



Cambridge (CIE) IGCSE English Literature



Your notes

How To Answer The Poetry & Prose Questions

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Section A: What The Question Is Asking



Your notes

Section A: What The Question Is Asking

Section A of Paper 1: Poetry and Prose is the **poetry** section. You must ensure you select the correct page and question numbers in the exam paper that relate to the poetry anthology you have studied. The guide below will enable you to approach the Section A **poetry question** with confidence. It is divided into:

- Overview
- Breaking down the question
- Top tips

Overview

You should answer one question in Section A from a choice of two. Each option will give you one of the poems you have studied in your poetry anthology printed on the exam paper. This Section is worth 25 marks and assesses all four Assessment Objectives. You have 45 minutes to answer this question.

In your response you are expected to:

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the poem through reference to detail and the use of accurate, relevant quotations from the poem
- Show that you understand the main ideas and explicit meanings in the poem, as well as the implied or hidden meanings
- Analyse, in detail, the choices the writer has made in terms of their use of language, structure and form to **convey** impressions and ideas
- Shape your writing in such a way as to communicate your engagement with the poem
- Demonstrate your understanding of the poem and the question
- Be sensitive to imagery, sound and language to develop an informed, personal response to the poem

The suggested timings for the Section A poetry question are:

10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Decide on the question you are going to answer▪ Highlight the key words in the question you choose▪ Re-read the poem▪ Annotate in the margins▪ Make a brief plan of the structure of your answer
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Your notes

30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follow your plan or annotationsWrite your response
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Re-read and check your response

It is important to read and check your work, rather than to try to write as much as you can in the time allowed. Answers that are shorter, but more focused and **concise**, are often more successful.

Breaking down the question

For this question, you will always be asked to write a response that explores how a poet conveys their meanings and message in their poem, focusing on a specific aspect or theme. The most common mistake students make in exams is not thoroughly understanding the question. By paying close attention to the question and understanding it thoroughly, you can enhance your exam performance significantly.

Below are a range of examples of Section A Poetry questions taken from past CIE IGCSE papers:

How does Auden **strikingly** convey the **speaker's grief** in this poem?

How does Adcock **vividly** portray the **behaviour of the people from Universal Lotteries** in "The Telephone Call"?

Explore how Monck **movingly** conveys **her thoughts about death** in this poem.

In what ways does Wotton **vividly** convey **how a person can become "Lord of himself"** in "The Character of a Happy Life"?

Explore how Gunn **uses words and images to powerful effect** in "The Man with Night Sweats".

In what ways does Marston make this such a **sad poem**?

How does Edmond make "Waterfall" such a **memorable poem**?

What does Duffy's writing **make you feel for the speaker** in "Originally"?

The focus of each question is indicated in bold

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Top tips

- Highlight the key words in the question:
 - The most successful answers maintain a clear focus on the key words in the question
 - Therefore, pay particular attention to what the question is asking you to do
 - Then, as you read through the poem, highlight and annotate key words and phrases directly relevant to the focus of the question
- Quotations are intended to support your points, but should not be a point in themselves:



- The strongest answers show a detailed knowledge of the text, by integrating precise and concise quotations and indirect textual references to support points
- You need to be able to analyse and explain the relevance of the quotations you have chosen to your argument and to the question you are answering
- You should structure your response and your use of quotations in chronological order, and ensure that you respond to every section of the poem:
 - You should aim to select 6–7 relevant quotations that contain a range of language and/or structure devices that you can comment upon and analyse
 - A high-level response will incorporate these quotations into the explanations of meaning
- Do not ignore the final stanza:
 - This is often where the poet emphasises their message or attitude
- Do not just state your ideas:
 - The most convincing responses sustain a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects
 - Therefore, it is important that your explanation and analysis is supported with reasons
 - Use words such as “because”, “as” or “since” to offer reasons as to how the writer’s choices of language and structure achieve the particular effects that you mention
 - Make sure you link all of your ideas and reasons to the question
- Embed your quotations into your sentences:
 - Avoid unnecessary phrases such as “This is shown by the quote...” as this is just a waste of words
 - Instead, try: “Atwood expresses her belief that nature will overcome the suburbs by referring to the ‘future cracks in the plaster’”
- Ensure your introduction demonstrates that you have understood the task and that you have a thorough knowledge of the poem:
 - You can do this by defining the focus of the question and summarising the main themes of the poem
- Do not waste words on general topic sentences that do not make a specific point:
 - For example: “Human activities seem pointless by the way Atwood describes them”:
 - This does not make any specific point that the examiner could reward with a mark
- Make sure you stick to the given poem and the focus of the question:
 - Do not refer to or make comments about any of the other poems in the anthology
- Avoid being narrative:
 - You do not get any marks for just re-telling the poem



- Make sure every paragraph answers the question:
 - Do not just write down everything you know about the poem without any focus on the question
 - Make every sentence count!
- Ensure you include analysis of the use of structure and the form of the poem:
 - Writing just about the poet's use of language can limit your marks
- In addition, avoid "feature-spotting":
 - Listing techniques a poet has used without analysis will not get you marks
- Your conclusion should be relevant and should summarise your personal response to the poem and the task:
 - The strongest answers provide evidence of an informed and sensitive personal response to the text, which focuses directly on the key words of question
 - It should not just repeat points you have already made
- Avoid lengthy discussion of the historical context of the writer and/or the time in which the poem was written:
 - Context is not explicitly assessed in this IGCSE
 - Instead, your wider background knowledge should be used to inform your personal response to the poem



Section A: How To Get Full Marks

The starting point for the analysis of any text is active reading. This means annotating with your own comments and questions about the text as you read. Poems will often contain many layers of meaning, so it is important that you explore beyond any surface meanings to uncover the deeper ideas and themes. Some appreciation of the context in which a poem was written can also help your understanding, but this should never be the main focus of your exploration.

It is tempting to jump straight in and start writing immediately. However, following this guide will ensure you answer the question in the way the examiners are looking for.

Below you will find sections on:

- What skills are required
- Steps for success
- Top tips

What skills are required

Each question on this exam paper assesses all four Assessment Objectives equally. This means it is important that you know what skills these Assessment Objectives require you to demonstrate in order to get the most marks.

- **AO1** is about demonstrating knowledge of the poem's content through reference to specific sections of the text:
 - As you read through the poem, **annotate** any questions you have
 - This objective is about working out what is going on in terms of content, structure and word choice
- **AO2** is about going beyond the surface meaning and story to look for underlying ideas and attitudes – the poet's and our own:
 - This requires you to ask "why" the author has made the choices they have
 - Some elements of the writer's context can be used to inform your personal response, but only if relevant to the focus of the question
- **AO3** requires **critical engagement** and evaluation of how the text works:
 - "Meanings and effects" suggests that there is more than one meaning for a text, and the language, structure and form of the poem contribute to those meanings
 - It does not mean just listing the literary techniques the writer has used
- **AO4** refers to the way you shape your writing in order to communicate your engagement with the text:



- A personal response means that you may wish to make comparisons with similar experiences of your own, whether in real life or in your reading
- Any comments, comparisons or contextual information should help reinforce your own interpretation, but not replace it
- Your own response is valid as long as it is supported by evidence

The following sections explore the skills you will need to demonstrate in more detail:

- **Analysing a poem**
- **Developing a personal response**

Analysing a poem

Poetry gives us an image that is not realistic, but which needs to be interpreted. It is important to remember that the choices a writer has made in terms of how the poem is set out and the language they have used are all deliberate – a poem is a crafted piece of work. It is therefore useful to consider not only the language choices a writer has made, but also what decisions they have taken in terms of structure and form.

