



South Bank
Part of Oasis Hub Waterloo



GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(8700)

Paper 1:

Explorations in creative reading and writing

Practice question booklet.

Overview

This booklet contains practice extracts and questions for Paper 1 of your English Language exam. This covers the four **reading** questions and the **writing** question.

The Paper is always structured the same way, with questions always retaining the same focus. You need to make sure you know what these are, along with the amount of time you should devote to each question. This **must** be stuck to strictly to ensure you cover all questions and achieve as highly as you can.

Q	Marks	Minutes	Focus
<i>Reading</i>		15	Read with the 4 questions in mind
1	4	5	Identify 4 details
2	8	10	Analysis of Language
3	8	10	Analysis of Structure
4	20	20	Evaluating writer's methods
5	40	45	Descriptive/ narrative Writing

1)

This extract comes from the middle of the novel 'The Blind Assassin'. Iris has had a difficult relationship with her sister, who has lived with her and her husband since their parents' death when she was fourteen.

Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge. The bridge was being repaired: she went right through the Danger sign. The car fell a hundred feet into the ravine, smashing through the treetops feathery with new leaves, then burst into flames and rolled down into the shallow creek at the bottom. Chunks of the bridge fell on top of it. Nothing much was left of her but charred smithereens.

I was informed of the accident by a policeman: the car was mine, and they'd traced the licence. His tone was respectful: no doubt he recognized Richard's name. He said the tires may have caught on a streetcar track or the brakes may have failed, but he also felt bound to inform me that two witnesses - a retired lawyer and a bank teller, dependable people - had claimed to have seen the whole thing. They'd said Laura had turned the car sharply and deliberately, and had plunged off the bridge with no more fuss than stepping off a curb. They'd noticed her hands on the wheel because of the white gloves she'd been wearing.

It wasn't the brakes, I thought. She had her reasons. Not that they were ever the same as anybody else's reasons. She was completely ruthless in that way.

"I suppose you want someone to identify her," I said. "I'll come down as soon as I can." I could hear the calmness of my own voice, as if from a distance. In reality I could barely get the words out; my mouth was numb, my entire face was rigid with pain. I felt as if I'd been to the dentist. I was furious with Laura for what she'd done, but also with the policeman for implying that she'd done it. A hot wind was blowing around my head, the strands of my hair lifting and swirling in it, like ink spilled in water.

"I'm afraid there will be an inquest, Mrs. Griffen," he said.; "Naturally," I said. "But it was an accident. My sister was never a good driver."

I could picture the smooth oval of Laura's face, her neatly pinned chignon, the dress she would have been wearing: a shirtwaist with a small rounded collar, in a sober colour - navy blue or steel grey or hospital-corridor green. Penitential colours - less like something she'd chosen to put on than like something she'd been locked up in. Her solemn half-smile; the amazed lift of her eyebrows, as if she were admiring the view.

The white gloves: a Pontius Pilate gesture. She was washing her hands of me. Of all of us. What had she been thinking of as the car sailed off the bridge, then hung suspended in the afternoon sunlight, glinting like a dragonfly for that one instant of held breath before the plummet? Of Alex, of Richard, of bad faith, of our father and his wreckage; of God, perhaps, and her fatal, triangular bargain. Or of the stack of cheap school exercise books that she must have hidden that very morning, in the bureau drawer where I kept my stockings, knowing I would be the one to find them.

Chignon: a type of pinned up hairstyle, similar to a bun

Pontius Pilate: the man who condemned Jesus to death and famously 'washed his hands' to show he didn't approve of the sentence he had to give.

Penitential: repentance- when you are sorry for what you have done

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the way the car crashed. (4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the fourth paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe Iris' reaction? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the middle of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the first half of the source.

A student said 'This part of the story, re-telling a devastating moment in Laura's life, reveals a distance between the two sisters.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of Iris
- evaluate how the writer shows that Iris feels distant from her sister
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing

5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of passengers boarding a train as suggested by this picture



Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'The problem with putting on a mask to face the outside world, is that at some point there will come a point when you are unable to take it off.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]

2)

This extract comes from the end of a short story called 'She Wasn't Soft' by T Boyle. In the story, Paula is a long distance runner, who is running a triathlon with her boyfriend Jason spectating- she is expected to come second, beaten by her rival Zinny, and Jason has made a plan to sabotage Zinny's race by giving her a cup of spiked juice as she runs past.

