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Learner Guide

Cambridge IGCSE[®]
Literature (English)
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How to use this guide

The guide describes what you need to know about your Cambridge IGCSE Literature (English) examination. It will help you to plan your revision programme and it will explain what the examiners are looking for in the answers you write.

Your teachers will have decided which of the various papers you are sitting and also which set texts you are studying. This Learner Guide will help you to see how all the texts you are studying and how all the questions you have practised fit into the overall course. The guide will make clear the important areas you should consider when revising.

The guide contains the following sections:

Section 1: How will you be tested?

This section will give you information about the different examination papers that are available. Your teacher(s) will have already made the decision about which examination papers you are going to take, and about whether or not you will be taking the coursework component. Before making use of this guide, you should make sure that you are absolutely clear about which papers you will be sitting at the end of the course.

Section 2: Examination advice

This section gives you advice to help you do as well as you can. Some of the ideas are general advice and some are based on the common mistakes that learners make in exams.

Section 3: What will be tested?

This section describes the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that the examination papers will test you on. There will be useful information, too, for those of you taking the coursework component.

Section 4: What you need to know

This section is broken up into three important areas:

- the skills you should be able to show in your answers
- how you should revise for the examination
- some of the important words in questions.

Section 5: Revision

Having read the earlier sections, you should now have the confidence to revise in an effective manner.

Section 1: How will you be tested?

About the examinations

Your teacher(s) will have decided already which **one** of the following three options you are following, and you need to be clear about which option you are taking before you go on to Section 2 of this guide.

Option A

For this option you will take two examination papers. You may **not** take your texts into the exam with you for these two papers.

Paper	Title	What is the % of the total marks?
Component 1	Poetry and Prose	50%
Component 2	Drama	50%

Option B

If you are being prepared for the open text drama and unseen papers you will take three examination papers. This is what your option looks like:

Paper	Title	What is the % of the total marks?
Component 1	Poetry and Prose	50%
Component 3	Drama (Open Text)	25%
Component 4	Unseen	25%

Option C

For this option you will take two examination papers and one coursework component.

Paper	Title	What is the % of the total marks?
Component 1	Poetry and Prose	50%
Component 3	Drama (Open Text)	25%
Component 5	Coursework	25%

About the papers

The table below provides key information about each paper. You will need to read only about the papers you are actually taking.

Paper number	How long is this paper?	What will you have to do in each paper?	What is the % of the total marks?
Component 1: Poetry and Prose	1 hour 30 minutes	You must answer two questions on two texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one on a poetry text • one on a prose text. There is a choice of two questions (one passage-based and one essay) on each text.	50%
Component 2: Drama	1 hour 30 minutes	You must answer two questions on two texts. There is a choice of two questions (one passage-based and one essay) on each text.	50%
Component 3: Drama (Open Text)	45 minutes	You must answer one question on one text. There is a choice of two questions (one passage-based and one essay) on each text.	25%
Component 4: Unseen	1 hour 15 minutes	You must answer one question. There is a choice of two questions requiring critical commentary (one based on literary prose and one based on a poem or extract of a poem).	25%
Component 5: Coursework		Candidates submit a portfolio of two assignments each on a different text.	25%

You will find more detail about each of these papers in Section 3.

Section 2: Examination advice

General advice

This is relevant for all of the examination papers and also for the coursework option (if you are taking it).

You should

- know what you have to do for each paper
- know your texts in detail
- make a note of the key words in each question
- answer the question set, and not one you would have preferred to answer
- make a plan to help you organise ideas and structure your material
- use many brief quotations/references to support your argument (in critical essays)
- analyse the key words in your quotations, showing how writers achieve their effects (in critical essays)
- write legibly (with a good pen) in English that is as clear and accurate as you can make it.

You should not

- copy out the question
- spend too long planning
- waste time on lengthy introductions or paragraphs of background material – such material is not relevant to the question and no credit can be given
- simply tell the story
- repeat the same material – you won't receive any more marks
- simply identify the language devices that writers use
- use very long quotations – it's better to use a series of shorter quotations with clear analytical comment made about the key words and phrases in them
- try to write about everything – you can't in the time available
- do more questions than you have to do for the paper – there are absolutely no marks for doing so
- refer to writers by their first names; use their surnames.

