



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Arabic (9AA0)

Paper 2: Translation into Arabic and written
response to work

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Introduction

Most candidates produced well-developed responses within the word count. There is a noticeable improvement in the overall quality of writing compared to previous years. The efforts made by teachers are evident; candidates showed increased confidence and ability, particularly in analysis. Many now understand what is expected of them in the exam and are better equipped to meet the demands of the tasks.

That said, a number of students still focused on narrative or descriptive responses rather than offering analytical insight, particularly in the literature and film questions. The paper as a whole performed well, with varied questions that tested a broad range of skills, including comprehension, translation, critical analysis, and structured writing in Arabic.

It is also worth mentioning that some candidates used colloquial Arabic or dialect inappropriately in formal tasks, which affected the quality of their language. Accuracy, structure, and lexical range continue to be key areas of differentiation between the highest- and lowest-scoring candidates.

A significant number of candidates submitted scripts written in Urdu-style Arabic handwriting, which many examiners found difficult to read. This had a direct impact on marking and potentially on candidates' overall performance. Teachers are strongly advised to ensure students are writing in standard, legible Arabic script suitable for examination conditions.

Question 1: Translation (English to Arabic)

The English source text was clear and well written to test a wide range of translation skills. Challenging vocabulary and phrases this year included:

- *In pessimistic attitudes*
- *A vast majority*
- *More young people represented in politics*
- *How the government manages matters*

Many candidates responded impressively, demonstrating good grammatical control and accurate sentence structure. Even weaker translations managed to convey basic meaning, though often with omissions or summarised versions of the source text. A common issue was candidates reverting to spoken language or dialect, which is inappropriate for this formal task.

Some candidates struggled with election-related terminology and misunderstood subtle connotations. However, the mark scheme was clear and helped examiners distinguish between partially correct and fully developed translations.

Recommendations:

- Encourage students to regularly practice translation using authentic materials (e.g. news articles, opinion columns) to improve vocabulary retention and adaptability.
- Emphasise the importance of preserving nuance and tone in translation.
- Discourage the use of colloquial or dialectal expressions.

Question 2a

This question asked candidates to explore the impact of Western civilisation on Mohsen. Most candidates demonstrated good understanding and were able to write focused responses, often drawing insightful comparisons between Eastern and Western culture.

Some responses, however, lacked depth and drifted into summaries of the plot or focused too much on Mohsen's relationship with Suzy, missing the broader implications of the question.

Recommendations:

- Teach students to differentiate between narrative retelling and critical analysis.
- Encourage reference to specific cultural and thematic elements supported by evidence from the text.

Question 2b

Candidates were asked to explain how the author portrays social relationships in the novel. This question proved more challenging. While a few students delivered strong responses, identifying various forms of social interaction and tension within French society, others struggled with breadth and depth.

A number of students instead wrote about East-West comparisons or limited their answer to a single character relationship, such as that between Mohsen and Suzy.

Recommendations:

- Students should be taught to address the **whole scope** of the question.
- More time should be spent on analysing how authors use character relationships to reflect broader societal issues.

Question 3a

Candidates were required to analyse the personality of the **gravedigger**. Many performed well, referencing how the character represents deeper themes such as mortality, alienation, and fame.

Strong answers made links to the author's intention and explored symbolic meanings behind the gravedigger's behaviour and language.

Some candidates confused this character with the protagonist or gave generalised descriptions, losing focus on analysis.

Recommendations:

- Teach the difference between character description and analytical character study.
- Encourage linking characters to wider themes.

Question 3b

This question focused on the theme of the **misuse of power**. It produced some of the most original and insightful answers. High-achieving candidates discussed both narrative figures and the author's own role in the story, with some interpreting symbolic moments as metaphors for exploitation.

Candidates who simply discussed plot events without interpreting them missed the analytical focus of the task.

Recommendations:

- Develop students' ability to identify and explore abstract themes.
- Encourage the use of metaphorical interpretation supported by text.

Question 4b

This question asked candidates to explore **how the author ironically presents the concept of stinginess in the play**. The vast majority of students demonstrated a sound factual understanding of the events, accurately narrating key scenes related to the theme. Most were able to identify examples of stinginess portrayed through the characters and storyline.

However, many responses fell short in terms of analytical depth. A common issue was the tendency to summarise the plot without offering a critical or literary perspective. The absence of key analytical terms—such as *theme*, *style*, *symbolism*, *character development*, *contrast*, and *narrative technique*—limited the sophistication of many answers. Additionally, students often neglected to reference specific scenes or dialogue to support their points.

There were also noticeable issues with sentence construction, grammatical accuracy, and the effective use of specialised vocabulary. As a result, while the knowledge of the play was evident, the ability to translate this understanding into critical literary analysis was frequently lacking.

Recommendations:

- Students must be trained to distinguish between simple narration and genuine literary analysis.
- Teachers should explicitly teach theatrical and literary terminology and how to apply it to analysis.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on using specific evidence—such as scenes or quotations—to support interpretation.
- Encourage the development of analytical writing skills through practice in critical thinking, structured argumentation, and textual evidence.

