

GCE English Literature Explorations in Prose and Poetry (6ET01): Sample Scheme of Work

This outline assumes that the assessment will take place in the summer term. Another possible approach, as suggested on page 5 of “Getting Started”, is that students are entered for the Unit 1 exam in January of year 1 (model 1). This Scheme of Work follows the Model 2 pattern. It is also assumed that two teachers will share the preparation for this unit. It may of course happen differently: for example, one teacher may be responsible for delivering Unit 2 (coursework) leaving one teacher solely in charge of Unit 1. If this is the case, simply ignore the distinctions of “teacher A” and “teacher B”. One advantage of sharing this Unit however is easing the workload pressure on any one teacher, especially if long novels are being taught (although it is not suggested that the novel work is divided). The Unit also lends itself quite easily to a loose poetry / prose division.

Suggested way of sharing the Unit:

Section to be taught	Teacher responsible
Unseen prose, Section A	A & B (shared)
Unseen poetry, Section A	B
Section B, Poetry: teaching the Anthology poems	B
Section C, Prose: teaching both novels	A (same teacher for reasons given below)

Summary of assumptions made in this Scheme of Work:

Questions	Yes	No
Will we enter candidates for the exam in January?		✓
Will we prepare students for BOTH the poetry and prose unseen, giving them a choice in the exam?	✓	
Will two teachers share the work in the unit?	✓	
Does the same teacher prepare students on BOTH novels?	✓	
If there are two teachers delivering GCE English, will one be totally in charge of coursework, leaving the other responsible for Unit 1?		✓

Some reasons for these assumptions / decisions:

- The same teacher is responsible for teaching both novels in Section C so that they can be taught in a coherent way, especially in order that, when writing about them, students can extend their argument more readily from the core novel to the second
- Both teachers prepare students for the prose unseen in the model above, recognising that some of the skills learnt in reading the novels can be applied to the unseens and *vice versa* (in just the same way that there is a cross-over with the poetry teaching).

Allocating time

It is important to recognise that, though there may only be 15 or so poems for Teacher B to work on in Section B, as against two novels for Teacher A in Section C, both sections carry equal weighting of marks in the exam. This Scheme of Work allocates time in accordance with this

weighting, recognising that the teaching of skills should not be neglected in favour of an excessive page by page “making sure that they’ve read it” approach in the novel teaching.

Allocation of marks - and therefore of time:

20%	40%	40%
Unseens, both Prose & Poetry	Anthology Poems	The core novel & supporting novel

There is evidence from the Legacy Syllabus to show that candidates do best at the unseen when they have been well prepared and practised in the appropriate skills. This strongly suggests that there is no automatic transference of skills from studying set books to dealing with unseens.

The *syllabus* devised by a particular centre, however, should not be the same thing as the *specification* devised by Edexcel. A school or college’s teaching will not stick rigorously to the assessment pattern, but leave room for introductions and deviations. The Edexcel AS English Literature Student Book, for example, provides a great deal of background material for Unit 1 connected with the study of poetry and prose and this approach is to be encouraged. Students do not need to know from day 1 exactly where the Assessment Objectives lie or what they mean, or how many marks are awarded for particular skills. They do, of course, need to know them by the time of the exam. It is therefore hoped that what follows will be seen as a possible template for teaching, based on the specification, but that teachers will feel free to do what they always have done, and teach in their own way.

With this caveat, a pattern for the AS year might emerge as follows:

	Teacher A	Teacher B
Term One (Autumn) Weeks 1 2 3	Introduction	Introduction
Term One Weeks 4 5 6 7	Novel 1 (and 2) Prose unseens,	Unseens, poetry mainly Anthology poems
Term Two (Spring)	Novel 2 (and 1) Prose unseens	Anthology poems Unseens, prose & poetry
	Other activities, syllabus rather than specification related	Other activities
Term Three Summer)	Revision; honing skills; exam preparation	Revision; honing skills; exam preparation

The Introduction; Autumn Term, weeks 1, 2, 3 (3 weeks)

Teacher A

Background to the study of the novels

Build up a reading list around the chosen authors or themes. In the ideal world, this might have been started already, before the course begins, perhaps through material issued to students at the end of the summer term or over the holiday.