Advice for each paper

Component 1 Poetry and Prose (1 hour 30 minutes)

Before you read on, check that you are taking Component 1. You may **not** take your texts into the examination.

Get the **timing** right: 45 minutes per question. Don't be tempted to write more on the first question and leave insufficient time for the second question. Otherwise you'll find it difficult to achieve high marks for the final question.

- Answer **two** questions. You must answer one question from each section: that is, one question on Poetry and one on Prose. Each of your questions must be on a different set text.
- Refer to your text closely, and use clear and precise references. Many successful learners do manage to integrate brief direct quotations from their texts, so try to learn as many as you can. Where you can't remember an actual quotation, make sure that you provide as clear reference as you can to the relevant part of the text. Of course, there is no problem about quoting in passage-based questions since the passages are printed in the question paper.
- For **all passage-based questions**, highlight the many key words and phrases you will comment on in your answer. Detailed analysis of the way writers achieve their effects is required for success. Stick to the question, and don't simply re-tell the story of the passage or paraphrase its content. Your main job is to provide an informed personal response to the question that accompanies the passage. Read it carefully and be prepared to probe it really closely. A few random or general points will not do at all.
- For **essay questions**, make sure that you have read the question carefully and don't skip over important words. Answer the question set, and don't reduce your response to a simple character sketch or a re-telling of the story. Questions will demand more than this and they will be worded so that they have a very particular focus that you need to address.

For **essay questions**, do not be tempted to regurgitate notes in an approach that might best be summed up as '10 things I know about the text I have studied'. If you disregard the actual question, you will not score highly.

- In **poetry** responses, do not simply summarise or paraphrase the content of poems. You must analyse the language and structure very carefully and show that you have appreciated the writer's use of poetic form.

In **poetry** responses in particular, do not list or log literary devices. Critical vocabulary on its own does not impress; there must be clear and precise analytical comment on actual words and phrases. Simply knowing a critical term (however exotic) will not earn you marks. Instead you must make sure that you explore **how** and **why** writers use such devices.

Make sure you set **poetry quotations** out properly. If you are quoting a line or perhaps two lines, you should indent one or both lines and follow the line arrangement of the original (so don't re-write the lines as prose). There is no merit in having a single quotation consisting of three or more lines; this suggests that you're avoiding commenting on the poet's words. The very best essays on poetry smoothly integrate short quotations (a word or a phrase) **and** analytical comment on them.

Component 2 Drama (1 hour 30 minutes)

Before reading on, check that you are taking Component 2.

- Answer **two** questions. You must answer one question from each section, that is, one question on each drama text you have studied.
- There will be a choice of two questions on each drama text. For each text, there will be one passage-based question and one essay question.
- As with Component 1, you are not allowed access to your set texts in the examination.
- Points 2–4 in the advice for Component 1 are relevant for this component. Remind yourself of these points on the previous page.

Component 3 Drama (Open Text) (45 minutes)

Before you read on, check that you are taking Component 3.

- You have 45 minutes to answer **one** question on the set text you have studied for this paper.
- For each text there is a choice of two questions, one passage-based and one essay question.
- Refer to your text closely and in critical essays use precise quotations to support your points. Take advantage of the fact that you have access to your text in the examination.
- For **all passage-based questions**, consider the key words and phrases you will comment on in your answer. Detailed analysis of the way writers achieve their effects is required for success. Keep to the question, and don't simply re-tell the story of the passage or paraphrase its content. Your main job is to provide an informed personal response to the question that accompanies the passage. Read the passage carefully and be prepared to probe it really closely. A few random or general points will not do at all.
- For **essay questions**, make sure that you have read the question carefully and don't skip over important words. Answer the question set, and don't reduce your response to a simple character sketch or a re-telling of the story. Questions will demand more than this and they will be worded so that they have a very particular focus that you need to address.