What to do when analysing a poet's methods

- Take a whole-text approach to the poem:
 - This could involve commenting on structure: “at the start”/“this changes when”/“in contrast...”
 - This could involve commenting on a poet's choice of form:
 - How have they conformed to, or subverted, the form of sonnet/**dramatic monologue** etc.?
 - What deliberate choices has the poet made with their verse form? Are there reasons there is a regular or irregular rhyme structure?
 - Think about how tone is presented and develops: why has the poet chosen to present this tone? Why have they included a tonal shift?
 - Are characters in the poem presented differently from each other? Why? What does each represent?
 - Do characters' relationships with each other change? Why might a poet have chosen to do this?
- Remember that **personas**, and characters in a poem, are constructs, not real people:
 - Think about what each character's function is in the poem
 - What does the poet use their persona, or characters, to say about the theme?
 - Why has the poet chosen to write their poem in first, or third, person?
 - Is the first-person narrator reliable or unreliable?
- Always frame your essay with the poet in mind:
 - As the examiners say: “writers use methods, including language and structure, to form and express their ideas – the choices the writer makes are conscious and



- deliberate”
- Therefore, write that a poet “highlights X”, “suggests Y”, “challenges Z”
- And always use the poet’s (last) name in your essay
- Use the words “so” and “because” to push you to explain your own ideas further
- Zoom out to big ideas in your analysis:
 - Go from analysing language, or other writer’s choices, to a poet’s overall intention or message
 - This should also link to your **thesis**, and argument, throughout
 - You can begin these “zoom out” sentences with “The poet could be suggesting that because X, then Y” or “The poet could be using the character of X to challenge contemporary ideas about Y”
 - Use modal language to present sophisticated ideas:
 - Using words like “could”, “may” or “perhaps” shows that you are thinking conceptually

Form

The form of the poem can be thought of as “genre”. Poetry itself is a form of text, as are prose and drama. Within the form of poetry, there are many subforms. Some of the main forms of poetry are detailed below:

Form	Explanation
Sonnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traditionally made up of 14 lines, usually dealing with the theme of love ▪ Petrarchan (Italian) sonnets typically follow an ABBA, ABBA, CDE, CDE rhyme scheme ▪ Shakespearean (English) sonnets typically follow an ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG rhyme scheme
Epic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A ancient type of lengthy, narrative poem ▪ Typically deals with heroic deeds
Free verse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A type of poetry defined by a lack of rules ▪ It can rhyme or not, have as many lines or stanzas as the poets want and can be about any subject matter
Villanelle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An old, rule-driven type of poetry made up of 19 lines ▪ It has five stanzas of three lines each (tercets) and a final stanza of four lines (quatrain) ▪ There are only two rhyming sounds (ABA) and a lot of repetition



Ode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the oldest forms of poetry, originally performed with a musical instrument Typically written to praise a person, event or thing Usually quite short in length
Ballad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An old, traditional form of poetry that typically tells a dramatic or emotional story Typically structured into quatrains with a rhyme scheme of ABAB or ABCB, although this can be modified to suit a writer's needs

When writing about form in poetry, it is important to consider *why* the poet has chosen that particular form, and especially if they have altered the rules of that particular form and why. It is also useful to consider how the form reflects the themes of the poem.

Let's take a look at an example. The following poem is called "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley:

<p><i>I met a traveller from an antique land</i></p> <p><i>Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone</i></p> <p><i>Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,</i></p> <p><i>Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown</i></p> <p><i>And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command</i></p> <p><i>Tell that its sculptor well those passions read</i></p> <p><i>Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,</i></p> <p><i>The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;</i></p> <p><i>And on the pedestal these words appear:</i></p> <p><i>"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:</i></p> <p><i>Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"</i></p> <p><i>Nothing beside remains. Round the decay</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The form of this poem is a sonnet, made up of 14 lines However, Shelley blends elements of the Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets It is Petrarchan in that the poem is structured as an octave and a sestet, but Shelley alters the rhyme scheme This could reflect the theme of the fleeting nature of human power compared to the overwhelming power of nature Shelley breaks away from the traditional sonnet form to imply that power doesn't last and can be broken
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Your notes

<p><i>Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, The lone and level sands stretch far away.</i></p>	
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How to apply this in an exam response:

Exam question	Incorporating analysis of form in your response
Explore how Shelley conveys ideas of power in "Ozymandias"	<i>Shelley conveys ideas of power in "Ozymandias" by taking the traditional form of a sonnet and subverting it. He blends Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnet forms, and alters the rhyme scheme. This reflects the fleeting nature of human power when compared to the overwhelming power of nature, and implies that power does not last and can be broken down and re-arranged</i>

Structure

The structure of a poem refers to how the poem has been put together in its particular form. The choices a poet can make in terms of how to structure their poem includes stanza length, the use of repetition and **refrains**, a circular structure, and the use of particular types of punctuation, such as **caesura**, or a lack of punctuation at the end of a line, called **enjambment**. Structure also includes rhyme scheme and changes in line length. The poet's choices regarding structure can affect a poem's meaning or message.

Let's look at an example of structural choices made by a writer and how these shape meaning. The following stanzas are taken from John Agard's poem "Checking Out Me History":

<p>Dem tell me bout 1066 and all data</p> <p>dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat</p> <p>But Toussaint L'Ouverture</p> <p>no dem never tell me bout dat</p> <p><i>Toussaint a slave with vision lick back</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agard deliberately structures the stanzas into two distinct styles through the use of italics to emphasise the separation between the history he was taught at school and Black history ▪ The poet also juxtaposes sometimes frivolous British and white history taught in colonial schools with powerful Black history ▪ The stanzas dealing with the history the speaker was forced to learn use simple rhyming couplets ▪ This emphasises the superficial nature and lack of relevance of this history to the speaker ▪ Each of these stanzas also start with "Dem tell me" – the repetition suggesting a frustration with the colonial control that has dominated the speaker's life, and which now dominates these stanzas of the poem ▪ The stanzas in italics are longer and use an unconventional structure, to suggest these are unconventional ideas
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Your notes

<p><i>Napoleon battalion and first Black Republic born Toussaint de thorn to de French Toussaint de beacon of de Haitian Revolution</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lines in these stanzas are shorter and written in free verse to sound more like speech and in contrast with the nursery-rhyme rhythm of the “white history” stanzas
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How to apply this in an exam response:

Exam question	Incorporating analysis of structure in your response
How does Agard strikingly convey the differences in personal experiences of history in “Checking Out Me History”?	<i>Agard structures his poem to show a clear distinction between the white, colonial history he was taught at school, and the history that is more important to him that he was not taught. He does this by deliberately changing the font of the poem between the stanzas. In addition, the stanzas containing “white” history are structured using simple rhyming couplets, giving them a nursery-rhyme and simplistic quality, while the stanzas written in italics and dealing with his history are written in free verse and are longer, suggesting they deal with more complex and unconventional ideas</i>

Language

When analysing language in a poem, you need to consider the specific choices of words and phrases the writer has used, as well as the imagery they have created and the language techniques they have used, all of which contribute to the themes and meanings in the poem.

In order to do this, you should consider both the denotation and the connotations of particular words:

- Denotation = the literal meaning of a word or phrase
- Connotation = the associations or implied meanings of the word or phrase

When commenting on words and phrases from the text, you should always try to consider **why** you think the writer has chosen that particular word to use. Below are some questions that you might ask yourself when analysing the words and phrases in a poem:

Denotations and connotations	Emotional impact	Characterisation	Formality and informality
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How do these layers of meaning add depth to the poem?	How do the words evoke emotions or feelings in the reader? Do they create joy, sadness, fear or excitement?	Do the words reveal aspects of the narrator's personality, background or emotions?	Do the words make the text more relatable or distant?
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The following table provides you with a list of some terms and definitions to use when analysing individual words and phrases:

Term	Definition	Example
Comparative adjectives	Used to compare differences between two nouns, such as “larger”, “smaller”, “faster”, “stronger”	“When you’re small, no one is smaller, You’ll wish you were tall...”
Superlatives	Words used to express something of the highest quality of its kind	“From fairest creatures we desire increase”
Emotive language	Emotive language refers to words and phrases that are intentionally used to evoke strong emotional responses in the reader	“The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude”
Colloquial language	Colloquial language is informal, everyday language that is used in casual conversations and familiar settings	“How can you tell what class I’m from? I can talk posh like some With an ‘Ollie in me mouth”
Imperatives	Imperatives are verb forms or sentences that are used to give commands	“Gilgamesh, fill your belly, Day and night make merry”

Once you are able to identify particular words and phrases within a text, you need to develop this skill further by considering why the writer has chosen to include these within their writing.