Question 6a

This question required candidates to examine **the social relationships within Aisha's family and the extent of their interconnectedness**. Some students responded impressively, demonstrating a clear understanding of the complex family dynamics and the cultural context that shaped them. These candidates were able to explore the interplay between characters with sensitivity, offering thoughtful commentary on emotional bonds, conflict, loyalty, and generational tensions.

However, a significant number of students struggled with the analytical demands of the question. Many responses were limited to narrative summaries, with little or no critical insight. These candidates merely recounted scenes involving the family members without evaluating the deeper implications of their relationships or the social issues they represent.

Another common shortcoming was the lack of supporting evidence. Few students referred directly to specific scenes or dialogue to back up their points. Additionally, the use of appropriate terminology, such as *character development*, *interpersonal tension*, *cultural expectations*, and *social commentary*, was notably absent in weaker responses.

Overall, while the question offered ample opportunity for analysis, many students missed the chance to explore the underlying themes and the director's possible intentions in portraying these family relationships.

Recommendations:

- Encourage students to move beyond plot retelling and engage with the emotional and social layers of character interactions.
- Teach students to identify and analyse the **social context** behind characters' behaviours, particularly in family-based narratives.
- Emphasise the importance of quoting or referencing specific scenes and interactions to support interpretation.
- Integrate film and character analysis vocabulary into classwork to strengthen students' analytical language and confidence.
- Provide opportunities to practise breaking down character relationships and linking them to wider societal or cultural issues.

Question 7a

This question asked candidates to analyse **the character of Lucy** in the film. While Lucy is not a central figure and has limited screen time, some candidates were able to construct thoughtful and perceptive responses. These students demonstrated the ability to extract meaningful insight from brief appearances, successfully highlighting Lucy's emotional complexity, his influence on other characters, and his symbolic role within the wider narrative.

However, many candidates struggled with this task. The brevity of Lucy's presence in the film appeared to challenge students' ability to develop a full analysis. As a result, some responses remained vague or generalised, lacking depth or critical focus. Several candidates reverted to summarising scenes in which Lucy appears without connecting his actions or dialogue to broader themes or character relationships.

There was also a noticeable absence of key analytical vocabulary in weaker responses, and few students made effective use of specific scenes or dialogue as supporting evidence. This limited their ability to fully meet the demands of the question.

Recommendations:

- Encourage students to develop the skill of **analysing minor or secondary characters**, especially those who have symbolic or emotional impact despite limited screen time.
- Teach students to **extract meaning from small details**, such as gestures, tone, and limited dialogue—and to link these to wider themes in the film.
- Provide targeted practice in analysing less prominent characters, helping students learn to approach them with the same rigour as they would a main character.
- Emphasise the use of **evidence-based argument**, ensuring students refer to specific scenes, actions, or dialogue to support their analysis.

Question 7a

This question on **Abdullah's role** in reflecting issues in Saudi society was well answered by many candidates. Responses included thoughtful analysis of his symbolic function and how his limited screen presence contributed significantly to the film's social critique.

Some linguistic errors were noted, particularly in spelling basic particles.

Recommendations:

- Encourage close character study and linkage to broader themes.
- Continue focusing on language accuracy at the sentence and word level.

Question 7b

This question, on **symbolism of colour in the film**, was popular but challenging. While some candidates gave insightful responses about how colour is used to convey mood, culture, and political context, others struggled with the cinematic techniques and offered vague answers.

Top-performing candidates discussed colour as a visual metaphor and made links to freedom, restriction, and identity. Lower-scoring answers tended to revert to basic plot retelling.

Recommendations:

- Teach students basic film analysis vocabulary and techniques.
- Provide practice in writing about visual symbolism and its emotional impact.

Final Summary and Recommendations

The performance of candidates in Summer 2025 was promising, with marked improvement in writing, structure, and linguistic accuracy across the board.

Teachers' continued effort to prepare students thoroughly is reflected in the quality of responses.

However, critical analysis remains a key area for development. Too many candidates still focus on narrative description, missing the opportunity to explore character, theme, and authorial intent in depth.

Recommendations for Teachers and Students:

- **Emphasise Analysis:** Distinguish clearly between description and evaluation. Use structured frameworks for analysing characters, themes, and symbolism.
- **Use Authentic Materials:** Incorporate real-life texts (news articles, short stories, etc.) for translation and discussion to build vocabulary and contextual awareness.
- **Target Supporting Characters:** Prepare students to analyse all characters, not just protagonists.
- **Teach Literary and Cinematic Terminology:** Familiarise students with terms needed to discuss both written and visual texts confidently.
- **Practice Exam Strategy:** Encourage timed writing, structured paragraphing, and planning before writing responses.
- **Avoid Dialect in Formal Writing:** Reinforce the use of Modern Standard Arabic for all tasks.
- **Promote Legible and Standard Handwriting:** Ensure students write in clear, standard Arabic script rather than Urdu-style handwriting, as illegibility may hinder examiners' ability to mark accurately.

With continued focus and guided teaching, candidates can excel not only in linguistic proficiency but also in higher-level analytical thinking.