For **essay questions**, do not be tempted to regurgitate notes in an approach that might best be summed up as '10 things I know about the text I have studied'. If you disregard the actual question, you will not score highly.

Component 4 Unseen (1 hour 15 minutes)

- You can only take this option if you are also preparing for Component 3 Drama (Open Text).
- There are no set books for this paper, but you can (and should) prepare for it. Although there are no quotations to learn for this paper, the critical **skills** you use in the set texts papers are also being tested in the Unseen paper. So in many ways preparation for this paper has in fact been taking place throughout the course.
- You must answer **one** of the two questions on the paper:
 - either the **poetry** unseen (on a single poem or extract from a longer poem)
 - **or** the **prose** unseen (on a passage from a novel or short story).
- You are advised to spend around 20 minutes reading the questions and planning your answer. You should:
 - select your question wisely

- read the question carefully and highlight the key words (which you will keep glancing at throughout the exam)
- read your chosen poem/passage and annotate it, highlighting the words and phrases you intend to comment on in your essay.
- A brief outline of what the poem or passage says (a few lines **only**) might be appropriate as a starting-point. But you should **not** re-tell the story.
- The question will direct you to an aspect of the writer's techniques, so the main focus of the question will be on **how** the writer presents his or her material.
- You must respond directly and personally to the question as there are no study guides to fall back on. Remember there are no correct or definitive answers. You must make your points in a logical and organised manner, supporting them by means of many brief quotations from the passage.
- Don't simply quote and leave it at that. Quotations are not for decoration. You should analyse the key words in the quotations in a way that answers the question.
- Do not include lists of devices. Such an approach does not lead to successful literary appreciation. For example, don't simply identify imagery or sound devices; explore them by considering carefully **how** and **why** they were useful to the writer in achieving a particular effect.
- Make sure you set **poetry quotations** out properly. If you are quoting a line or perhaps two lines, you should indent one or both lines and follow the line arrangement of the original (so don't re-write the lines as prose). There is no merit in having a single quotation consisting of three or more lines; this suggests that you're avoiding commenting on the poet's words. The very best essays on poetry smoothly integrate short quotations (a word or a phrase) **and** analytical comment on them.
- You should devote around 50 minutes to the writing of your answer, which leaves 5 minutes for checking what you have written.
- You should not try to be exhaustive. You cannot write about everything in the time available.

Component 5 Coursework

- You won't be doing this option if you are taking either Component 2 Drama or Component 4 Unseen. It is taken alongside Component 1 Poetry and Prose and Component 3 Drama – Open Text.
- Read Section 3.3 below on Component 5: Coursework. This will remind you of the requirements for the coursework portfolio.
- Read also the general parts of this section for guidance about writing essays.
- Write legibly or present your typed version neatly. If you word-process your work, use a standard font (such as Arial, point 10) and avoid strange or coloured fonts.
- Add your name and page numbers, and make sure that the full title appears at the beginning of each of your two assignments. Don't give an approximate or abbreviated title.
- Take advantage of the re-drafting and proof-reading stages of coursework to produce assignments which are free of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Taking care here will help in other parts of the course.
- Before your final versions, make sure that the length of your assignments is appropriate. The syllabus recommends that each assignment should be between 600 and 1200 words. If you write too little, there will not be enough evidence to show that you can develop and sustain your answers. If you write excessively, you are likely to lose focus.

- **Don't** waste time on lengthy introductions or on background or biographical material – such material isn't rewarded. As with the examination papers, stick to the question set and don't be tempted to stray from it. Every sentence must add something to your overall argument.
- **Don't** waste time on re-telling the story.
- In coursework, you have the relative luxury of time to explore in detail how writers achieve their effects. Analyse **how** particular words and phrases have been used by your chosen writers. Use critical terms as part of your analysis, but don't use them simply to list features.
- In general essays, show that you understand some of the effects of form. For example:
 - a. for **poems** you might discuss such matters as rhyme or the organisation of the lines into stanzas or different sections (but **always** relate such points to the content of the poem)
 - b. for **drama** texts, you might think about the effect the words and actions of the characters would have on an audience
 - c. for **prose** texts, you might consider who is narrating (first or third person) and what effect this has on the reader (for example, is the narrator trustworthy or not?).