Give students extracts from related texts.

Teacher B

Background to the study of poetry

Look at a range of poetry - from an accessible piece of eighteenth century writing to something totally modern.

Aim to establish what might be different from the study of poetry at A level from GCSE.

Autumn Term, weeks 4,5,6,7 (4 weeks)

Teacher A

Issue students with both novels. Start work on the core novel. Read the opening chapter with the second novel firmly in mind. Look at the two openings. What have they got in common? What are their differences? How is reading one novel likely to influence understanding of the other as the course progresses? (Note: although you will not want to avoid comparisons - in fact, they are inevitable - AO3 is not specifically assessed in Section C of the exam. Therefore, when setting written assignments nearer the exam time, focus on ways in which arguments about the first novel could be taken further and expanded in light of the second, rather than giving straight comparisons. It is also important to keep the concept of a core novel in mind: the two texts are not to be studied in equal depth, as they would need to be for a straight comparison exercise.)

Original writing exercise: students to attempt writing in the style of each novel.

Students to keep a reading log or diary, recording their reactions as reading progresses. Need to set clear reading milestones and monitor reading. It might be expected that a significant part of the core novel has been read by the end of the half term break.

Students set assignments to use the internet, libraries, etc to research context and background of both novels and report back to the rest of the group.

Students set the task of writing a critical analysis of a short section (as if for an unseen) being introduced to the “what to look for” features listed on page 10 of “Getting Started” (Narrative structure, Time, Voice, Speech, Style, Images Symbols & Motifs, Genre). It will be important to introduce these features gradually over the course of the term and not all in one lesson. A passage could be set for analysis with one or two features specifically in mind.

Teacher B

Having made the choice of theme (Land, Home or Work) for the Anthology poems, set students the task of writing down their ideas connected with that theme. An assignment can be to find other poems and prose extracts that share these ideas.

Students to work in pairs or groups on individual poems and present their findings to the rest of the class.

Give students the first of the features to look for when studying poetry (“Getting Started” on page 8 lists: Type, Voice, Form & Structure, Imagery, Language Choice, Rhyme & Rhythm, Tone & Mood, Genre) and explain these will apply both to the Unseen and Anthology sections of the exam. Be careful about giving out too much at once - this list can be followed through over the duration of the term

Encourage students to be quite precise in their use of terms such as “imagery”, about which they will have to write in a focussed and succinct fashion for the unseen exercise. This discipline may be something they have not been used to at GCSE.

Set students the task of comparing and contrasting two poems in the light of a quotation or assertion (model this on the specimen question papers in the “Sample Assessment Materials”)

Assignments to have been completed during first half term (7 weeks):

Teacher A:

- Starting the reading of the core novel and keeping a reading log
- Researching the background and context of the two novels
- Writing in the style of one or other of the novels
- Writing a critical analysis of a short section, applying some of the features listed in “Getting Started”

Teacher B:

- Exploring the chosen Anthology theme (Land, Home or Work)
- Writing about individual poems
- Comparing two poems in the light of a quotation or assertion

Autumn Half Term break (week 8)

Students encouraged to continue with the reading of their core novel. They need to be given a target point to aim for.

Reading guidance: students need to be told that, whatever they did at GCSE, for AS reading the core novel once only is not enough. All students will of course read at different rates and with different levels of enthusiasm and interest. It is important to stress that what is being talked about here is the initial reading only - when the reader is too involved in finding out what happens to notice some of the finer points that will emerge on subsequent readings.

Autumn Term, weeks 9 - 14 (6 weeks)

Teacher A

Establish clearly what has, and has not, been read of the core novel. Fix a first reading completion date that seems realistic. Emphasise that this is only a *first* reading.

Students can prepare chapters or sections, either individually or in groups, to present to the rest of the class. The Teaching and Assessment CD ROM may be used to provide helpful guidance on how to approach the teaching of the novels with key passages, themes, features and links.

