terms of the question are registered at the outset.</p> <p>An alternative view of the novel is offered and challenged in the answer (AO3).</p> <p>Appropriate contextual information is offered (AO4).</p> <p>The writer's own view of her work shows AO3 awareness.</p> <p>A concise and effective textual reference shows how the writer achieves her effects (AO2).</p> <p>The writer demonstrates that the essay is consistently focused on the task by using the terms of the question.</p>

marriage which is 'a dull duty'. The inhabitants of old New York constantly watch and monitor Newland: when Mrs van der Luyden bids farewell to him at the end of her dinner (given to signal old New York's acceptance of Ellen into polite society at the start of the novel), she comments on his 'unselfish' attention to Ellen, while reminding him of May's loveliness - a sure sign that he is being supervised.

As Newland's story continues, there continue to be constant signs that his conduct is avidly watched by his peers. He finds that he has been omitted from family discussions concerning Ellen's future, presumably because he is not to be trusted. Finally, at May's farewell dinner for Ellen, he realises that 'to all of them he and Madame Olenska were lovers', and for this reason Ellen is to be expelled from old New York society. Newland's intention to escape through travel is then quashed by May's announcement of her pregnancy, 'her blue eyes wet with victory'. Newland can hardly abandon her now.

These social pressures on Newland are formidable, and fascinating to a post-WWI readership which no longer played by these rules. However, are the pressures truly 'irresistible'? - Does Newland really have no choice? There are moments in the novel where he does have opportunities to make choices without the watchful eye of society upon him - for example, when he is sent to fetch Ellen from her walk by the shore in Newport. He sees her with her back to him, facing out to sea, and cannot bring himself to act; he leaves the decision to fate, making it depend on whether she turns around before 'that sail crosses the Lime Rock light'. She does not. The verdict of fate seems to concur with that of old New York. Even at the end of the novel, after a 25 year time slip and the death of his wife, Newland still fails to approach Ellen when he has the opportunity to meet her in Paris. His son, Dallas, belongs to the modern world and is 'incredulous', but Newland imagines meeting Ellen again and concludes that this imagined meeting is 'more real to me here than if I went up'. His imagination was fashioned in the social milieu of old New York, and in this way social pressures continue to act on him beyond practicality, beyond morality, almost beyond reason.

This textual reference is detailed and illuminating, but requires minimal quotation.

Having examined some of the social pressures which act on Newland Archer, the writer confronts the question head-on, focusing on 'how far' he agrees with the question (AO3).

The writer shows awareness of structure with this view of the novel as a whole (AO2).

The writer has his own sense of style, and has given some thought to the way he expresses his ideas.

<p><i>Other characters are victims of these social pressures too: Ellen says of New York, 'this dear old place is heaven', and she is reluctant to offend a society which is all too ready to dispense with her when she threatens its values. May, with her limited and often triumphalist attitudes and values, often seems like the instrument of old New York, punishing and victimising the lovers, but can be seen as a victim too, with her restricted freedom and opportunities. At the end of the book, the tolerance and freedom of Dallas and Mary Archer may represent an escape from the <u>irresistible pressures</u> of their parents' young lives.</i></p>	<p>The writer makes a final reference to the terms of the question in his conclusion.</p>
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## Overall banding: High

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These answers are excellent, showing a detailed and intelligent knowledge of text and context. Both essays are consistently well focused, making judicious use of the terms of the question and signposting their arguments clearly. The writer offers some sophisticated literary insights and displays a confident command of appropriate terminology and an assured written style. Both answers offer detailed analysis of the text, especially strong in relation to Frost. The quality of the argument is excellent in 8(a), although the range of reference could be wider. The treatment of context is very well managed in both answers, since information is apposite and well integrated.