Plagiarism

Remember that coursework should be your own work. Do not copy from other learners' work, study guides or the internet. In short, do not copy! Teachers and moderators have to investigate any cases of 'suspected malpractice' (in one word, cheating).

What the examiners say

The following are extracts from examiners' reports,

- 'At the centre of this syllabus is the desire that learners are given the confidence to respond directly and personally to their reading.'
- 'All the questions are designed to encourage learners to think in the exam room rather than to regurgitate semi-prepared essays.'
- 'Many candidates have the confidence to express individual views of their reading based on sound evidence [*that is, references to and quotations from the text*]. This is what literary study should lead to, as opposed to a reliance on mere parroting of the words of study aids.'
- 'There are still instances of learners introducing into their answers material which has little relevance to the question set. It cannot be stressed too much that this will lead to little reward.'
- 'Time spent organising thoughts [*by writing a brief plan*] would be time well spent and would reduce the amount of repetition.'
- 'General introductions [*to each answer*] simply cut down the time candidates have to write to the point.'

Section 3: What will be tested?

This section provides further details about what you will be tested on in each paper. The first part outlines the skills you need to show in all of the papers for this subject. The second part gives details about the types of question you will face in the specific papers.

No information is given about particular set texts since these change regularly.

What are we looking for?

For each examination answer or coursework assignment you write, you will need to show that you:

- have a detailed knowledge of the passage or whole text you are writing about (this will depend on the question)
- understand the important themes of texts as well as their basic storylines
- appreciate the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to achieve their effects (for example, to create characters or settings)
- offer a personal response to the text and the question set.

We will **not** reward highly answers which offer:

- a sketchy knowledge of the text (for example, a few unconnected points)
- a very basic understanding of the plot
- little awareness of the writer's role (for example, in creating characters or using imagery for a particular effect)
- second-hand ideas (taken, for example, from study guides).

What are the assessment objectives?

Assessment objectives? Don't be alarmed by this term. The assessment objectives help examiners to see that you have covered everything in the syllabus. You don't need to worry about the assessment objectives since the questions you face in the various papers are designed to allow you to show all the skills required for Cambridge IGCSE Literature (English). If you know your texts thoroughly and answer the questions thoughtfully, you will have covered the assessment objectives!

The following table is for reference only and helps you to see what the assessment objectives mean in practice, but you don't need to revise them.

Section 3: What will be tested?

Assessment objective	What you must be able to do	What you need to be able to do
AO1 Detailed knowledge	show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts in the three main forms (drama, poetry, and prose)	<p>Show that you have grasped the detail of all your texts.</p> <p>Use many brief references to the texts to support the points you make in your passage-based and general essays.</p>
AO2 Understanding of deeper meanings	understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes	<p>Read your texts closely so that you have a clear understanding of major themes and ideas.</p> <p>Questions will require you to do more than:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> re-tell the story <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> give a character sketch.
AO3 Understanding of writer's methods	recognise and appreciate the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects	<p>Show an appreciation of the writer's craft. In their plays, poems, short stories and novels, writers make careful choices about language and structure in order to achieve the effects they desire.</p> <p>An important aspect of responding to literary texts is to consider how a writer sets out to create a certain response in the reader.</p> <p>You can show your skills in critical essays by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making relevant references to the text commenting on the effects of the words and phrases you quote. <p><i>This will be developed further later in Section 3 of this guide.</i></p>
AO4 Personal response	communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts	<p>Give your honest personal response to the question you are asked.</p> <p>This is not a subject where there are correct answers to be learned by memory.</p> <p>You will be required to support your views in passage-based and general essay questions by making detailed references to the text.</p> <p>Always answer the actual question set; don't make it the answer to a (imaginary) question you would prefer to answer!</p>

In the table above, the important information is the advice contained in the final column. Leave the middle column to the examiners!