It would be a good idea for the teacher to have knowledge of the third novel in the chosen group even though this is not being taught. Knowing about this novel will give the teacher a much clearer idea of the kind of question the exam is likely to ask and avoid the over-zealous pursuing of themes that are not relevant to all three novels and therefore cannot be used as a basis for questions in the exam.

Consider some extracts from the second novel, especially where they help extend ideas about the core novel. Treat these extracts in the same way that students might approach their prose unseen, working through the features listed on page 10 of “Getting Started”.

Take a theme or feature that is common to both novels. Set a written exercise (an essay) directing students to a particular section, say a chapter or a group of chapters, of the core novel and a shorter extract, perhaps a few pages only, from the second novel. Give a starting point statement about the core novel for consideration. The students should then produce work dealing primarily with the core novel, but then extend the argument by considering the second. Approximately two-thirds of the answer should be about the core novel.

As a break from work on these two novels, introduce a wide range of “unseen” material. Pick up on ideas that were established in the introductory three weeks. If the course book is available, make use of extracts given there, and in the Teaching and Assessment CD ROM.

It will be particularly beneficial if students are given help with experiencing a broad range of literature. This will not only pay dividends for those who extend their work into A2 - in tackling Unit 4 coursework, for example - but for responding to unseen material. Although the set prose texts in this Unit are drawn from the period 1800 - 1945, the unseen section of the exam may take material from any period, from today’s writing back to the eighteenth century (with the proviso that the language itself does not present an obstacle to understanding.) The prose passages themselves can be chosen from a range of genres. It would be a good practice to encourage students to find their own materials and bring them in to present to others. An exercise in which the students devise unseen questions for themselves on their chosen passages would also be very helpful, because it would put them into the situation of the examiner so helping them understand what is being looked for.

Emphasise the need to respond to unseen material in the exam format in a specific way, and the need to allocate time in accordance with the given marks. There will be no harm in Teacher B making exactly the same points with regard to poetry unseens - experience teaches that guidance, especially on the allocation of time, cannot be over emphasised.

Towards the end of term is a good time for consolidating these points, especially if some sort of “trial exam” is envisaged for the following term. If possible, it would be helpful if both teachers can come together to reinforce certain points about how the course is progressing and pick up students’ comments and questions.

If no cross college or school examination is envisaged, a timed essay experience would be useful at the beginning of next term. Among other things it could provide a useful check on how much of the core novel has actually been read. It would be good to urge all students to finish reading their core novel over the holiday if they have not already done so by the end of term. Teaching will become increasingly difficult in January if they have not done so.

Teacher B

Complete a first reading of all the poems in the chosen section. Set exercises which encourage students to combine them in many different ways, not just by theme and subject matter but by structure, language, use of imagery etc. If the course book is used it has a number of suggested linkings.

Make sure that students know and understand what is required by AO3, as this is not being covered by Teacher A in this Unit. They should realise that there are two parts to it. They need to (i) explore “connections and comparisons between different literary texts” and (ii) recognise that these are “informed by interpretations of other readers.” It is worth spending some time explaining the second part of this AO as it might not be as readily obvious as the first (it does, of course incorporate curriculum 2000’s separate AO, AO4).

Therefore different interpretations and different critical approaches leading to different readings of the same poem need discussing. Students can be given a broad understanding of how feminist readings, Marxist readings, ecocritical standpoints etc might influence the understanding of a particular poem. Students can be made aware of how it might be read and understood outside their own particular location and time.

The Anthology can be explored more widely, outside the particular grouping that has been chosen, discussing ways poems could be linked in other sections. Emphasise, however, that they must restrict their examination answers to writing about the prescribed poems (which will be listed for them on the paper in the exam as a reminder).

Poetry and Prose from the eighteenth century onwards may be used for unseen criticism in the exam. Close liaison with teacher A will ensure that the same points are made about tackling the unseen.

As the end of term approaches, consolidate what has been learnt. In the ideal world, both teachers would speak to the class together. Some sort of trial exam, or at least timed essay, would be a good idea for the start of next term and the contents can be discussed with students.