He found a knot of volunteers in their canary-yellow T-shirts and caps and stationed himself a hundred yards up the street from them, the ice rattling as he swirled his little green time bomb around the lip of the cup. The breeze was soft, the sun caught in the crowns of the trees and reaching out to finger the road here and there in long slim swatches.

He'd never tell Paula, of course, no way, but he'd get giddy with her, pop the champagne cork, and let her fill him with all the ecstasy of victory.

A cheer from the crowd brought him out of his reverie. The first of the men was cranking his way around the long bend in the road, a guy with a beard and wraparound sunglasses—the Finn. He was the one favored to win, or was it the Brit? Jason tucked the cup behind his back and faded into the crowd, which was pretty sparse here, and watched the guy propel himself past, his mouth gaping black, the two holes of his nostrils punched deep into his face, his head bobbing on his neck as if it weren't attached right. Another guy appeared around the corner just as the Finn passed by, and then two others came slogging along behind him. Somebody cheered, but it was a pretty feeble affair.

Jason checked his watch. It would be five minutes or so, and then he could start watching for the Amazing Bone Woman, tireless freak that she was. He fingered the cup lightly, reminding himself not to damage or crease it in any way—it had to look pristine, fresh-dipped from the bucket—and he watched the corner at the end of the street till his eyes began to blur from the sheer concentration of it all.

Two more men passed by and nobody cheered, not a murmur, but then suddenly a couple of middle-aged women across the street set up a howl, and the crowd chimed in: the first woman, a woman of string and bone with a puffing heaving puppet like frame, was swinging into the street in distant silhouette. Jason moved forward. He tugged reflexively at the bill of his hat, jammed the rims of the shades back into his eye sockets. And he started to grin, all his teeth on fire, his lips spread wide: Here, take me, drink me, have me!

As the woman drew closer, loping, sweating, elbows flailing and knees pounding, the crowd getting into it now, cheering her, cheering this first of the women in a man's event, the first Ironwoman of the day, he began to realize that this wasn't Zinny Bauer at all. Her hair was too long, and her legs and chest were too full—and then he saw the number clearly, No. 23, and looked into Paula's face. She was fifty yards from him, but he could see the toughness in her eyes and the tight little frozen smile of triumph and superiority. She was winning. She was beating Zinny Bauer and Jill Eisen and all those pathetic jocks laboring up the hills and down the blacktop streets behind her. This was her moment, this was it.

But then, and he didn't stop to think about it, he stepped forward, right out on the street where she could see him, and held out the cup. He heard her feet beating at the pavement with a hard merciless slap, saw the icy twist of a smile and the cold triumphant eyes. And he felt the briefest fleeting touch of her flesh as the cup left his hand.

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the scene of the spectators.

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the fourth paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe the runners? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the end of a short story.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

A student said 'Although Jason wants Paula to win, he doesn't seem to like her very much.'

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of Jason
- evaluate how the writer shows that Jason disapproves of the race
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)



Section B: Writing

5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of a field as suggested by this picture

Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'The wind began to blow through the trees with a ripping intensity that seemed to be growing with every minute.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]

3)

This extract comes from the opening of the novel Run, Rabbit by John Updike. It introduces us to the novel's main character, nicknamed Rabbit, who at 26 suddenly panics about growing up and tries to escape his adult life.

Boys are playing basketball around a telephone pole with a backboard bolted to it. Legs, shouts. The scrape and snap of Keds on loose alley pebbles seems to catapult their voices high into the moist March air blue above the wires. Rabbit Angstrom, coming up the alley in a business suit, stops and watches, though he's twenty-six and six three. So tall, he seems an unlikely rabbit, but the breadth of white face, the pallor of his blue irises, and a nervous flutter under his brief nose as he stabs a cigarette into his mouth partially explain the nickname, which was given to him when he too was a boy. He stands there thinking, the kids keep coming, they keep crowding you up.