Remember the goal of analysing words and phrases is to uncover layers of meaning, understand the writer’s intent and explore how language contributes to the overall impact of the poem.

Language features

It is important that you are familiar with key literary terms to support your analysis of the poem. While the examiner will expect you to use relevant subject terminology to support your views, this does not mean that you will secure more marks for demonstrating a wide understanding of literary terms. It is much more important that you clearly articulate the intended effects of any terms that you use.

The table below provides some definitions of key literary terms. This list is not exhaustive, but it is simply a guide to some of the techniques that might be most useful when analysing a poem:

Language technique	Definition	Example
Simile	A simile is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things, using "like" or "as" to highlight their similarities	"I wandered lonely as a cloud"
Metaphor	A metaphor is a figure of speech that equates or describes one thing in terms of another, asserting that they are the same	"The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas"
Imagery	Imagery engages the reader's senses by using vivid and detailed language to create mental images	"When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze"
Alliteration	Alliteration involves the repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words or stressed syllables, within a phrase or sentence	"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary"
Personification	Personification attributes human characteristics or qualities to inanimate objects, animals or abstract concepts	"Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so"
Onomatopoeia	Onomatopoeia is the use of words that imitate or mimic the sounds they represent	"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, And the wild water lapping on the crag"



Your notes

Repetition	Repetition involves the deliberate repetition of words, phrases, sounds or grammatical structures to create emphasis, reinforce ideas or establish rhythm	“Dem tell me Dem tell me Wha dem want to tell me”
Juxtaposition	Juxtaposition places two contrasting ideas, images or concepts side by side to highlight their differences or create a striking effect	“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference”

Knowing the names of sophisticated language techniques will not gain you any more marks in the exam, especially if these techniques are only “spotted” and the writer’s intentions are not explained. Once you are able to identify and understand different literary techniques, you need to develop this skill further by considering why the writer has chosen to include these techniques in their writing.

How to apply this in an exam response:

Exam question	Incorporating analysis of language in your response
How does Hughes create such a compelling portrait of the hawk in “Hawk Roosting”?	<i>The poem begins with the hawk as the narrator, personifying it with the human quality of dreams, as it describes dreaming “about killing my prey perfectly and eating them”. Hughes gives the hawk the powers of conscious thought, but juxtaposes this with the lack of human qualities such as mercy and remorse. This leads to a contradiction that runs throughout the poem: the hawk’s natural instinct is the non-human one to kill, yet it can only express this nature through human language</i>



Examiner Tips and Tricks

It is more important to explore the **effects** of the writer’s choices than it is to use over-complicated terminology. You can be just as successful in writing about the effect of a specific word choice as you are in writing about complex language features.

Developing a personal response

A sensitive and personal response to a poem comes from reading the poem closely and knowing the poem thoroughly. You should think critically about meanings and interpretations, and use quotations and references to support your response.

When you consider your response to a poem, it is essential that you provide evidence to support your interpretation. This will make your response well-informed. Here is where you consider the language and structural devices that the poet has used.

You should therefore begin your analysis of the given poem with an exploration of the poet's meaning and ideas, rather than the methods they have used. This will automatically mean that you are developing a personal response to the poem, rather than just "spotting" the techniques a poet has used. It is also a good idea to consider how the poem's title helps you understand its content. Then, depending on the focus of the question, find the evidence that supports your understanding and interpretation of the poem.

Ideas and themes, not methods

- Examiners warn against structuring your analysis based on the poet's methods:
 - They do not reward well when students identify a poet's method first, and then analyse what it means
 - For example, spotting that a poem includes sibilance, or caesura, and then attempting to say something relevant about that method
 - Often, this won't work because students will fail to identify a convincing link between the method and the theme of the question
- Instead, examiners suggest students focus their responses on meaning and ideas, and use the poet's methods as a means of illustrating meaning:
 - So your argument should start with the poet's overarching ideas in terms of the question, and then find evidence from the poem that illustrates these ideas
 - For example, if the question is about how the poet conveys ideas about marriage, you would not start a point like this:
 - "The poet uses caesura in line 13. This caesura could show how..." Ξ
 - But instead, like this:
 - "The poet presents marriage as something challenging, which requires mutual respect. The poet shows this when..." Ξ

Tone

Another way to understand the meaning and ideas of a poem is to consider its tone.

- In poetry, tone is the "mood" of a poem:
 - This could be the mood that:
 - A speaker expresses in a poem
 - A poet has towards their speaker
 - The poet creates in terms of the setting of the poem
 - The poet creates in terms of the poem's subject matter
- The tone of a poem reflects its ideas and meaning:



- It is therefore something you should consider when thinking about **how** a poet expresses their ideas and meaning
- Because a poem's mood is created by the poet's language, pace and rhythm, symbolism and grammar, it works perfectly as **evidence** in your essay:
 - So think: what is the tone the poet is trying to convey in their poem?
 - And how – via their choices – do they create this effect?
- Another sophisticated way to explore ideas and meanings presented by a poet is to consider whether the tone of a poem changes:
 - Think: why has the poet created this **tonal shift**?
 - And how – via their poetic choices – do they create this shift?
 - This also enables you to say something relevant about structure
- So think first about why a poet has created a certain tone, and what its effect is, before thinking about what methods they have used to create it:
 - For example, you would not start a point like this:
 - “The poet uses imagery in line 1. This creates a tone of ...”☹
 - But instead:
 - “Macrae explores ideas about being contented within your own self through her use of metaphor, “while inside his heart was fat with sun”, which suggests Harry's life is one that is filled to the brim with joy and pleasure, which...”☹



Examiner Tips and Tricks

A lot of students feel they need to include analysis of language, structure and form in their essays, but this is not a requirement, and actually can make for a less successful response. Indeed, the exam board says: “Students often address structure at the end of a response, as though they feel they must mention it; all too often, it adds absolutely nothing to what they have already achieved.”

You do not get more marks for addressing language, structure and form separately. In fact, if your analysis is irrelevant to the question you have been set, you could lose marks. So only include analysis of a poet's methods if it is relevant to your argument, and the exam question.

Perspective and tense

Considering perspective is another sophisticated way to explore a poet's intention and messages.

- Perspective in poetry is the point of view from which the poem is being told:
 - It could be narrated in the first person (using the pronoun “I”)
 - It could be narrated in the third person (“he”; “she”; “they”, etc.)



- Poems often also contain a persona:
 - A persona, or speaker, is the invented character through which the poem is narrated
- Remember, the persona of a poem is not the same as the poet themselves, and this separation allows poets to explore ideas with more **nuance** and subtlety
- Poets often create a fictional narrator (a persona) when writing in the first person
 - Sometimes, writing in the first person can give a poem more immediacy
- Perspective is therefore a very deliberate choice made by the poet in order to better get across their ideas and message:
 - As such, it counts as a writer's method
 - Just like tone above, it is directly linked to a writer's intention, and so serves as excellent evidence for a poet's meaning and ideas
- Considering the tense of the poem also contributes to the speaker's perspective
- Different tenses will create a different tone and perspective, and the poet will have made a deliberate choice over which tense and why:
 - For example, is the speaker looking back (past tense), speaking about now (present tense) or looking forward (future tense)?

