

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

H472

For first teaching in 2015

H472/03 Summer 2022 series

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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General overview

The non-examined assessment (NEA) is a compulsory component of the A Level English Literature qualification. It is worth 40 marks and counts as 20% of the total A Level.

The non-examined component comprises two pieces of work. For Task 1, candidates can choose to do either a close reading or a piece of recreative writing with commentary. For the close reading task, candidates critically analyse a section of their chosen text, or an individual poem selected from a collection or anthology. Candidates should select a manageable section of text: approximately three to four continuous pages of prose or drama or up to 45 continuous lines of poetry are recommended. Any selection made from poetry should be either **a single poem or one extract** from a longer poem. The recommended word length for this task is 1000 words, excluding quotations.

For the recreative option in Task 1, candidates produce a piece of writing on a selected passage or poem from their chosen text, with a commentary explaining the links between their own writing and the original passage. The recommended word length for the recreative piece is 300–350 words with a commentary of 650–700 words, excluding quotations.

For Task 2, candidates produce an essay exploring comparisons and contrasts between two texts, informed by different interpretations and an understanding of contexts. The recommended word length for this task is 2000 words, excluding quotations, task title, footnotes, and bibliography. Across the two tasks, candidates must study one prose, one drama and one poetry text. All three texts must have been first published or performed in 1900 or later and at least one text should have been first published or performed in 2000 or later.

Guidance on preparation and marking of the non-examined assessment is included in the specification, including the marking criteria. Marking should be positive, rewarding achievement rather than penalising failure or omissions. The awarding of marks must be directly related to the marking criteria. Teachers should use their professional judgement to select the best-fit level descriptor that describes the candidate's work. Teachers should use the full range of marks available to them and award all the marks in any level for which work fully meets that level descriptor. Teachers should bear in mind the weighting of the assessment objectives, place the response within a level and award the appropriate mark. If a candidate does not address one of the assessment objectives targeted in the task, they cannot achieve all the marks in the given level.

Centres are responsible for internal standardisation of assessments.

Candidates who did well generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the requirements of each task • were able to explore and pursue their own interests in terms of tasks and/or texts, producing lively, engaging and thoroughly researched essays • engaged with language, structure, and form in both tasks • contextualised the passage or poem and blended the analysis with the wider text awareness in Task 1 close reading • integrated comparison of both texts consistently in Task 2 • explored the implications of different readings of their texts consistently and in depth in Task 2 • addressed the assessment objectives in Task 2 in a blended way, allowing the different strands to inform each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated a lack of awareness in the requirements of each task • took a strictly narrative approach in this task in Task 1 close reading • did not clearly make links between their choices and the choices of the studied author in Task 1 recreative writing • prioritised one text over the other, or offered an unbalanced comparison in Task 2 • used critical views or interpretations only to confirm or substitute for argument in Task 2 • took a plot and character approach to Task 2, rather than focusing on presentation of characterisation • addressed some of the assessment objectives in separate sections of the Task 2 essay.

Administration

After a two-year hiatus, most centres were able to pick up smoothly where they had left off and resume the careful teaching, marking, internal moderation and administration of the NEA. Most submitted their folders to moderators in a timely way, in organised packets with all the relevant paperwork. In some cases, a few of the details of administration had been forgotten, so it may be useful to offer a reminder of a few of the most important points:

- the coversheet is a very important document. As the final record of the candidate's attainment, it is essential that all details are correct, including candidate name and number, the texts and their authors with the post-2000 text indicated, word count and the correct marks for the tasks
- it is also important that a clear summative comment on the folder as a whole is recorded on the coversheet, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the work to justify the mark given
- each candidate's folder should be bound by a treasury tag or staple. Paperclips are unsatisfactory as they attach themselves to the wrong papers and usually come loose. Some centres did not bind their candidates' work in any way, sending a loose pile of papers to the Moderator. This is liable to cause considerable confusion and is most unhelpful
- a number of folders were submitted which went well beyond the 3000 words guidelines. While there is no specific penalty for this, allowing candidates to submit work that is beyond the guidelines does them a serious disservice. It is useful to remind candidates that writing to a specific length is a valuable skill in itself and the resulting precision produces taut, focused writing. Writing well beyond the guidelines will not demonstrate the focused argument expected in 3000 words and will always be self-penalising
- as stated in the NEA guidelines, footnotes should only be used to acknowledge secondary sources. They cannot be given as part of the argument
- a copy of the selected passage or poem should be included with Task 1.