His standing there makes the real boys feel strange. Eyeballs slide. They're doing this for themselves, not as a show for some adult walking around town in a double-breasted cocoa suit. It seems funny to them, an adult walking up the alley at all. Where's his car? The cigarette makes it more sinister still. Is this one of those going to offer them cigarettes or money to go out in back of the ice plant with him? They've heard of such things but are not too frightened; there are six of them and one of him.

The ball, rocketing off the crotch of the rim, leaps over the heads of the six and lands at the feet of the one. He catches it on the short bounce with a quickness that startles them. As they stare hushed he sights squinting through blue clouds of weed smoke, a suddenly dark silhouette like a smokestack against the afternoon spring sky, setting his feet with care, wiggling the ball with nervousness in front of his chest, one widespread white hand on top of the ball and the other underneath, jiggling it patiently to get some adjustment in air itself. The cuticle moons on his fingernails are big. Then the ball seems to ride up the right lapel of his coat and comes off his shoulder as his knees dip down, and it appears the ball will miss because though he shot from an angle the ball is not going toward the backboard. It was not aimed there. It drops into the circle of the rim, whipping the net with a ladylike whisper. "Hey!" he shouts in pride. "Luck," one of the kids says.

Keds = a type of trainers

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the scene of the appearance of Rabbit Angstrom. (4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the second paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe the alley? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

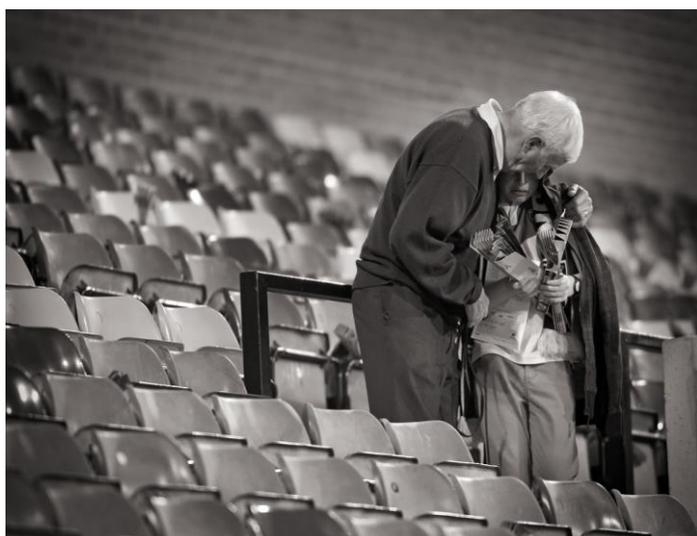
A reviewer wrote 'This part of the text, where the writer describes Rabbit taking the basketball shot, feels more tense- as if he has something to prove.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the basketball game
- evaluate how the writer shows that Rabbit cares about making the shot
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing



5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of a football fan as suggested by this picture

Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'As the household awoke slowly from their slumber, and the rooms creaked into life, they could not have anticipated just how different that day would be in comparison to the other 364 of that year.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]

4)

This extract comes from the detective novel 'Cuckoo's Calling' by Robert Galbraith (JK Rowling), this is the opening where the crime that is investigated is described: the death of a young celebrity, apparently of suicide.

The buzz in the street was like the humming of flies. Photographers stood massed behind barriers patrolled by police, their long-snouted cameras poised, their breath rising like steam. Snow fell steadily on to hats and shoulders; gloved fingers wiped lenses clear. From time to time there came outbreaks of desultory clicking, as the watchers filled the waiting time by snapping the white canvas tent in the middle of the road, the entrance to the tall red-brick apartment block behind it, and the balcony on the top floor from which the body had fallen.

Behind the tightly packed paparazzi stood white vans with enormous satellite dishes on the roofs, and journalists talking, some in foreign languages, while soundmen in headphones hovered. Between recordings, the reporters stamped their feet and warmed their hands on hot beakers of coffee from the teeming café a few streets away. To fill the time, the woolly-hatted cameramen filmed the backs of the photographers, the balcony, the tent concealing the body, then repositioned themselves for wide shots that encompassed the chaos that had exploded inside the sedate and snowy Mayfair street, with its lines of glossy black doors framed by white stone porticos and flanked by topiary shrubs. The entrance to number 18 was bounded with tape. Police officials, some of them white-clothed forensic experts, could be glimpsed in the hallway beyond.