How to quote from the poem in your essay

- The ability to support your interpretation means selecting relevant quotations from the poem
- However, it is the skill of precisely unpicking and selecting textual references, rather than using quotations, that's important
- Therefore, references don't need to be direct quotations:
 - They can be references to things that happen in the poem
 - They can be references to the choices and methods the poet uses ("this idea is expressed when the poet uses first-person narration/a tonal shift/symbolism relating to X in order to...")
- Examiners repeatedly stress that textual references are just as valuable as direct quotations:
 - The most important thing is that these references are directly related to the ideas and themes you are exploring in your essay, and provide evidence to prove your thesis
- When using direct quotations, you should aim to select 6–7 relevant quotations that contain a range of language and/or structure devices that you can comment upon and analyse:
 - A high-level response will incorporate these quotations into the explanations of meaning
 - Your quotations should also be embedded into your sentences, rather than separate. For example:



- “The poet explores how power does not last by stating that “Nothing beside remains”, which tells us that there is nothing left of this once-powerful ruler except a broken statue standing in the middle of a vast desert” ≡
- Rather than:
 - “The poet explores how power does not last. This is shown in the quote “Nothing beside remains”. This shows...” ≡

Steps for success

Following these steps will give you a strategy for answering this poetry question effectively:

1. Grab your highlighter and **read the question first**:

- Read carefully and highlight the focus of the question

2. Read the poem with the focus of the question in mind:

- Highlight and annotate as you read
- Note down any comments about structure, form and language that will help you to answer the question
- Ask yourself: how does what I am noting down **show** the focus of the question?
 - Do not just write a list of techniques that the poet has used

3. Do a brief plan of 3–4 points, linking to the quotations you are going to use

4. Start your answer using the wording of the question:

- For example: “Atwood makes the reader feel as though human activities are pointless in *The City Planners* by contrasting the mechanical nature of urban planning with the chaos of the natural world”
- This demonstrates to the examiner that you have understood both the question and the poem

5. Go into detail:

- Now you need to make as many points as possible, ranging throughout the poem
- It is a good idea to make your points in chronological order, if possible
- Use the annotations you have made in the margins to form the basis of each point:
 - Make your point, then support it with quotations and/or direct references to the poem
 - Explain how the quote highlights the idea in the question
 - Analyse what the key words and phrases in the quote make the reader feel about the idea in the question
- Comment on and analyse language, form and structure
- Link your ideas to the theme and the focus of the question:
 - You should refer back to the keyword in the question throughout your answer



- Use “because” or “as” to support your ideas with detailed reasons
- Explore the poet’s intention and message

6. Sum up:

- Finish your answer with a “So overall...” statement
- Zoom back out to the big idea in the poem
- Your finishing statement should sum up what you have discovered, relevant to the focus of the question:
 - However, it should not just repeat the points you have already made

Top tips

- Avoid being too general or vague in your introduction:
 - Your introduction should address the Assessment Objectives in some way
- Avoid simply “re-telling” the story of the poem
- Make sure every paragraph answers the question:
 - Do not just write everything you know about the poem
- Respond to the whole of the poem
- Avoid unnecessary words
- Re-read each of the paragraphs you have written before you write the next:
 - Check that each paragraph is clear and that it answers the question
- Ensure your selection of quotations are directly relevant to the focus of the question
- Do not neglect to comment on the final stanza or end of the poem



Section A: Mark Scheme and Model Answer

The best way to improve any essay is to know how you are assessed, and what skills you are being assessed on. This page has been created to give you a sense of what examiners are looking for in a full-mark response. It contains:

- Overview
- Mark scheme
- Example task
- Model answer
- Unannotated model answer

Overview

Section A (Poetry) will require you to answer one question from a choice of two. Each of the questions will feature one of the poems you have studied in your poetry anthology. You will be asked to explore, or analyse, how a poet has achieved particular meanings or ideas. Your response must also be supported with direct quotations or close reference to the poem.

Mark scheme

The mark scheme for any question in Literature in English is quite broad and can seem difficult to understand. This is because there is no “correct answer” for any essay: the exam board does not provide points that need to be included in any essay; instead, examiners use the mark scheme to place an answer into a level.

The questions in Paper 1 are equally weighted, and each question tests all four Assessment Objectives.

In simple terms, to achieve the highest marks (Band 8 = 23–25 marks), this means:

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrate your knowledge by incorporating well-selected references to the text skillfully and with flair in your answers▪ This means using quotations and indirect references to the poem to support your views or arguments
AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sustain a critical understanding of the text by showing individuality and insight▪ This means showing that you understand the main ideas, settings, events and characters, and that you appreciate the deeper meanings of the poem



Your notes

AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Respond sensitively and in considerable detail to the way the writer achieves her/his effects▪ This means that you are able to explore how writers use language, structure and form to convey impressions and ideas
AO4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sustain a personal and evaluative engagement with the task and text▪ This means that you are able to give a personal response to the question and text, and support your response with references to the text



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Although there are four specific assessment objectives assessed in this task, it is not the case that a certain number of marks are awarded for any one objective. Instead, the examiners are looking for a well-constructed and coherent essay that seamlessly combines all of the skills covered by the Assessment Objectives.

Example task

The following task is written in the style of a question you might get on your exam paper. It is based on the poem “Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

“Ozymandias”

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert...Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered **visage** lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell us that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the **pedestal** these words appear:

“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.



How does Shelley powerfully convey to you thoughts about the passage of time in "Ozymandias"?

Model Answer

Below you will find a full-mark model answer for this task. The commentary labelled in each section of the essay illustrates how and why it would be awarded full marks. Despite the fact it is an answer to the above question on "Ozymandias", the commentary is relevant to any of the other poems, because it is modelling how to structure an answer incorporating the relevant Assessment Objectives.

This introduction demonstrates knowledge of the poem and an understanding of the focus of the question

In the poem "Ozymandias", Shelley powerfully conveys thoughts about the passage of time by emphasising the concept of time ruling over all materialistic things, whether a person, political regime or a whole civilisation. The poet tells us about meeting a "traveller" from an "antique" land, immediately establishing a sense of history. The traveller tells the narrator of an old, broken statue in the middle of the desert, depicting a once great but now forgotten leader, called Ozymandias. The meaning of the poem is that human power is temporary and time will always outlast and overpower it.

It seamlessly incorporates direct quotations to support the overarching summary

It also demonstrates understanding of the main ideas in the poem

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Shelley comments on the passage of time by using the traditional form of a sonnet for the poem, but subverts it by blending Petrarchan and Shakespearean forms. The poet uses an octave and a sestet: in the octave, the reader learns about how powerful Ozymandias was, and in the sestet the reader learns that Ozymandias's power has gone. By structuring the poem in this way, Shelley highlights that time has passed and power has faded. In addition, Shelley creates an uneven pattern in the rhythm of the poem through the use of enjambment, "Round the decay//Of that colossal wreck,..." implying that time marches on despite humanity's attempts to outlive it.

Here, comments about the poem's form and structure are linked to the focus of the question, and explore how the poet's choices contribute to this theme

This part of the response also focuses on a particular example of how the poet has manipulated structure to convey the message of time passing

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The fragmented statue outwardly displays the decay of time, but also tells a story of time gone by. The first person perspective that the poem begins with quickly passes to the "traveller" who then goes on to tell his story. The fact that he is from an "antique land" suggests that the statue featured in the story sits in a land which is ancient. By describing the "visage" as "shattered", the narrator implies irony in that all that is left of this great and powerful ruler are his statue's broken face and legs. This is ironic because Ozymandias's power and pride were based on his image of being a supreme ruler, and yet now all that remains are broken pieces of stone. Irony is also present because this king tried to immortalise his power through his statue, and yet time has destroyed it and, with it, the memories of the king.

The response zooms in on aspects of language the poet has used, again staying relevant to the focus of the question

The response also considers the tone created in the poem, and how this links to the key ideas

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Furthermore, the inscription on the statue, which invites people to "look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!", continues the ironic tone as the statue is crumbling, so demonstrating that power deteriorates and even great empires which seem to be eternal can fade to nothingness. The idea that nothing lasts forever is reiterated in the line "Nothing beside remains", suggesting that nothing is immune to time.

The response adds to the previous argument and supports it with further direct quotations. This shows the response is considering the effects the writer has created in considerable detail

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Moreover, the image of the passage of time is continued by Shelley in the reference to the fact that “lone and level sands stretch far away”. Shelley uses sand as a metaphor for the passage of time, just like the sand in a timer marks time passing. The alliterative “lone and level” suggests the consistent and never-ending nature of time, and the fact that the desert has taken over the statue implies that time and nature can erase the power of man: the “boundless” desert has easily outlived the now-forgotten Ozymandias. This is a key theme of poetry from the Romantic era, communicating how natural forces, such as time, are far superior to man-made forces.