Component 1 Poetry and Prose

You have to answer questions on two set texts (45 minutes for each). You must answer one question from each of the Poetry and Prose sections.

There are two questions set on each text; you must choose one question for each of the texts you have studied. You must not answer two questions on the same text; if you do, you will lose marks.

You may **not** take your set texts into the examination.

Let us now look at each of the sections in turn: Poetry and Prose.

Poetry

For each poetry set text, two types of question are set:

- The first question on each poetry text relates to a single poem (or occasionally an extract from a longer poem).
- The second question asks for responses **either** to one poem **or** to two poems – so it's important that you read the questions with great care. Read past questions, and you will see that some questions name particular poems for you to write about. This is designed to help you by providing poems that work well with particular questions. Because some questions name poems, it is important that you revise all the poems in your chosen poetry selection; there are no short cuts!
- All poetry questions have in common a requirement for you to offer your personal response to the poetry itself. You should aim to use as many brief quotations as you can in your answer in order to demonstrate your close reading of the poem(s). If you are unable to provide a direct quotation, try to give as clear and precise a reference as possible. Your quotations and references will provide the starting-point for an analysis of how the poet has used language to convey ideas or description or whatever the topic of the poem is. So your focus should be on **HOW** poets present their material as well as **WHAT** they write. You will show your appreciation of structure as you consider how the poem begins, develops and ends.
- Examiners will not reward the following highly:
 - answers which merely re-state (or paraphrase) what is in the poem
 - answers which rely on the simple listing of poetic devices.

There is little merit in using literary terms (such as *metaphor* and *alliteration*) if you are not prepared to show what effects the poet creates by using such devices. Likewise, quotation used on its own will not receive high marks; you must comment on **why** the poet has used certain words.

Prose

For each novel or short story text, two types of question are set.

- The **passage-based** question comes first and requires you to analyse the content of the printed passage in close detail. Questions might, for example, ask you to consider the ways in which the writer has made the particular scene amusing or powerful or moving or dramatic, etc. Look at the range of passage-based questions in past papers.

Read the questions carefully; some ask for you to focus completely on the passage, whereas others ask additionally for some reference to the wider text. Questions tend to focus on characters, setting or mood. Whatever the actual question, you must analyse the passage closely, making many brief quotations from it and commenting on the writer's use of language – all the time keeping your eyes on the question set.

Section 3: What will be tested?

Remember that the characters are products of a writer's imagination, and not real-life people. This will help you to keep a focus on the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to achieve their effects. For example, a character in a novel is presented differently from a character in a play. Is the narrator first or third person? Is the narrator trustworthy or unreliable? What use does the writer make of description and/or dialogue in conveying a sense of character or setting?

- The **essay** question, which is the second question on each prose text, will test your understanding of characters, themes or settings. Look at past questions, and you will see that the general essay questions ask you to consider a particular angle. This means that you will not receive high marks if you merely re-tell the story or give a character sketch. You must throughout your essay keep the precise focus of the question to the front of your mind.

Your response must be carefully organised, and your points supported by means of close and detailed reference to the text. As part of your revision, you should learn useful quotations on key characters, themes and setting(s). You should try to use as many brief, relevant quotations as you can, since analysis of the key words will help you to focus on the role of the writer and his/her intended effects. Where you cannot remember direct quotations, give references that are as clear and precise as possible.

Component 2 Drama

Before reading on, check that you are taking Component 2.

There are two questions set on each drama text; you must answer two questions, one on each drama text you have studied for this paper. You must answer one passage-based question and one essay question.

As with Component 1, you may **not** take your set texts into the examination.

For each play, two types of question are set.

- The **passage-based** question comes first and requires you to analyse the content of a particular passage in close detail. The passage will be printed in the question paper so you can highlight key words and phrases. Questions might, for example, ask you to consider the way in which the playwright has made the particular scene amusing or powerful or moving, etc. Look at the range of passage-based questions in past papers.