The television stations had already had the news for several hours. Members of the public were crowding at either end of the road, held at bay by more police; some had come, on purpose, to look, others had paused on their way to work. Many held mobile telephones aloft to take pictures before moving on. One young man, not knowing which was the crucial balcony, photographed each of them in turn, even though the middle one was packed with a row of shrubs, three neat, leafy orbs, which barely left room for a human being.

A group of young girls had brought flowers, and were filmed handing them to the police, who as yet had not decided on a place for them, but laid them self-consciously in the back of the police van, aware of camera lenses following their every move.

The correspondents sent by twenty-four-hour news channels kept up a steady stream of comment and speculation around the few sensational facts they knew.

"...no sign yet that they are moving the body, which has led some to speculate..."

"...no word on whether she was alone when she fell..."

"...teams have entered the building and will be conducting a thorough search."

A chilly light filled the interior of the tent. Two men were crouching beside the body, ready to move it, at last, into a body bag. Her head had bled a little into the snow. The face was crushed and swollen, one eye reduced to a pucker, the other showing as a sliver of dull white between distended lids. When the sequinned top she wore glittered in slight changes of light, it gave a disquieting impression of movement, as though she breathed again, or was tensing muscles, ready to rise. The snow fell with soft fingertip plunks on the canvas overhead.

Sedate = calm, serious

Orbs = round spheres

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the scene of the crime.

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the second paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe the people at the crime scene? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

A reviewer wrote 'This part of the text, where the writer finally describes the body, feels as if it takes a darker tone.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the basketball game
- evaluate how the writer shows that Rabbit cares about making the shot
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing



5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of a street at night as suggested by this picture (picture of a street at night).

Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'Fortunately, the boy's crime was never discovered, unfortunately, his guilt for the crime was never shed.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]

5)

This extract is from the opening of a the crime novel 'In The Woods' , here we are introduced to the main character, Rob Ryan, who is detective on the Dublin Murder Squad.

What I warn you to remember is that I am a detective. Our relationship with truth is fundamental but cracked, refracting confusingly like fragmented glass. It is the core of our careers, the endgame of every move we make, and we pursue it with strategies painstakingly constructed of lies and concealment and every variation on deception. The truth is the most desirable woman in the world and we are the most jealous lovers, reflexively denying anyone else the slightest glimpse of her. We betray her routinely, spending hours and days stupor-deep in lies, and then turn back to her holding out the lover's ultimate Möbius strip: But I only did it because I love you so much.

I have a pretty knack for imagery, especially the cheap, facile kind. Don't let me fool you into seeing us as a bunch of parfit gentil knights galloping off in doublets after Lady Truth on her white palfrey. What we do is crude, crass and nasty. A girl gives her boyfriend an alibi for the evening when we suspect him of robbing a north-side Centra and stabbing the clerk. I flirt with her at first, telling her I can see why he would want to stay home when he's got her; she is peroxided and greasy, with the flat, stunted features of generations of malnutrition, and privately I am thinking that if I were her boyfriend I would be relieved to trade her even for a hairy cellmate named Razor. Then I tell her we've found marked bills from the till in his classy white tracksuit bottoms, and he's claiming that she went out that evening and gave them to him when she got back.

I do it so convincingly, with such delicate crosshatching of discomfort and compassion at her man's betrayal, that finally her faith in four shared years disintegrates like a sand castle and through tears and snot, while her man sits with my partner in the next interview room saying nothing except "I was home with Jackie," she tells me everything from the time he left the house to the details of his sexual shortcomings. Then I pat her gently on the shoulder and give her a tissue and a cup of tea, and a statement sheet.

This is my job, and you don't go into it—or, if you do, you don't last—without some natural affinity for its priorities and demands. What I am telling you, before you begin my story, is this—two things: I crave truth. And I lie.

parfit gentil knights = from Chaucer, perfect gentle knight
palfrey = a sweet horse for a lady to ride
Peroxided = dyed blonde with peroxide bleach

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things Ryan believes about truth.

