


# AQA GCSE English Language Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing

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# Overview of the Exam

## Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing

**Date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Duration:** 1 hour 45 minutes

**Marks:** 80

**Weighting:** 50% of total GCSE grade

**Section A:** Reading and answering four questions on a 20th or 21st century fiction extract. (40 marks)

**Section B:** A choice of two fiction **writing** tasks. (40 marks)

### Suggested breakdown of marks and timings:

Task	Marks	Suggested timing
Reading text	N/A	15 minutes
Question 1	4 marks	4 minutes
Question 2	8 marks	8 minutes
Question 3	8 marks	8 minutes
Question 4	20 marks	20 minutes
Question 5	40 marks	40 minutes
Checking your work	N/A	10 minutes
<b>Total</b>	<b>80 marks</b>	<b>1 hour 45 minutes</b>

# Section A: The Text

## **The Facts**

What will I need to do?

Read an extract from a 20th or 21st century piece of fiction (novel or short story). Any particularly unusual words will be marked with an asterisk and explained in a glossary at the bottom of the text.

**Suggested time spent: 15 minutes.**

### **Top tips:**

Don't skim through the text first time round – make sure you read it carefully.

If there are any words or phrases you don't understand, try to use their context in the writing to work out their meaning.

Remember that you can write on the text as you go through it.

## **Sample Text**

The following is an extract from *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux which is set in a Paris theatre called the Palais Garnier. The performers in the theatre believe that it is haunted by 'The Phantom' or the 'Opera Ghost' and the story is growing.

# The Phantom of the Opera:

## Gaston Leroux

'It's the ghost!' And she locked the door.

Sorelli's dressing-room was fitted up with official, commonplace elegance. A pier-glass, a sofa, a dressing-table and a cupboard or two provided the necessary furniture. On the walls hung a few engravings, relics of the mother, who had known the glories of the old Opera in the Rue le Peletier: portraits of Vestris, Gardel, Dupont, Bigottini. But the room seemed a palace to the brats of the **corps de ballet**, who were lodged in common dressing-rooms where they spent their time singing, quarrelling, smacking the dressers and hair-dressers and buying one another glasses of cassis, beer, or even rum, until the call-boy's bell rang.

Sorelli was very superstitious. She shuddered when she heard little Jammes speak of the ghost, called her a 'silly little fool' and then, as she was the first to believe in ghosts in general, and the Opera ghost in particular, at once asked for details:

'Have you seen him?'

'As plainly as I see you now!' said little Jammes, whose legs were giving way beneath her, and she dropped with a moan into a chair.

Thereupon little Giry – the girl with eyes black as **sloes**, hair black as ink, a swarthy complexion and a poor little skin stretched over poor little bones – little Giry added:

'If that's the ghost, he's very ugly!'

'Oh, yes!' cried the chorus of ballet-girls.

And they all began to talk together. The ghost had appeared to them in the shape of a gentleman in dress-clothes, who had suddenly stood before them in the passage, without their knowing where he

came from. He seemed to have come straight through the wall.

'Pooh!' said one of them, who had more or less kept her head. 'You see the ghost everywhere!'

30 And it was true. For several months, there had been nothing  
discussed at the Opera but this ghost in dress-clothes who stalked  
about the building, from top to bottom, like a shadow, who spoke to  
nobody, to whom nobody dared speak and who vanished as soon as  
35 he was seen, no one knowing how or where. As became a real ghost,  
he made no noise in walking. People began by laughing and making  
fun of this spectre dressed like a man of fashion or an undertaker;  
but the ghost legend soon swelled to enormous proportions  
among the corps de ballet. All the girls pretended to have met this  
supernatural being more or less often. And those who laughed the  
40 loudest were not the most at ease. When he did not show himself, he  
betrayed his presence or his passing by accident, comic or serious,  
for which the general superstition held him responsible. Had any  
one met with a fall, or suffered a practical joke at the hands of one  
of the other girls, or lost a powderpuff, it was at once the fault of the  
45 ghost, of the Opera ghost.

After all, who had seen him? You meet so many men in dress-clothes  
at the Opera who are not ghosts. But this dress-suit had a peculiarity  
of its own. It covered a skeleton. At least, so the ballet-girls said. And,  
of course, it had a death's head.