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References to language techniques are accurate and relevant to the points being made and the focus of the question

The ultimate message in the poem is that time and nature are far more powerful than man made illusions of power, and Shelley conveys the passage of time through the perspective of a re-telling of a story of an ancient and now largely forgotten leader, whose futile attempt to immortalise himself in stone is now a subject of irony and folktales. This invites the reader to contemplate how nothing lasts forever, and that time always marches on.

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The conclusion does not just repeat what has already been said, but offers evaluative engagement with the poet and the focus of the question

Unannotated model answer

In the poem “Ozymandias”, Shelley powerfully conveys thoughts about the passage of time by emphasising the concept of time ruling over all materialistic things, whether a person, political regime or a whole civilisation. The poet tells us about meeting a “traveller” from an “antique” land, immediately establishing a sense of history. The traveller tells the narrator of an old, broken statue in the middle of the desert, depicting a once-great but now forgotten leader, called Ozymandias. The meaning of the poem is that human power is temporary and time will always outlast and overpower it.

Shelley comments on the passage of time by using the traditional form of a sonnet for the poem, but subverts it by blending Petrarchan and Shakespearean forms. The poet uses an octave and a sestet: in the octave, the reader learns about how powerful Ozymandias was, and in the sestet the reader learns that Ozymandias’s power has gone. By structuring the poem in this way, Shelley highlights that time has passed and power has faded. In addition, Shelley creates an uneven pattern in the rhythm of the poem through the use of enjambment, “Round the decay/Of that colossal wreck,...” implying that time marches on despite humanity’s attempts to outlive it.

The fragmented statue outwardly displays the decay of time, but also tells a story of time gone by. The first person perspective that the poem begins with quickly passes to the “traveller” who then goes on to tell his story. The fact that he is from an “antique land” suggests that the statue featured in the story sits in a land that is ancient. By describing



Your notes

the "visage" as "shattered", the narrator implies irony in that all that is left of this great and powerful ruler are his statue's broken face and legs. This is ironic because Ozymandias's power and pride were based on his image of being a supreme ruler, and yet now all that remains are broken pieces of stone. Irony is also present because this king tried to immortalise his power through his statue, and yet time has destroyed it and, with it, the memories of the king.

Furthermore, the inscription on the statue, which invites people to "look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!", continues the ironic tone as the statue is crumbling, so demonstrating that power deteriorates and even great empires that seem to be eternal can fade to nothingness. The idea that nothing lasts forever is reiterated in the line "Nothing beside remains", suggesting that nothing is immune to time.

Moreover, the image of the passage of time is continued by Shelley in the reference to the fact that "lone and level sands stretch far away". Shelley uses sand as a metaphor for the passage of time, just like the sand in a timer marks time passing. The alliterative "lone and level" suggests the consistent and never-ending nature of time, and the fact that the desert has taken over the statue implies that time and nature can erase the power of man: the "boundless" desert has easily outlived the now-forgotten Ozymandias. This is a key theme of poetry from the Romantic era, communicating how natural forces, such as time, are far superior to man-made forces.

The ultimate message in the poem is that time and nature are far more powerful than man-made illusions of power, and Shelley conveys the passage of time through the perspective of a re-telling of a story of an ancient and now largely forgotten leader, whose futile attempt to immortalise himself in stone is now a subject of irony and folktales. This invites the reader to contemplate how nothing lasts forever, and that time always marches on.

Section B: What The Question Is Asking



Your notes

Section B: What The Question Is Asking

Section B of Paper 1: Poetry and Prose is the **prose** section. You must ensure you select the correct page and question numbers in the exam paper that relate to the prose text you have studied. The guide below will enable you to approach the Section A **prose question** with confidence. It is divided into:

- Overview
- Breaking down the question
- Top tips

Overview

You should answer one question in Section B from a choice of two. The first option will give you a passage from the text and ask you to consider how the writer achieves a certain effect within this passage. The second option will not have a passage attached, but is an “essay”-style question. This Section is worth 25 marks and assesses all four Assessment Objectives. You have 45 minutes to answer this question.

In your response you are expected to:

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the text through reference to detail and the use of accurate, relevant quotations
- Show that you understand the main ideas and explicit meanings in the text, as well as the implied or hidden meanings
- Analyse, in detail, the choices the writer has made in terms of their use of language, structure and form to **convey** impressions and ideas
- Shape your writing in such a way as to communicate your engagement with the text
- Demonstrate your understanding of the text, and the question
- Be sensitive to imagery and language to develop an informed personal response to the text

The suggested timings for the Section B prose question are:

10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Decide on the question you are going to answer▪ Highlight the key words in the question you choose▪ If you decide to answer the passage-based question, annotate the key words and phrases in the passage you might want to explore in your answer▪ If you decide to answer the essay question, write a brief plan, using bullet points or a mind map
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Your notes

30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow your plan or annotations Write your response
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-read and check your response

It is important to read and check your work, rather than to try to write as much as you can in the time allowed. Answers that are shorter, but more focused and **concise**, are often more successful.

Breaking down the question

For this question, you will always be asked to write a response that explores how a writer conveys their meanings and message in the text, focusing on a specific aspect or theme. The most common mistake students make in exams is not thoroughly understanding the question. By paying close attention to the question and understanding it thoroughly, you can enhance your exam performance significantly.

Below are a range of examples of Section B Prose questions taken from past CIE IGCSE papers:

How does Bronte make **this moment in the novel so moving**? (passage-based question)

How does Bronte **vividly** convey **Jane's changing feelings towards Mr Rochester**? (essay question)

Explore how Desai **strikingly** portrays **the relationship between Murad and Deven**. (essay question)

The focus of each question is indicated in bold

"**Joe Starks (Jody) wants to be in control**." How far does Hurston's writing **suggest that he succeeds**? (essay question)

What **vivid impressions** of **Morris Townsend** does **James** create at this moment in the novel? (passage-based question)

To what extent does James make **Dr Sloper a frightening character**?

Explore **two** moments in the novel where **Paton's writing makes you feel particularly angry about the treatment of black people**.

Does Hill's writing make it possible for you to **feel any sympathy for Hooper**?

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Top tips

- Highlight the key words in the question:
 - The most successful answers maintain a clear focus on the key words in the question
 - Therefore, pay particular attention to what the question is asking you to do
- If you choose to answer the essay question, it is important that you do not just use the extract printed for the previous question as evidence in your response:



- This will limit your marks as there will be insufficient material to draw upon
- Some of these types of questions also make it clear that you must not use the printed passage as evidence in your answer
- Quotations are intended to support your points, but should not be a point in themselves:
 - The strongest answers show a detailed knowledge of the text, by integrating precise and concise quotations and indirect textual references to support points
 - You need to be able to analyse and explain the relevance of the quotations you have chosen to your argument or to the question you are answering
- If answering the passage-based question, you should structure your response and your use of quotations in chronological order, and ensure that you respond to every section of the extract:
 - You should aim to select 6–7 relevant quotations that contain a range of language and/or structure devices that you can comment upon and analyse
 - A high-level response will incorporate these quotations into the explanations of meaning
- If answering the essay question, you should show that you have extensive knowledge of the text as a whole, and include both direct quotations and indirect references to the text (as relevant to the focus of the question)
- Do not just state your ideas:
 - The most convincing responses sustain a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects
 - Therefore, it is important that your explanation and analysis is supported with reasons
 - Use words such as “because”, “as” or “since” to offer reasons as to how the writer’s choices of language and structure achieve the particular effects that you mention
 - Make sure you link all of your ideas and reasons to the question
- Embed your quotations into your sentences:
 - Avoid unnecessary phrases such as “This is shown by the quote...” as this is just a waste of words
 - Instead, try: “The writer creates sympathy for the character by describing her as ‘small and weak’.”
- Ensure your introduction demonstrates that you have understood the task and that you have a thorough knowledge of the text:
 - You can do this by defining the focus of the question
- Do not waste words on general topic sentences that do not make a specific point:
 - For example: “The writer uses adjectives to create sympathy for the character.”
 - This does not make any specific point that the examiner could reward with a mark