Assignments to have been completed during the second half term (6 weeks):

Teacher A

- Continuation of the reading log
- Written up versions of class presentations
- A formal exercise (an essay) looking at one theme or feature that is relevant to both novels

Teacher B

- Comparison essay on at least two poems drawn from the Anthology
- Response to unseen poems from the 18th century onwards
- Response to unseen prose from the 18th century onwards

The Christmas & New Year holiday

Students have their reading to do. They should be urged to, and expected to, complete their reading of the core novel. The more adventurous may have read both by the time they return in January and the lessons will mean much more to them if they have done.

Spring Term, weeks 1 - 5/6 (5/6 weeks)

Teacher A

The term begins with some sort of test or trial exam. The degree to which the core novel has been read and understood can be ascertained. It will also be a useful diagnostic exercise allowing for some differentiation of tasks in the forthcoming weeks. If both teachers can talk over what the students have written it should become clear which students would benefit from a more structured approach and perhaps some additional small group or one-to-one time. If help with reading is required it would be good to break the novels up into manageable portions and set targets. The high achievers can also be noted - among them may be students who will go on to be awarded A* grades if they stay for A2 - and they can be set some extension work, perhaps reading other novels by the same authors as their set books.

Now that students can be expected to have read their core novel and have some familiarity with the second novel, teaching can step up a gear. The second novel can be read with plenty of opportunities to reflect back on the core novel.

It is important that the core novel is not neglected while the second novels being worked on. Teaching on the second novel should be used to reinforce points about the first.

Now is the time to focus on essay work requiring reference to both novels. As the course book explains, there are two possible essay structures. The more obvious approach is for candidates to spend the first two thirds of their essay on the core novel and then extend their argument by referring to the second in the final third. Another approach would be to refer to both novels throughout the essay, while still retaining the primary focus on the core novel. Class time spent looking at ways of structuring an essay would therefore be very valuable. The “Sample Assessment Materials” give a range of possible starting point quotations for essay titles. Students should be getting used to this approach and be made aware that the starting point quotation is only an assertion - they do not necessarily have to agree with it. They can be reminded of AO3 here and the requirement for readers to be open to different interpretations.

In the exam, students will need to write their novel essay in 50 minutes (the division of time is spelt out more fully for Teacher B, below). At this stage it would be good to allow longer for research and planning, though the actual writing time should be limited so that students begin to get an idea of how much it is feasible to write.

Despite the need to give students exam style essay practice it is important not to get exclusively examination focussed at this stage. While there is still time before revision sets in in earnest across the curriculum in all subjects find time to be experimental and creative. Some suggested activities from the Unit 1 Principal Examiner are:

- Writing dialogues between the characters from different novels
- Re-casting exercises, changing the character focuses
- Character role play
- “Interviewing the author”
- Adding or subtracting passages (textual extension)
- Writing in the style of a particular author
- Parody

Teacher B

Work with teacher A on the test or trial exam and the feedback to students. It is likely that the students who need a more structured and guided reading pattern for their work on the novels will be the same ones who are struggling with the poetry section of the course. In particular they may find it difficult to select the poems that best suit their purpose when answering questions on the Anthology, being tempted to answer on the ones they know best and feel most comfortable about. Practice on selecting the most appropriate poems is therefore appropriate at this stage.

All students are likely to need help with structuring their answers to fit the requirements of the unseen questions. Paradoxically, this may prove especially difficult for those with the most to say. Given the time constraints of the exam, it would be realistic to encourage students to divide up their time in this way:

Reading the paper, especially the unseens, and making a choice: *10 minutes*

Answering on the chosen unseen: *25 minutes*

Writing the Anthology essay: *50 minutes*

(Writing on the Novel essay: *50 minutes*)

It would be very unwise for students to exceed a total of 35 minutes, including reading time, on the Unseen, as they would be seriously handicapped in trying to write a Section B or C essay in under 50 minutes.

They therefore need practice on giving short answers on the unseen, noting that the third Unseen question carries as many marks as the first two.