Additionally, all text combinations and task titles for each cohort are required to be submitted to OCR through the [Text and Task tool](#) each year, as highlighted in the specification. The deadline for this is 31st January in the year of examination; generally, it is advised that this is done as early as possible in the planning and drafting process to enable students to respond to any advice offered. This should be done by teachers, rather than students, can cover entire classes or cohorts in the same submission.

As per [p. 10 of the specification](#), none of the core set texts for Component 2 can be used for the NEA, regardless of the topic students are studying for the exam. However, the suggested set texts for Component 2, on pages 36-37 of the specification, can be used for coursework so long as they're not being studied for the exam and if they meet the NEA text requirements.

Texts and tasks

A number of centres played very safe with the component this year, teaching the same three texts, and offering a limited range of questions on them. Sometimes the essays were structured in very similar ways, using the same references, contexts, and critics. This kind of approach runs against the spirit of the component, which is designed as an individual research and study opportunity. It also tends to limit the candidates' achievement, as it is very clear that candidates who have been given the freedom to explore and pursue their own interests, produce more lively, engaging and thoroughly researched essays. In some centres, the same texts were studied, but candidates had a choice of which to pair for Task 2 and which to focus on for Task 1, which was successful. Candidates in other centres had studied two texts together, while choosing their own third option. There was less evidence of centres encouraging candidates to choose all three of their texts independently this year, but there were some examples, which produced vibrant work.

Some familiar texts were still very much in evidence, particularly *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The History Boys*, and *The World's Wife*. Work on these texts was often very good, though there was in some cases a sense that candidates were following a well-trodden path rather than engaging with something fresh.

This sense of freshness was apparent in the work of those centres who had embraced the freedom from the constraints of a set text list. Candidates relished studying both the poetry and the drama of Owen Sheers and Simon Armitage. Harold Pinter and TS Eliot were studied successfully and there was ambitious work on the drama of Eugene O'Neill.

It was also striking that many centres had clearly responded to recent events and consciously diversified their text offering, with far more texts by women and writers of colour. In most cases, candidates had clearly engaged with enthusiasm to poets such as Nina Mingya Powles, Camille Dungy, Maya Angelou, Rupi Kaur, Ocean Vuong, Tracy K Smith, George Mpanga, Akala, Jacob Sam-La Rose, Warsan Shire, Marilyn Nelson, Imtiaz Dharker, Alice Walker, and Langston Hughes. Moderators saw work on the novels of Bernadine Evaristo, Madeleine Miller, Pat Barker, Andrea Levy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Kamila Shamsie, Jean Rhys, Hanif Kureishi, Brit Bennett, Caleb Azuah Nelson, Celeste Ng, Sarah Moss and Monique Roffey. The drama offered included plays by Lorraine Hansberry, Marina Carr, Lynn Nottage and Inua Ellams and Caryl Churchill. It was very refreshing for moderators to see candidates engaging with contemporary literature and discussing, often in a sophisticated way, the different methods writers used to engage with contemporary political concerns.

Feature of sampled work

Task 1 Close Reading

AO2 is dominant in the assessment of Task 1, as both options require close detailed analysis of a specific section of text or a poem. The close reading task balances that focus on close analytical discussion with an informed view of how the chosen extract relates to the rest of the text for which it is taken. It is essential, therefore, that the task wording reflects both aspects, but puts the emphasis on the close reading.

The most successful responses contextualise the passage or poem and seamlessly blend the analysis with the wider text awareness, demonstrating how key methods, techniques and concerns are reflective of the whole text. Such essays give a very clear reading of the passage or poem, elucidating its content and meaning by showing how those are communicated by the writer's choices of language and structure. They also make clear and specific references to other parts of the text or other poems to show characteristic features.