- Avoid being narrative:
 - You do not get any marks for just re-telling the story
- Make sure every paragraph answers the question:
 - Do not just write down everything you know about the novel without any focus on the question
 - Make every sentence count!
- Ensure you include analysis of the use of structure and the form of the text:
 - This is especially important when considering, for example, a writer's use of dialogue
- In addition, avoid "feature-spotting":
 - Listing techniques a writer has used without analysis will not get you marks
- Your conclusion should be relevant and should summarise your personal response to the text and the task:
 - The strongest answers provide evidence of an informed and sensitive personal response to the text, which focuses directly on the key words of questions
 - It should not just repeat points you have already made
- Avoid lengthy discussion of the historical context of the writer and/or the time in which the text was written:
 - Context is not explicitly assessed in this IGCSE
 - Instead, your wider background knowledge should be used to inform your personal response to the text



Section B: How To Get Full Marks

The starting point for the analysis of any text is active reading. This means, as you read, annotating the text with your own comments and questions. Stories and novels will often contain many layers of meaning, so it is important that you explore beyond any surface meanings to uncover the deeper ideas and themes. Some appreciation of the context in which a piece of prose was written can also help your understanding, but this should never be the main focus of your exploration.

It is tempting to jump straight in and start writing immediately. However, following this guide will ensure you answer the question in the way the examiners are looking for.

Below you will find sections on:

- What skills are required
- Steps for success
- Top tips

What skills are required

Each question on this exam paper assesses all four Assessment Objectives equally. This means it is important that you know what skills these Assessment Objectives require you to demonstrate in order to get the most marks.

- **AO1** is about demonstrating detailed knowledge of the text:
 - This can be through reference to specific quotations and indirect references to the text
 - Whatever references you make, they need to be well-selected and well-integrated into your response
- **AO2** is about going beyond the text's surface meaning and plot to look for underlying ideas and attitudes – the writer's and our own:
 - This requires you to ask "why" the author has made the choices they have
 - Some elements of the writer's context can be used to inform your personal response, but only if relevant to the focus of the question
- **AO3** requires **critical engagement** and evaluation of how the text works:
 - "Meanings and effects" suggests that there is more than one meaning for a text, and the language, structure and form of the text contribute to those meanings
 - It does not mean just listing the literary techniques the writer has used
 - In prose, this also means considering how the writer has presented settings, characters and events



- **AO4** refers to the way you shape your writing in order to communicate your engagement with the text:
 - These responses directly address the words in the question, which are designed to elicit personal responses, such as “powerful”, “vivid”, “striking”, “memorable” and “moving”
 - Contextual information should help reinforce your own interpretation, but not replace it
 - Your own response is valid as long as it is supported by evidence

The following sections explore the skills you will need to demonstrate in more detail:

- Analysing prose
- Developing a personal response

Analysing prose

Your study of prose in this IGCSE will be based on short stories, extracts from longer prose works or novels. You will either choose a passage-based question, and base your response on the passage given on the exam paper, or an essay question, which will ask you about an aspect of the whole text.

Analysing a piece of prose involves not just looking at the language the writer has used. You might also wish to consider:

Form	Explanation
Plot structure	<p>A plot could be cyclical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This means there could be a recurrent theme or motif▪ Or it could mean that the plot “circles back” to the beginning <p>The writer might also use parallelism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This means the use of matching sentences, phrases or longer marks to balance ideas of equal importance
Mood	<p>Mood describes the feelings or attitudes of roles and/or characters</p> <p>It is the emotional impact intended by the writer</p>
Juxtaposition	<p>To place two things side by side to compare or contrast for effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This might include the use of foil characters▪ A foil is a character who contrasts with another character▪ For example, Harry Potter and Voldemort are foils
Foreshadowing	<p>This is a warning or a prediction of a future event in the story</p>



	The writer might also employ dramatic irony, where the reader might be aware of what is coming, but the characters are not
In medias res	This is when the story starts in the middle of the action
Flashbacks	A scene set in a time earlier than the main story: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This device can be used to convey extra information about plot or character
Soliloquies/dialogue	A soliloquy is a speech which a character makes to themselves: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ It is a device in which a character's inner thoughts can be made known to the reader▪ Dialogue is a conversation between two or more characters in a novel or play

What to do when analysing the author's methods

- Take a whole-text approach:
 - In the essay question, this could involve commenting on structure: "at the start"/"this changes when"/"in contrast..."
 - In the passage-based question, consider how the passage given on the exam paper relates to the rest of the text: where does it appear in the text? What is significant about its position in the text?
- Always frame your essay with the author in mind:
 - As the examiners say: "writers use methods, including language and structure, to form and express their ideas – the choices the writer makes are conscious and deliberate"
 - Therefore, write that the author "highlights X", "suggests Y", "challenges Z"
 - Use the words "so" and "because" to push you to explain your own ideas further
- Zoom out to big ideas in your analysis:
 - Go from analysing language, or other writer's choices, to the author's overall intention or message
 - This should always link to the focus of the question

What not to do when analysing the author's methods

- Do not just "spot techniques":
 - Examiners dislike it when students use overly sophisticated terminology unnecessarily and without analysis
 - Knowing the names of sophisticated techniques will not gain you any more marks, especially if these techniques are only "spotted" and the author's intentions for this



- language are not explained
- Instead of technique spotting, focus your analysis on the **reasons** why the author is presenting the character or theme the way they are
- Do not just limit your analysis to a close reading of the author’s use of language:
 - You gain marks for explaining all of the author’s choices, not just their language
 - Instead, take a whole-text approach and think about the author’s decisions about:
 - Form
 - Structure
 - Characterisation
 - Setting
- Never retell the story:
 - “Narrative” and “descriptive” answers get the lowest marks
 - Move from **what** the author is presenting to **how** and **why** they have made the choices they have

Perspective

The narrative perspective of a piece of prose is the point of view from which the story is told. It is like a lens through which we view characters and events; we interpret those characters and events based on what the speaker shows and tells us.

There are two main types of narrative perspective:

First-person narrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This means the story is told from the perspective of a character, most likely the protagonist ▪ It is easily identifiable by the use of the word “I” ▪ In a first-person narrative, the reader only has access to the experiences and thoughts of the narrator, and we see and experience events through their eyes ▪ This can lead to the reader feeling sympathy for the character, or exposing the character as an unreliable narrator ▪ Sometimes, the reader may know something the narrator does not seem to – this is called dramatic irony
Third-person narrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This means the story is told from a perspective that sits outside of the world of the story ▪ The narrator refers to all of the characters by their names or pronouns ▪ A third-person narrator is sometimes referred to as an omniscient narrator, which means that the narrator knows everything about the characters and events

When considering the narrative perspective, ask yourself if the perspective shifts, or how the perspective affects your understanding of the story.

Characterisation

It is important to remember that characters are constructs, not real people. You should therefore consider what each character's function is in the novel, how they are presented, how they develop and how they interact with each other. Some characters may also be "foil" characters – this means any two characters who are opposites of each other. For example, Harry Potter and Voldemort are foils of each other – they embody the idea of good versus evil. Foil characters therefore help establish important themes.

There are two main types of characterisation:

Direct characterisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This means what we are told by the author about a character's appearance and personality▪ It might also involve the writer explicitly showing what characters think of one another:▪ For example, a character might directly describe another character's traits
Indirect characterisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This involves implying what a character is like▪ This could involve what a character says, how they say it or how they interact with other characters▪ It might also involve their inner thoughts and feelings, and more subtle indications of character, such as how they move and behave

Often, characters are symbolic of broader ideas or attitudes. It is therefore important to consider how a character changes as a result of the events in a novel.