Despite the need to practise for exam writing, it is important not to lose sight of more creative and adventurous things. The Principal Examiner for Unit 1 suggests the following activities:

- students can write their own poems
- they can make use of parody
- they can design their own starter activities based on the poems
- through visiting websites (such as that of the Poetry Society) they can access podcasts and vodcasts to see and hear poets read their own work

Assignments to have been completed during the first half term (5/6 weeks)

Teacher A

- Some kind of test or trial exam
- Essay practice, with two kinds of structure
- Something more creative

Teacher B

- Some kind of test or trial exam
- Practice on writing on unseens under strictly timed conditions
- Something more creative

Spring Half Term break (week 6 /7)

Students should ensure they have read novel 2. The core novel will need re-reading in the forthcoming few weeks and over the Easter holiday.

Spring term, weeks 7/8 - 13/14 (6 weeks)

Teacher A

This is the time to get students accustomed to the idea of the fifty minute essay and to practise writing with clean copies of the text in front of them. How to use a novel in an exam, without being tempted to waste time looking through it for a desired quotation, is a skill that needs practice. Students may also need to be shown how to embed quotations in their writing, how not to quote at too great a length and how to use the most appropriate quotation (not just “all purpose” phrases.)

An excellent exercise would be to get students to write a fifty minute essay *without* reference to the texts, or with very limited reference to them (say 10 minutes only at the beginning).

Students should be encouraged to share ideas and show each other what they have written.

Students should be urged to re-read the core novel, finding fresh perspectives as they go.

Now that everyone is quite familiar with both novels this is an excellent time for discussion and debate.

Looking at the mark schemes, as shown in the “Sample Assessment Materials”, will help students understand what is being looked for to achieve the highest grades. In particular phrases such as:

- *sustained argument, pertinent use of literary terms, shapes a response in an original and creative way (for AO1)*
- *sustained analysis, well-developed critical understanding (for AO2)*

might be explored and discussed to see how they could be achieved. If the course book is available, some of the model essays printed there might be used as starting points for discussion.

Practice in a wide range of prose unseens will help reinforce the habit of looking closely and analytically at a text. This is a time for exploring different genres - fiction, memoir, journalism, biography, etc. Students should experience analysing passages that are not necessarily of traditional “literary” merit. They can look at extracts from popular fiction, for example, and should be as familiar with doing this as they are with classic authors, recognising the same skills of analysis can be applied to the text.

Teacher B

Students’ responses to poetry should by now have moved from merely spotting features to having something useful to say about what the poem is doing. Students should now be developing their own individual approaches to the unseen exercise and the more practice they get at this the better. Making sure that material does not overlap too much from one section to another is important - students should be encouraged to draft out ideas for each of the three sections before they begin to write on the first one in order to avoid this.

Time should be spent on how ideas can be best organised in the Anthology essays. In the Novel essay, two approaches were seen as equally valid: the novels being considered side by side (with special emphasis on the core novel) and the second novel being left until the final third of the essay. AO3 was not being assessed in this essay: here it is. Therefore it may be seen that some attempt to interleave and interweave between poems throughout the essay is the more sophisticated approach. Students might also consider the rubric that asks them to compare and contrast “at least two” poems. They should not see this as an injunction to write about *only* two. Obviously they will not gain extra marks simply for writing about extra poems, nor will they lose marks for writing about only two, but their essay practice at this stage should get them used to the idea that there is flexibility here and the best answers will be the ones that use their material in the most appropriate way.

Assignments to have been completed in the second half of the Spring Term (6 weeks)

Teachers A & B

- Students write practice essays, timed (50 minutes) with clean, unmarked texts (and, in the case of the novels, sometimes without).
- Students write practice unseens covering a wide range of genres.

The Easter holiday

Students need to take advantage of this break for a further reading of their core novel.

The Summer term 4 / 5 weeks

Teachers A & B

Revision and exam practice. But also find time to outline the second year of the course in the hope that students will stay on. Talking about the attractive range of texts for unit 3, and the open ended nature of the coursework Unit 4, will make a break from the exam-oriented approach at this stage.