Taking a strictly narrative approach in this task, explaining content, and meaning only, is a significant weakness as it does not address AO2 sufficiently. In their close reading, candidates are more successful if they move beyond word level analysis, considering phrasing, structure, and form, while ensuring that they show how these examples convey the developing meaning of the text.

Task 1 Recreative Writing

There was a resurgence in the popularity of recreative work this year, some of which was outstandingly accomplished. Poetry and drama were the most popular forms and candidates often showed highly skilled imitation of appropriate lexis, imagery and structure in poetry, and in stagecraft and the patterns of dialogue in drama. It is important that candidates control the length of their recreative passages, writing no more than 400 words, though 300 words is usually plenty. In their analytical commentary, the most successful approach is for candidates to be explicit about which techniques and concerns they have imitated, drawing clear links between their own work and that of the original author, with analytical commentary on both.

Task 2 Comparative Essay

As with Task 1, the phrasing of the question in the Comparative Task 2 is very important; it should make it explicit that candidates are being asked to compare the *writing* of the texts, how the authors *present* an issue or concern. Reminding candidates of this might help them avoid a common pitfall, which is to compare the content, the concerns or characters, with little address to how the writers' choices present them to the reader or audience. Successful essays clearly focus on a comparison of the writers' methods, and the two different forms being compared are a very useful prompt for that kind of discussion, giving clear opportunities to address AO2 as well as AO4. This kind of blended approach to the assessment objectives is the most successful – integrated comparison of the writing demands controlled structure and expression as well as a secure understanding of, and selection from, the texts, which addresses AO1 as well.

Successful candidates are also aware of the significance and influence of the contexts they cite, which are examined in detail and used to inform the understanding of key areas of the texts. Socio-historical, cultural, philosophical and literary contexts were most often used. The quality of engagement with different readings seemed to have slipped this year. There were still examples of excellence where readings were challenged, or their implications thoroughly explored, but there were many examples where readings, if present at all, were merely cited as soundbites with little awareness of the arguments behind them. Such citations often appeared at the end of a paragraph to confirm the candidates' argument or were used as a substitute for argument.

Marking and annotation

Most centres resumed their practice of marking their candidates' work with close reference to the marking criteria, looking closely at the essays and coming to carefully considered judgements. Address to the assessment objectives was often noted in the margins and this was most helpful when accompanied by some evaluative comment. The most helpful summative comments, both on essays and the coversheet, balanced the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces.

In most cohorts, moderators saw clear evidence of internal standardisation. This was most helpful when differences of view and changes to marks were clearly explained on the work. This kind of annotation makes it easier for the Moderator to support the Centre's marking. Where marks had been moved upwards without clear justification, the original marks tended to be more accurate. Where there are different teaching sets, or different centres within a consortium, it is essential that the whole cohort is internally moderated together to make sure an accurate rank order before the submission of marks to OCR.

Centres can make use of free internal standardisation training available at [OCR professional development](#).

Raising Attainment

Task 1 Close Reading

Candidates should:

- present a coherent reading of the selected extract or poem
- use analytical detail to demonstrate their understanding of ways in which the author guides the reader or audience response
- relate the selection to the whole text, considering methods as well as content and concerns
- consider genre, form, and structure as well as language in order to address AO2 fully.

Task 1 Recreative

Candidates should:

- keep the recreated passage or poem relatively brief to allow for a developed commentary
- explore the methods and concerns of the original text in the commentary
- discuss how they have reached their decisions in their own piece of writing.

Comparative Task 2

Candidates should:

- focus on writers' presentation or methods rather than characters and concerns directly
- show clear awareness of the difference in genre between the two texts and compare the different methods and effects
- always focus on how characters and ideas are presented – narratively, dramatically, or poetically – rather than on the characters and ideas themselves.

Avoiding potential malpractice

The specification document makes the need for appropriate referencing through footnotes and bibliography quite clear. It is advisable to train candidates in the correct practices for acknowledgement of secondary sources used in their essays. Oxford or MHRA referencing would be advisable referencing systems.

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