**Corps de ballet** – a group of ballet dancers who perform  
ensemble roles



# Section A: Question 1

## The Facts

**Worth: 4 marks**

**You will be tested on AO1:**

- identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas;
- select and synthesise evidence from different texts.

**Suggested time spent: 4 minutes**

**What will I need to do?**

Locate four specific pieces of information, such as a description, from the text. There may be more than four available, and the information may be surface meaning (such as a fact) or implied meaning (such as a suggestion or hint). You can use specific quotations from the text or your own words, or both.

**Top tips:**

- Read the question very carefully – the examiner is looking for particular things.
- Use the line references. Only look at the section of text you are asked to consider.
- Only give four pieces of information – this is a four-mark question, so don't spend a long time on it.
- Make sure that your points are different – don't say the same thing in different ways!
- Read carefully for implied meaning.
- Make sure you take your information from the text – don't attempt to answer from memory!



## Sample Question

1. Read the source again from lines 1 to 8.

List four things we learn about the setting from this part of the text.

## Sample Answer

Read the following answer to the sample question. Do you think this is correct? If not, what do you think is the correct answer?

1. The room is a dressing-room.
2. The door can be locked.
3. The room is furnished with a sofa and a dressing table.
4. A little girl called Jammes is there.

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# Section A: Question 2

## The Facts

**Worth: 8 marks**

**You will be tested on AO2:**

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

**Suggested time spent:** 8 minutes

## What will I need to do?

Identify and analyse how the writer uses words, phrases, and rhetorical devices to create particular effects. You will need to quote from the text directly and you will need to explain how the quotations you have chosen make your points.

### Top tips:

- Make sure you refer to language throughout your answer – try to use the vocabulary you have learned to discuss literary techniques.
- Use the line references to get to the appropriate piece of text quickly.
- Highlight on the text words or phrases you think you may use in your answer.
- Remember to use short, precise quotations from the text.
- It's not enough to just identify the techniques being used – you must explain **how** they are effective.

## Sample Question

### 2. Look in detail at this extract:

"If that's the ghost, he's very ugly!"

"Oh, yes!" cried the chorus of ballet-girls.

And they all began to talk together. The ghost had appeared to them in the shape of a gentleman in dress-clothes, who had suddenly stood before them in the passage, without their knowing where he came from. He seemed to have come straight through the wall.

"Pooh!" said one of them, who had more or less kept her head. "You see the ghost everywhere!"

And it was true. For several months, there had been nothing discussed at the Opera but this ghost in dress-clothes who stalked about the building, from top to bottom, like a shadow, who spoke to nobody, to whom nobody dared speak and who vanished as soon as he was seen, no one knowing how or where. As became a real ghost, he made no noise in walking. People began by laughing and making fun of this spectre dressed like a man of fashion or an undertaker; but the ghost legend soon swelled to enormous proportions among the corps de ballet. All the girls pretended to have met this supernatural being more or less often. And those who laughed the loudest were not the most at ease. When he did not show himself, he betrayed his presence or his passing by accident, comic or serious, for which the general superstition held him responsible. Had any one met with a fall, or suffered a practical joke at the hands of one of the other girls, or lost a powderpuff, it was at once the fault of the ghost, of the Opera ghost.

**How does the writer use language to create a sense of the mystery surrounding the ghost in this section of the story?**

- You could include the writer's choice of:
- words and phrases;
- language features and techniques;
- sentence forms.

### **Sample Answer**

Read the following partial answer to the sample question. Do you think it is correct? If not, how would you change it?

**The extract shows us a lot about the ghost. Immediately, we are given the information that the girls think he is 'ugly'. This lends an air of the gothic to the ghost, making him seem otherworldly. A large group of girls seem to have seen the ghost. The author mentions that the ghost 'appeared' and seems to have come through the wall, giving him a greater aura of mystery.**

**The word 'stalked' implies that the 'ghost' is hunting something or someone and the story of the ghost is called a 'legend', showing that it is important among the ballet girls.**

### **Word Bank**

**The following phrases may be useful when writing your answer:**

The writer/narrator uses / refers to / employs...