Read the questions carefully; some ask for you to focus completely on the passage, whereas others ask in addition for some reference to the wider play. Whatever the actual question, you must analyse the passage closely, making many brief quotations from it and commenting on the writer's use of language – all the time keeping your eyes on the question set.

Whilst this is not a Theatre Studies examination, there is some advantage in imagining, as you read a play, how the various scenes might appear when performed on the stage. Doing this will help you to see how a playwright uses the form of drama to achieve his/her effects. Remember that the characters are products of a writer's imagination, and not real-life people.

- The **essay** question, which is the second question on each drama text, will test your understanding of characters, themes or settings. Look at past questions, and you will see that the general essay questions ask you to consider a particular angle. This means that you will not receive high marks if you merely re-tell the story or give a generalised character sketch.

Your response must be carefully organised, and your points supported by means of close and detailed reference to the play. You should use many brief, relevant references. Your revision should include the learning of useful quotations for key characters, themes and the setting(s). Because you don't have access to your set texts during the examination, you may not have a precise quotation to hand. But do make every effort to provide clear references where you can. Where you are able to use direct quotation, analysis of the key words will help you to focus on the role of the writer and his/her intended effects.

Component 3 Drama – Open Text

You may refer to clean copies of your drama text.

You need to answer **one** question on **one** text.

For each text there is a choice of two questions, one passage-based and one essay question.

- The **passage-based** question comes first and requires you to analyse the content of the passage in close detail. Questions might, for example, ask you to consider the ways in which the playwright has made the particular scene amusing or powerful or moving. Look at the range of passage-based questions in past papers to get a feel for the types of question set.

Read the questions carefully; some ask for you to focus completely on the passage, whereas others ask in addition for some reference to the wider play. Whatever the actual question, you must analyse the passage closely, making many brief quotations from it and commenting on the writer's use of language – all the time keeping your eyes on the question set.

Whilst this is not a Theatre Studies examination, there is some advantage in imagining, as you read a play, how the various scenes might appear when performed on the stage. Doing this will help you to see how a playwright uses the form of drama to achieve her/his effects. Remember that the characters are products of a writer's imagination, and not real-life people.

- The **essay** question, which is the second question on each drama text, will test your understanding of characters, themes or settings. Look at past questions, and you will see that the general essay questions ask you to consider a particular angle. This means that you will not receive high marks if you merely re-tell the story or give a generalised character sketch.

Your response must be carefully organised, and your points supported by means of close and detailed references to the play. Since you are allowed to refer to the text in the exam, you are able to (and should) use many brief, relevant quotations. Analysis of the key words will help you to focus on the role of the writer and his/her intended effects.

Component 4 Unseen

If you are taking this examination paper, you will also be taking Component 3. You have to select **one** of two questions. One question will be on an extract from a prose text; the other will be on a poem or an extract from a longer poem. As the title of this exam paper indicates, you will not be able to prepare for it in the way you will for the set texts papers.

Use some of the 20 minutes' reading time to skim through the two choices before settling finally on one question. Use the rest of the reading time to read and annotate your chosen poem or prose passage and write a **brief** plan.

The skills important in this paper are similar to those needed in passage-based questions in the other papers. You will need to provide a detailed appreciation of the ways in which the writer of your chosen text uses language, structure and form to shape meanings. The actual wording of the question will point you in the right direction and ensure that you deal with **HOW** the writer presents his material, as well as **WHAT** the content is.

The questions will expect you to show more than just an understanding of the content. When answering your chosen question, you should:

- use brief quotations from the passage as the starting-point for analysis of the **language**
- consider the way the material is **structured**, the way in which it develops
- comment on relevant aspects of **form** (that is, poetry or prose fiction).

Component 5 Coursework

The portfolio requirements

If you are taking the coursework option, the following provides a useful checklist.