Structure

When considering structure, you should think about:

- The way the writer has put the different parts of the story together
- How they set up the world of the story
- How they introduce characters
- What conflicts there are and how they are resolved
- The role of individual chapters or paragraphs in the story arc
- How things change by the end of the story

Developing a personal response

A personal response is your opinion about the text, as relevant to the focus of the question. You are being asked to consider what the writer has tried to do and whether you think they have succeeded. However, it is important that your arguments are convincing, which means

that they need to be supported with evidence. Your choice of evidence, whether that be direct quotation of language, or references to the form and structure of a text, must be careful, accurate and effectively explained.

How to structure your response:

<p>Start with an introduction that demonstrates that you understand the focus of the question and the novel</p>	<p>You can do this by using the wording of the question to develop a thesis statement</p> <p>For example: "Orwell strikingly portrays the absolute power of the Party by presenting us with a society in which everything, even a person's thoughts, is monitored and controlled."</p>
<p>Then, structure your response into paragraphs</p>	<p>Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence</p> <p>You should integrate direct quotation or specific reference to the text to prove your point</p> <p>Then comment on how this evidence proves your point</p> <p>Each point you make must be directly relevant to the focus of the question</p>
<p>If you have chosen the passage-based question</p>	<p>Start with a close analysis of the passage, linking to the focus of the question</p> <p>Then, incorporate commentary on how the extract relates to the text as a whole</p>
<p>If you have chosen the essay question</p>	<p>Start with a whole-text approach, discussing the structure and perspectives of the novel as a whole, relevant to the focus of the question</p> <p>Then, zoom in on particular, specific parts of the novel that are directly relevant to the focus of the question</p>
<p>Finish with a conclusion</p>	<p>Summarise your findings and your response to these findings</p> <p>Do not just repeat the points you have already made</p> <p>For example: "So overall, Orwell's dystopian novel powerfully presents the absolute power of the Party by presenting us with a suffocating, bleak vision of the future as a warning against one person or organisation being able to hold complete authority over a society."</p>

Steps for success

Following these steps will give you a strategy for answering this prose question effectively:



1. Grab your highlighter and **read the question first**:

- Read carefully and highlight the focus of the question

2. If doing the passage-based question, read the passage with the focus of the question in mind:

- Highlight and annotate as you read
- Note down any comments about structure, form and language that will help you to answer the question
- Ask yourself: how does what I am noting down **show** the focus of the question?
 - Do not just write a list of techniques the writer has used

3. Do a brief plan of 4–5 points, linking to the quotations you are going to use

4. Start your answer using the wording of the question:

- This demonstrates to the examiner that you have understood both the question and the text

5. Go into detail:

- Now you need to make as many points as possible, ranging throughout the passage or text
- It is a good idea to make your points in chronological order, if possible
- Use the annotations you have made in the margins to form the basis of each point:
 - Make your point, then support it with quotations and/or direct references to the text
 - Explain how the quote highlights the idea in the question
 - Analyse what the key words and phrases in the quote make the reader feel about the idea in the question
- Comment on and analyse language, form and structure
- Link your ideas to the theme and the focus of the question:
 - You should refer back to the keyword in the question throughout your answer
 - Use “because” or “as” to support your ideas with detailed reasons
- Explore the writer’s intention and message

6. Sum up:

- Finish your answer with a “So overall...” statement
- Zoom back out to the big ideas in the text
- Your finishing statement should sum up what you have discovered, relevant to the focus of the question:
 - However, it should not just repeat the points you have already made

Top tips



Your notes

- Avoid being too general or vague in your introduction:
 - Your introduction should address the Assessment Objectives in some way
- Avoid simply “re-telling” the story
- Make sure every paragraph answers the question:
 - Do not just write everything you know about the text
- Avoid unnecessary words
- Re-read each of the paragraphs you have written before you write the next:
 - Check that each paragraph is clear and that it answers the question
- Ensure your selection of quotations is directly relevant to the focus of the question



Section B: Mark Scheme and Model Answer

The best way to improve any essay is to know how you are assessed, and what skills you are being assessed on. This page has been created to give you a sense of what examiners are looking for in a full-mark response. It contains:

- Overview
- Mark scheme
- Example task
- Model answer
- Unannotated model answer

Overview

Section B (Prose) will require you to answer one question from a choice of two. One of the questions will be based on a printed extract from a text, and the other will be an essay-style question. You will be asked to explore, or analyse, how a writer has achieved particular meanings or ideas. Your response must also be supported with direct quotations or close reference to the text.

Mark scheme

The mark scheme for any question in Literature in English is quite broad and can seem difficult to understand. This is because there is no “correct answer” for any essay: the exam board does not provide points that need to be included in any essay; instead, examiners use the mark scheme to place an answer into a level.

The questions in Paper 1 are equally weighted, and each question tests all four Assessment Objectives.

In simple terms, to achieve the highest marks (Band 8 = 23–25 marks), this means:

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrate your knowledge by incorporating well-selected reference to the text skillfully and with flair in your answers▪ This means using quotations and indirect references to the text to support your views or arguments
AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sustain a critical understanding of the text by showing individuality and insight▪ This means showing that you understand the main ideas, settings, events and characters, and that you appreciate the deeper meanings of the text
AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Respond sensitively and in considerable detail to the way the writer achieves her/his effects



Your notes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This means that you are able to explore how writers use language, structure and form to convey impressions and ideas
AO4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustain a personal and evaluative engagement with the task and text ▪ This means that you are able to give a personal response to the question and text, and support your response with references to the text



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Although there are four specific Assessment Objectives assessed in this task, it is not the case that a certain number of marks are awarded for any one objective. Instead, the examiners are looking for a well-constructed and coherent essay that seamlessly combines all of the skills covered by the Assessment Objectives.

Example task

The following task is taken from the 2021 Paper 1 exam paper:

GEORGE ORWELL: 1984

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 17 Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Presently they fell asleep for a little while. When Winston woke up the hands of the clock had crept round to nearly nine. He did not stir, because Julia was sleeping with her head in the crook of his arm. Most of her make-up had transferred itself to his own face or the bolster, but a light stain of rouge still brought out the beauty of her cheekbone. A yellow ray from the sinking sun fell across the foot of the bed and lighted up the fireplace, where the water in the pan was boiling fast. Down in the yard the woman had stopped singing, but the faint shouts of children floated in from the street. He wondered vaguely whether in the abolished past it had been a normal experience to lie in bed like this, in the cool of a summer evening, a man and a woman with no clothes on, making love when they chose, talking of what they chose, not feeling any compulsion to get up, simply lying there and listening to peaceful sounds outside. Surely there could never have been a time when that seemed ordinary? Julia woke up, rubbed her eyes and raised herself on her elbow to look at the oilstove. 5

'Half that water's boiled away,' she said. 'I'll get up and make some coffee in another moment. We've got an hour. What time do they cut the lights off at your flats?' 10

'Twenty-three thirty.'

'It's twenty-three at the hostel. But you have to get in earlier than that, because – Hi! Get out, you filthy brute!' 15

She suddenly twisted herself over in the bed, seized a shoe from the floor and sent it hurtling into the corner with a boyish jerk of her arm, exactly as he had seen her fling the dictionary at Goldstein, that morning during the Two Minutes Hate. 20

25



'What was it?' he said in surprise.
 'A rat. I saw him stick his beastly nose out of the wainscoting. There's a hole down there. I gave him a good fright, anyway.'
 'Rats!' murmured Winston. 'In this room!'
 'They're all over the place,' said Julia indifferently as she lay down again. 'We've even got them in the kitchen at the hostel. Some parts of London are swarming with them. Did you know they attack children? Yes, they do. In some of these streets a woman daren't leave a baby alone for two minutes. It's the great huge brown ones that do it. And the nasty thing is that the brutes always –'
 'Don't go on!' said Winston, with his eyes tightly shut.
 'Dearest! You've gone quite pale. What's the matter? Do they make you feel sick?'
 'Of all horrors in the world – a rat!'
 She pressed herself against him and wound her limbs round him, as though to reassure him with the warmth of her body. He did not re-open his eyes immediately. For several moments he had had the feeling of being back in a nightmare which had recurred from time to time throughout his life. It was always very much the same. He was standing in front of a wall of darkness, and on the other side of it there was something unendurable, something too dreadful to be faced. In the dream his deepest feeling was always one of self-deception, because he did in fact know what was behind the wall of darkness. With a deadly effort, like wrenching a piece out of his

own brain, he could even have dragged the thing into the open. He always woke up without discovering what it was: but somehow it was connected with what Julia had been saying when he cut her short.
 'I'm sorry,' he said; 'it's nothing. I don't like rats, that's all.'
 'Don't worry, dear, we're not going to have the filthy brutes in here. I'll stuff the hole with a bit of sacking before we go. And next time we come here I'll bring some plaster and bung it up properly.'