The writer/narrator builds / creates / develops...

The writer/narrator creates a mood / atmosphere / sense / feeling of...

The use of simile / metaphor / personification creates a sense of...



# Section A: Question 3

## The Facts

**Worth: 8 marks**

**You will be tested on AO2:**

- explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support your views.

**Suggested time spent: 8 minutes**

### What will I need to do?

Identify and analyse how the writer uses structural devices to create particular effects. You will need to quote from the text directly and you will need to explain how the quotations you have chosen make your points. Structural features can be:

- whole text: eg. beginnings / endings / perspective shifts;
- paragraph level: eg. topic change / aspects of cohesion;
- sentence level when they contribute to the whole structure.

### Top tips:

- Make sure you refer to elements of structure throughout your answer – these include the form and type of sentences, the way the story and plot are put together and where and how certain types of words are used.
- Use the line references to get to the appropriate piece of text quickly.
- Highlight on the text words or phrases you think you may use in your answer.
- Remember to use short, precise quotations from the text.
- It's not enough to just identify the techniques being used – you must explain **how** they are effective.

## Sample Question

This question refers to the text on pages 2 and 3.

**3. Answer the following question using the whole source.**

**This text comes from an early point in the novel.**

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

**You could write about:**

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

## Sample Answer

Read the following partial answer to the sample question. What is good about it, and what needs improvement? Can you write a better answer?

**The writer tells us about the dressing-room at the beginning of the extract after opening with an exclamation from one of the girls about the ghost. The description is necessary but the reader wants to continue learning about the ghost and is excited to read on. The writer uses lots of quick exclamatory statements by the girls to show their excitement about the appearance of the ghost. The fact that the girls 'all begin to talk together' shows that they are excited by news of the ghost.**

## Word Bank

The following phrases may be useful when writing your answer:

The writer/narrator uses / refers to / employs...

The writer/narrator builds / creates / develops...

The writer/narrator creates a mood / atmosphere / sense / feeling of...

The use of short sentences / ellipsis / longer sentences creates a sense of...

The pace / rhythm of the text increases/decreases here so that...

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# Section A: Question 4

## The Facts

**Worth: 20 marks**

**You will be tested on AO4:**

- evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

**Suggested time spent: 20 minutes**

**What will I need to do?**

Evaluate how successful the writer has been throughout a section of the text. This will involve referring to language and structural devices the writer uses, but you will also need to show how the writer builds an effect over the course of the piece. Your answer will need to have an overview of the text supplied, as well as an understanding of specific details. You will need to give a personal opinion. You will need to use quotations in your answer.

- Use specific quotations from the text.
- Make sure you consider the question. This will often be a quotation from another student or teacher giving their impressions of the text. You must explain how and why you agree or disagree with this impression.
- Think about how the text changes throughout the section specified – how does the author take the reader on an emotional or psychological journey?
- Remember to refer to the reader – what impression does the author make on them?
- Make sure your answer is personal – you are offering a judgement – but it must be firmly backed up by the text.
- Don't criticise the author too much – the text is likely to be regarded as a classic of English literature!

## Sample Question

This question refers to the text on pages 2 and 3.

4. For this question, look at the first part of the source from the beginning to the line ‘ - little Giry added: ‘If that’s the ghost, he’s very ugly!’

**After reading this section of the text, a student said: ‘The passage is very effective. The author really gives the reader a sense of what it is like to be in the Opera dressing rooms at that time.’**

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write about your own response to the scene;
- evaluate how the writer has described things in the scene;
- support your opinions with references to the text.

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## Sample Answer

Read the following partial answer to the sample question. What is good about it, and what needs improvement? Can you write a better answer?