1. You need to submit a portfolio of **two** assignments. (Your teacher might ask you to prepare more than two, and make a selection of the best two from them.)
2. The assignments may be on texts from the same form (e.g. they can be both on Drama texts – but they don't have to be).
3. Texts must be originally written in English, and must **not** be translations into English.
4. One of the assignments may be on a set text from Components 1, 2 or 3.
5. The syllabus recommends that assignments should be between 600 and 1200 words.
6. Poetry assignments must refer to 2 poems, and short story assignments must refer to 2 stories. There is no need to compare.
7. You do not need to submit earlier drafts.
8. Your work should be tidy and legible, and may be handwritten or word-processed. If word-processing, use a standard font of reasonable size (e.g. Arial, 10 point); do not use coloured or exotic fonts.

Why do coursework?

Coursework gives you the opportunity to plan and re-draft your ideas, allowing you to develop as critical thinking and editing and skills. During the re-drafting stage, you should think carefully about how to improve your personal response in a way that is appropriate to the question, whether it asks for a general essay or empathic response.

Copy the wording of your assignment titles very carefully. Your teacher will have worded the titles in such a way as to allow you to show all the relevant skills. For this reason, you must not make do with an approximate title or an abbreviated one or none at all!

Remember that there is no credit at all for writing paragraphs containing background material. Your questions will require you to focus on the text itself – so don't waste time by including irrelevant biographical or historical material in your answers!

The 'rules' of coursework

You are allowed in the early stages to discuss your ideas with your friends and your teacher, and then draft your response carefully on your own before preparing a final version. Then, once the final version is marked, you may not re-write it or change it in any way.

Your teacher will mark your assignments in the first instance; then a coursework moderator will check your teacher's marking. If necessary, your marks may be adjusted slightly so that all learners taking this unit are treated fairly and all work is marked to the same standard.

Although you may use study guides in print and online to enrich your studies, you must not copy from them. It is your own personal response that is important. Teachers are instructed to take very seriously suspected instances of plagiarism, and there can be serious penalties if plagiarised work reaches the moderator.

What will you be rewarded for?

A successful **essay** has the following qualities:

- evidence of detailed knowledge
- a clear argument
- relevant references to the text support the points you make
- analytical comment on the ways in which the writer uses language, structure and form
- an informed personal response which answers the question.

Section 3: What will be tested?

Section 4: What you need to know

Curriculum content

In this subject the largest part of the **CONTENT** you need to know is what happens in your set texts. Close study over the course so far will have helped you to a detailed knowledge of what happens in each of your texts.

Your revision programme should include slots for re-reading and close study of your texts in order to improve your knowledge and understanding still further. Section 5 of this guide will offer useful advice about how you might go about this.

Meanwhile the table below sets out the **SKILLS** you need to master for success.

All learners should be able to:	What this means for you
recall, narrate	The ability to re-tell the story (e.g. of a printed passage or a whole novel) is a basic skill. This is just a starting-point for the real work of Literature essays.
summarise	The ability to list the main points (e.g. of a poem) is another basic skill. It is likely that many essays will at some stage require a summary of some kind – but do not expect high marks if your essay is merely a summary (for example, of the plot). All questions will demand more than that.
paraphrase	The ability to repeat points in your own words is a third basic skill, but too much paraphrase (e.g. repeating in your own words the meaning of a quotation) will not lead to the most successful answers.
select relevant detail	All essays will require you to select the best detail available that supports your point or response. In essays, points not supported by references to the text are <i>unsubstantiated assertions</i> . These will not lead to successful answers. Literature essays require you to support your views by clear, precise reference to the text.
distinguish viewpoint	A detailed knowledge of the text will help you to see the differences in the points of view of various characters (including the narrator).

Section 4: What you need to know

All learners should be able to:	Learners aiming for Grades C – A* should also be able to:	What this means for you
detect theme, motivation	explore theme, motivation	All learners should be aware of a text's main themes (or ideas) and what motivates characters to behave in the way they do. More successful learners are able to go further and 'explore', or discuss in detail , such issues.
comment on plot, characterisation	analyse plot, characterisation	All learners should be able to show that they have understood the plot and the ways in which writers present their characters. More successful learners are able to go further and 'analyse' plot and characterisation by examining them methodically and in detail .
demonstrate some awareness of the ways writers achieve their effects	discuss the ways writers achieve their effects	All learners should be aware of some of the methods writers use to achieve certain effects. More successful learners are able to go further and write in detail about the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings.
draw inferences	make connections	All learners should be able to read between the lines, that is, go beyond the surface level of the writing. More successful learners are able to point out links between different parts of texts. For example, Lady Macbeth's attitude towards blood is different at the beginning and end of <i>Macbeth</i> .
state opinions	integrate apposite quotation and comment	All learners should be able to give their views clearly. More successful learners are able to link fluently suitable quotations and analytical comment in a clearly developed and convincing personal response.
articulate and discuss feelings and attitudes	communicate a considered personal response	