(from Part 2)

How does Orwell make this moment in the novel so memorable and significant?

Model Answer

Below you will find a full-mark model answer for this task. The commentary labelled in each section of the essay illustrates how and why it would be awarded full marks. Despite the fact it is an answer to the above question on George Orwell's 1984, the commentary is relevant to any prose response, because it is modelling how to structure an answer incorporating the relevant Assessment Objectives.

The introduction addresses the focus of the question and demonstrates knowledge of the novel as a whole

Orwell makes this moment in the novel so memorable and significant because it draws upon several key themes, such as the relationship between Winston and Julia, the significance of dreams, and the passage of time. It also foreshadows Winston's eventual torture at the hands of O'Brien in Room 101 in *The Ministry of Love*.

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The passage is memorable because Winston and Julia experience a temporary moment of happiness and peace. Winston does not “stir” because he does not want to disturb the moment. The writer describes a “yellow ray” from the “sinking sun” creating a dream-like quality to the moment, which is juxtaposed with the water in the pan “boiling fast”, reflecting the swift passage of time. This reminds the reader that Winston and Julia’s peace cannot last, as Winston knows that his betrayals of Big Brother will be discovered in the end.

The response goes on to specifically address the “memorable” part of the question first

The response closely analyses Orwell’s word choices and the effects these choices create

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Furthermore, the differences in Winston and Julia’s characters are highlighted in that Winston is reflecting on the moment and wondering about how things might have been in a time before Oceania, with people doing normal things and going about their normal lives, “simply lying there and listening to peaceful sounds outside”. Julia, however, stays asleep, unconcerned that some of the make-up she had applied in a parody of normality had rubbed off. This is memorable because it reminds the reader that Winston is the epitome of “thoughtcrime”, whereas Julia appears just to live in the moment and not concern herself with the consequences.

The response goes on to explore aspects of characterisation that link to both the passage and the wider novel

The repeated use of the key word in the question ensures the response maintains focus

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Winston goes on to reveal that he knows what is behind the wall, but that he practises “self-deception”, pretending that he doesn’t. This mirrors the self-deception he is currently practising in pretending that his affair and rebellion against Big Brother will not be discovered and punished, even though he knows, deep down, that it will. Later on in Part 2, just before he and Julia are arrested, Winston declares that “We are the dead”, revealing that he knows that his time is running out.

This part of the response includes a quote from elsewhere in the novel, again demonstrating thorough knowledge and engagement with the text

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This part of the response moves on to deal with the second key word in the question, including a personal response

The passage is significant because Julia sees a rat “stick his beastly nose out of the wainscoting”. This reveals to the reader that Winston is terrified of rats more than anything else, as he states “Of all the horrors in the world - a rat!” This foreshadows Winston’s breaking point later in the novel, as O’Brien uses a cage of rats to break Winston’s spirit in Room 101, a place where prisoners are sent to confront their deepest fear. The presence of the rat is a further indication that their safe refuge might not be so safe after all. Julia, always practical, offers to “fix” the problem by “stuffing the hole with a bit of sacking before we go”, but Winston knows there is ultimately no fixing the situation.

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The response uses “because” and “as” throughout to explain reasons

This paragraph goes into more detail regarding the significance of Orwell’s choices of language and imagery, commenting on why those choices may have been made

In addition, Julia’s reaction to the rat, flinging a shoe at it, is compared to her flinging the dictionary at “Goldstein, that morning during the Two Minutes Hate”. She goes on to start to describe how prole women “daren’t leave a baby alone for two minutes”, implying the significance of that amount of time in which horrible things can happen. Orwell links the rat to something that can inflict pain and terror, just like Big Brother. The fact that Winston’s deepest fear is rats is also significant, as rats are associated with people who betray other people, which is exactly what happens to Winston and Julia, as they are betrayed by Mr Charrington, the owner of the shop.

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Overall, this passage offers a significant revelation to the reader, and a taste of Winston’s eventual fate, as well as being memorable for it being reflective of the themes of time and dreams versus reality.

The conclusion summarises the findings and links back to the original question

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Unannotated model answer



Orwell makes this moment in the novel so memorable and significant because it draws upon several key themes, such as the relationship between Winston and Julia, the significance of dreams, and the passage of time. It also foreshadows Winston's eventual torture at the hands of O'Brien in Room 101 in *The Ministry of Love*.

The passage is memorable because Winston and Julia experience a temporary moment of happiness and peace. Winston does not "stir" because he does not want to disturb the moment. The writer describes a "yellow ray" from the "sinking sun" creating a dream-like quality to the moment, which is juxtaposed with the water in the pan "boiling fast", reflecting the swift passage of time. This reminds the reader that Winston and Julia's peace cannot last, as Winston knows that his betrayals of Big Brother will be discovered in the end.

Furthermore, the differences in Winston and Julia's characters are highlighted in that Winston is reflecting on the moment and wondering about how things might have been in a time before Oceania, with people doing normal things and going about their normal lives, "simply lying there and listening to peaceful sounds outside". Julia, however, stays asleep, unconcerned that some of the make-up she had applied in a **parody** of normality had rubbed off. This is memorable because it reminds the reader that Winston is the epitome of "thoughtcrime", whereas Julia appears just to live in the moment and not concern herself with the consequences.

The passage is also memorable because it starts by describing the scene almost like a dream, with the sounds from outside floating in "the cool of a summer evening". This contrasts with Winston's description of his recurring nightmare, in which he is standing "in front of a wall of darkness" knowing that on the other side there was "something unendurable". What is behind the wall is both symbolic and real, as behind the metaphoric wall is Winston's fate, and behind the real wall in the room is the hidden telescreen.

Winston goes on to reveal that he knows what is behind the wall, but that he practises "self-deception", pretending that he doesn't. This mirrors the self-deception he is currently practising in pretending that his affair and rebellion against Big Brother will not be discovered and punished, even though he knows, deep down, that it will. Later on in Part 2, just before he and Julia are arrested, Winston declares that "We are the dead", revealing that he knows that his time is running out.

The passage is significant because Julia sees a rat "stick his beastly nose out of the wainscoting". This reveals to the reader that Winston is terrified of rats more than anything else, as he states "Of all the horrors in the world - a rat!" This foreshadows Winston's breaking point later in the novel, as O'Brien uses a cage of rats to break Winston's spirit in Room 101, a place where prisoners are sent to confront their deepest fear. The presence of the rat is a further indication that their safe refuge might not be so safe after all. Julia, always practical, offers to "fix" the problem by "stuffing the hole with a bit of sacking before we go", but Winston knows there is ultimately no fixing the situation.

In addition, Julia's reaction to the rat, flinging a shoe at it, is compared to her flinging the dictionary at "Goldstein, that morning during the Two Minutes Hate". She goes on to start to describe how prole women "daren't leave a baby alone for two minutes", implying the significance of that amount of time in which horrible things can happen. Orwell links the rat to something that can inflict pain and terror, just like Big Brother. The fact that Winston's deepest fear is rats is also significant, as rats are associated with people who betray other

people, which is exactly what happens to Winston and Julia, as they are betrayed by Mr Charrington, the owner of the shop.

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Your notes