**The writer starts by describing the actual room where the girls are. This gives a sense of the place itself. We learn about the furniture and the pictures on the walls. After this, we begin to understand what is happening in the place. The author tries to make us use all our sense by telling us about the sounds of the girls from the ballet. When they are in their own rooms they are 'singing, quarrelling, smacking the dressers'. You get the impression of a rather violent group of young women, always arguing.**

**The author also manages to create a realistic picture of the girls and their relationships with one another. Sorelli is clearly very senior and she calls Jammes a 'silly little fool'. This shows us that she thinks she is above the other girls. I like that we get an impression of the girls' personalities.**

## Word Bank

**The following phrases may be useful when writing your answer:**

- The writer/narrator uses / refers to / employs...
- The writer/narrator builds / creates / develops...
- The writer/narrator creates a mood / atmosphere / sense / feeling of...
- The reader is given the impression that...
- This is effective because...
- This creates a feeling of... by...



# Section B: Question 5

## The Facts

**Worth: 40 marks**

**You will be tested on AO5 (24 marks):**

- communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences;
- organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

**You will be tested on AO6 (16 marks):**

- use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

**Suggested time spent: 40 minutes**

### What will I need to do?

Write an engaging, imaginative fiction piece which could be based on your real experiences or entirely made up. It should be appropriate to the purpose, audience and form stated in the task. One of the tasks will include an image which you will be asked to use as a stimulus for your piece.

### Top tips:

- Make sure your piece is carefully structured – take two minutes to plan it first.
- Use a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures and literary devices – this is your opportunity to show off!
- Make sure you have read the question carefully – it's important that your writing fits the task given.
- Take great care with spelling, punctuation and grammar – 16 marks are available for technical accuracy.



## Sample Answer

Read the following task. What is good about it, and what needs improvement? Can you write a better piece?

**As soon as I entered the living room I knew something was wrong. A man sat in my chair, stareing back at me as I stood in the doorway. He was real scarey and I worried that he might jump out of the seat and atack me. His hands were in black gloves and he actally had black on all over. I never seen him before.**

**Suddenly he jumped off the chair and come towards me. The door crashed shut behind me because the whind caught it as he ran at me. I stumbled and fell almost over him. His hands reached out to touch me and I pulled back away from him. His face wasn't actually there - there was a mask in place of his face.**

**I tried to scream but I couldn't get the sound out. My voice was croaky like a frog's. 'Help!', I shouted but hardly any sound came out.**

**Suddenly the door rattled behind me. My mum called threw the door. Are you in there? I herd a noise. Are you okay.**

**I turnd back round and looked at the man. Surprise! He was'nt their any more. Where had he gone? He had disappeared!**

## Word Bank

**Try including some of the following literary techniques in your writing:**

Alliteration

Juxtaposition

Sibilance

Emotive language

Metaphor

Simile

Irony

Onomatopoeia

Personification





# Final Tips

- When you know the time of your exam, work out what the timings for each question will be. For example, if the exam begins at 1.30pm:

Reading the text:	1.30pm
Question 1:	1.45pm
Question 2:	1.49pm
Question 3:	1.57pm
Question 4:	2.05pm
Question 5/6:	2.25pm
Checking your work:	3.05pm
End of exam:	3.15pm

- If you miss your timings, don't panic. Move to the next question quickly – you can always return to the previous one if you have time at the end.
- Read the text provided carefully. If you're unsure of what some of the words mean, try to work out their meanings by looking at their context in the sentence.
- Remember to read for implied meaning, as well as surface meaning.
- Read the questions very carefully. If need be, underline key words so you are sure what you are being asked.
- Look at the marks available and adapt your response accordingly. There is no point writing two pages for an eight mark question and half a page for a twenty mark question.
- Write on your copy of the text if you want to. This is your exam paper – annotate and highlight as you need.

- Keep quotations short – a few words at most.
- Try to integrate quotations into your sentences.  
e.g.
  - The narrator dislikes the man’s coat. He says it is ‘ghastly’.
  - The narrator dislikes the man’s ‘ghastly’ coat.
- Never criticise an author. You can evaluate their work, using evidence from the text, but do not make sweeping statements about whether you personally like or dislike the text.
- Plan your written task – a spider diagram, list or flow chart will help you to create cohesion in your writing.
- Pay attention to your spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is worth 16 marks in Section B of the exam. Don’t make silly mistakes, such as forgetting to use capital letters correctly.
- Check your work carefully when you have finished. Use every minute you have!

Believe in yourself.  
You are prepared and  
**you can do this!**