You will see from the table that the basic skills are re-telling, summarising and paraphrasing. If learners demonstrated just these skills in their essays, they would be able to show some knowledge of the text, but could not expect to receive the highest marks.

If you look at the middle column of the table, you will see how much more a learner aiming for Grades C to A* has to do. Words such as **explore**, **analyse** and **discuss** indicate that a higher order of skills is required. Learners aiming for successful answers must show a detailed knowledge of texts and a clear appreciation of how writers achieve their effects.

Critical terms

Any subject you study will have its own set of specialist terms, and Literature is no different. Such terms can help you to write clearly and economically. The table below gives some of the more useful terms.

Type	Useful terms
Imagery	simile, metaphor, personification
Sound	alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia
Rhetorical devices	rhetorical question, repetition (for a specific effect), hyperbole, irony
Mainly linked with drama	act, scene, dialogue, stage direction, audience, soliloquy
Mainly linked with poetry	rhyme, rhythm, stanza, couplet, blank verse, free verse, sonnet, tone, mood
Mainly linked with prose	chapter, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, dialogue, narrator, viewpoint

These terms are **not** a substitute for your personal response to a text. Always make sure that you use such terms **as part of your analysis**. Just spotting the devices they refer to will not lead to successful answers. You do not need to explain these terms as your teachers and examiners will understand them!

Section 5: Revision

General points

The very act of reading this guide shows that you are a serious learner keen to do well.

Having read the first four sections of this guide, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Which examinations am I taking?
- How many set texts do I have to revise?
- How long are the examination papers?
- How many sections are there in the examination papers?
- How many questions do I have to answer?
- Is my set texts examination paper 'open book' (Component 3) or 'closed book' (Components 1 and 2)?

You should be able to answer all of these questions confidently. It's important, too, to remind yourself of what the papers you will take actually look like.

The purpose of revision

You are of course revising whenever you revisit a text you studied earlier, for example, when you are researching for an essay set by your teacher. The best revision you can do in Literature is to re-read your set texts a number of times. Reading the original text and appreciating its detail is a better route to success than learning the plot synopses or character sketches found in study guides. As you re-read your texts (and make or amend notes), your confidence should grow as you learn more and more detail.

Your aims when revising should be to:

- have as detailed a grasp of your texts as you can in the time available
- grow increasingly confident of exploring the ways in which writers use language, structure and their chosen form (Drama, Poetry or Prose) to achieve their effects
- develop a wide range of reference (including learning brief quotations) you can draw on to support your points
- practise the writing skills required in the kinds of questions you will face.

The final revision period

Organise your notes, files and study area before you begin the final period of revision. Fill in any gaps.

Your overall revision programme should:

- include most days leading up to the exams – but be sure to strike out any days when you are unable to revise and also include one rest day per week
- include a mixture of subjects each day
- have short revision sessions and short breaks between them

- break up the material in your subjects into manageable chunks (e.g. 4 or 5 poems for a one-hour slot)
- involve a good deal of note-writing – it doesn't have to be neat – use scrap paper, and lots of it
- be flexible – if your original plans are too ambitious, amend future revision sessions accordingly
- be realistic – working too late into the evening is rarely productive, so build at least a couple of hours' rest before bed time.

A final word

The examiners will set questions that allow you to demonstrate your knowledge, understanding and skills. If you re-read your texts carefully, and follow the advice contained in this guide, you have every reason to be confident about your performance in the examination.

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