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the second paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe the woman he is interrogating? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

A reviewer wrote 'This part of the text, where Ryan describes the success of his interrogation technique, makes him sound both proud and ashamed.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of Detective Ryan
- evaluate how the writer shows that Detective Ryan has mixed feelings
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing



5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of a police Interrogation as suggested by this picture

Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'Staring at the four walls of my dingy jail cell, I thought back to the events that started this evening's fateful chain.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]

6)

This extract is from the beginning of the novel, 'Bring Up the Bodies' by Hilary Mantel. It is told from the point of view of Thomas Cromwell, a close friend of King Henry VIII. Here, they have spent the day hunting with hawks and horses.

His children are falling from the sky. He watches from horse-back, acres of England stretching behind him; they drop, gilt-winged, each with a blood-filled gaze. Grace Cromwell hovers in thin air. She is silent when she takes her prey, silent as she glides to his fist. But the sounds she makes then, the rustle of feathers and the creak, the sigh and ruffle of pinion, the small cluck-cluck from her throat, these are sounds of recognition, intimate, daughtery, almost disapproving. Her breast is gore-streaked and flesh clings to her claws.

Later, Henry will say, 'Your girls flew well today'. The hawk Anne Cromwell bounces on the glove of Rafe Sadler, who rides by the king in easy conversation. They are tired; the sun is declining, and they ride back to Wolf Hall with the reins slack on the necks of their mounts. Tomorrow his wife and two sisters will go out. These dead women, their bones long sunk in London clay, are now transmigrated. Weightless, they glide on the upper currents of the air. They pity no one. They answer to no one.

Their lives are simple. When they look down they see nothing but their prey, and the borrowed plumes of the hunters: they see a fluttering, flinching universe, a universe filled with their dinner. All summer has been like this, a riot of dismemberment, fur and feather flying; the beating off and the whipping in of hounds, coddling of tired horses, the nursing, by the gentlemen, of contusions, sprains and blisters. And for a few days at least, the sun has shone on Henry. Sometime before noon, clouds scudded in from the west and rain fell in big scented drops; but the sun re-emerged with a scorching heat, and now the sky is so clear you can see into Heaven and spy on what the saints are doing.

As they dismount, handing their horses to the grooms and waiting on the king, his mind is already moving to paperwork: to dispatches from Whitehall, galloped down by the post routes that are laid wherever the court shifts. At supper with the Seymours, he will defer to any stories his hosts wish to tell: to anything the king may venture, touselled and happy and amiable as he seems tonight. When the king has gone to bed, his working night will begin.

Though the day is over, Henry seems disinclined to go indoors. He stands looking about him, inhaling horse sweat, a broad, brick-red streak of sunburn across his forehead. Early in the day he lost his hat, so by custom all the hunting party were obliged to take off theirs. The king refused all offers of substitutes. As dusk steals over the woods and fields, servants will be out looking for the stir of the black plume against darkening grass, or the glint of his hunter's badge, a gold St Hubert with sapphire eyes.

Already you can feel the autumn. You know there will not be many more days like these; so let us stand, the horseboys of Wolf Hall swarming around us, Wiltshire and the western counties stretching into a haze of blue; let us stand, the king's hand on his shoulder, Henry's face earnest as he talks his way back through the landscape of the day, the green copses and rushing streams, the alders by the water's edge, the early haze that lifted by nine; the brief shower, the small wind that died and settled; the stillness, the afternoon heat.

pinion = part of a wing
plume = decorative feather
alders = birch trees

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the hawks.

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the last paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe their summer of hunting? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

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

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

A reviewer wrote 'This part of the text, where Cromwell describes the countryside, changes the tone to an almost wistful one, which contrasts with the violence of the hunting.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the countryside
- evaluate how the writer shows that the countryside contains both violence and beauty
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing



You are going to enter a creative writing competition. Your entry will be judged by a panel of people of your own age.

Either: Write a description suggested by this picture

Or: Write the opening part of a story about a place that has been deserted and left for ruin.